

POEMS FROM
FENWICK TOWER



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Contents!?

Your guess is as good as mine.

I'll check around the shelves of Don 88 Asian Grocery and see what I can find.

I might just pace the floor and wait for some new product to change my world—sit outside the door there in an aluminum navy chair and write letters to Jack the Crow from the stuffed specimen box in the Thomas McCulloch Museum. Play some skiffle music with a blues harp and a foot pedal trash can. You can't top up the contents list overnight. Upon completion, the writer doesn't really want to look it over. The writer is off finding new things.

Song of the Marginal Man¹

1.

I have a friend at court
He defends my
Periodic narcosis
Gutter ball marginalia
Sublet parasitism
Doloroso hymns
Bleated long
And low

2.

I feel oblivious
To the cacophony of
The common crowd
The cold-hearted
Prosecution
Instead
I follow the wings
Of the honey guide

3.

The song of hands
Striking ewer and basin
Freshly drawn water
They
Dance for the morning sun
Plaster ceiling is a silver screen
For sun's bath laughter

Guest soaks in the meaning
Before undressing

¹ Published in *Earthborne Poetry Magazine* and *Essence*

Marvellous Travels by Land and Air*

Chainlink Drive is nailed to Lacewood Drive
Lacewood turns into Captain Danjou's wooden hand
We fight valiantly to catch up to
Doctor Thirsky and his enormous flying kite
We lose him as he flies above
A family restaurant
And two urbanized seagulls
Thirsky in silhouette against the cloud-veiled sun
Looks like Baron Karl Münchhausen
He pierces a cloud and makes it weep
We pull over until such sadness dissipates
And science can prevail once more over
Poetic justice

*Written for Doctor Robert Brent Thirsk, "the first Canadian astronaut to fly a long duration expedition aboard the International Space Station". I sent it to him the day it was finished. He responded with an autographed photograph. "Thirsky" was an affectionate bit of word play, which apparently he took in stride. This was published in the March, 2012 edition of *Open Heart Forgery*.

Laughing Laplander Blues

Electric power
Who needs it

We can watch the sun rise
Watch it do a fan dance with skimpy little clouds
Watch the sun do a belly flop
Plop over earth's edge

Heat is marginally necessary
Drag some deeply scarred trees from the forest
Cut them up and make a fire inside
A stove discovered in the attic
Maybe we should just live up there

Leave the first two floors to the animal kingdom
Keep the goats and feral dogs full of venture capitalists
We can tie them together to make a motley sled team
Drag the house to town
Show the other rats
Where the real cheese is at

Mourners (1998, 2011, Halifax)

1.

Hyeah, and when we as lost sheep
Trudged through the snow
Accompanied by mourners
To the Irving Big Stop
You watched swarthy truckers
Eat their bulk in breakfast
Served in the evening.

Soon thereafter, we mulled over
Cabbages in net bags
And bought them—five for a loonie²—
And talked of cabbage stew while
Attendants pumped gas.

Snow falls on both the fat and needy/
Holds promise for those still alive enough
To dream.

2.

They built that bridge
To carry us from blighted fields
To Halifax and Promise.
To help feed Tracy and the little ones.
Social services would pay the toll,
If we let them, then roll back the red
Carpet and ask for money based on
Suspected earnings.

And before the bridge,
When there was a ferry,
I'd stuff some cognac and a sweater
Into a kit bag smelling of damp gone bad
And walk out onto the boat while dodging truck loads
Of potatoes. There was no wife then, and the loneliness
Was at par with tonight's want.

A promise:
We shall cross this bridge together
Over the frozen Atlantic in Son Ed's taxi
And return to that strange, red mud,
Warm and asleep after a good meal,
Suitcases full of treasures for our new home.

² *Loonie*. Canadian dollar.

Later On, At the House Party

Older brother and the black sheep
Of our clan
(A study in spiritual insolvency)
Join me in voicing confessions
Into a Norelco reel-to-reel
Behind the family store.

One electric lead
One snare
One bass
Three voices

Improvise while father
Closes cash.

We will listen and smile
Some twenty years from now
When the black sheep and the store
Are both gone.

So Much Glass to So Much Steel³

Behind a clear, glass veil
Facing a snarling, spitting sea
And the dim shadow of Georges Island
I spent nine dollars
From Mother's retirement cheque
On gelato down at the bay
Birra Moretti in a coffee cup
And for a frat boy twist
Greek fries with chopsticks

Outside this farmer's market
A distant cousin with payot and a suit of sky-by-night
Nods his head and fedora in a courtly fashion
To the bag boy and his toil

And the train enters and do-si-dos
With kindred spirit trains
To the strain of whistles blown
For dream time

³ Published in *Haggard and Halloo*, *Poetswest*, *Earthborne Poetry Magazine* and *Poetry Super Highway*

Make Mine a Manhattan

Across the trail that hugs the conifer-spiked edge of land mumbling into November sea,
Bohr makes a statement carved thoughtfully into the whitewashed wall of an outhouse,
That bit about "*everything we call real is made of things that cannot be regarded as real*".

I can't help but look beneath my hole-for-a-throne and wonder
If underneath the black ooze of unmentionable,
There is a ticking little bomb with its nose pointing upwards.

Game Tree in Soft Focus

From my rented window view, with glasses put away for the night:

Myodesopsia in contra dance formation

Repeated over multiple plains with Comet and Lionhead goldfish

Over electric lattice

Lines punctuated by burning yellow Marigolds and Calliandra

Dance progressions disappear beneath pond slime and shadow

Or around upended draughts boards glowing a dull, brown glow

Going For a Song

Down on the dirt road made of your clay and mine
Your soft clay and mine
I am a man who likes quality
Okay, low-cost
Cut-price quality
But still
Quality

Together now we have this
Soldier of misfortune here in the studio
Let's take our next caller
Go ahead, Gabriella
Gotta question for the soldier man

Gabriella asks

*Why send off your warning from pneumatic tubes
Just blast out a tempest on a didgeridoo
Dust off your keening, earnest voice
Cracked in places but ready to go
Down on the dirt road made of your clay and mine
Your soft clay and mine*

Klopstock Quadriga

*The cheese in the harbour is made from the milk of
Tired clouds squeezed by high winds and circumstance,
Says Old Man Klopstock*

He rides his fingers over
Folds of holes in winter pockets
Looking for a door to escape

Down there
Where cold, wounded thigh meets
Death shroud of Charlemagne
The ecclesiastical meets the fantastical

Klopstock slips into his own wound
But before his final departure
Tips his wig to suggest that you

*Dig a hole in the water
And bury your tears at sea
Print a picture of your shadow
To prove you come by darkness
Honestly*

Swimming Pool, Water Park, Snow

Life guard out in an apple orchard
Nice shorts there out in January cold
Lifeguard tower covered in frost
Interrupted step by step
With flip flop indentations
Shouting to displaced Jamaicans
Who did not make it home
Get out of the water
Followed by one, two three short blasts

The Jamaicans eye one another,
Convince one another to humour their fine
Life guard, and feign fatigue

They beg for assistance out of the invisible water
Exemplified
By snow-covered earth

The lifeguard and his distressed swimmers make it to shore
There is mollification
If not exultation

You Can Paint an Elephant, But You're Still Gonna See Wrinkles

1.

Consonance sweepers
Bring out the hypocritical oath
In the many.

I asked the Baum of Gilead, "What's your theosophy?"

He cried as he replied:

"Though it may sound hollow I swear by Apollo
That my dreams are screams in emerald green
Such as the world has never seen.
It makes you wonder where you've been. Still,
No one takes them...seriously."

I am trying to be kind to
The rivers in my mind
Although the rivers aren't that very kind to me.
They catch me in the undertow
And tell that they told me so
And that redemption is the missing key.

2.

Lil misshapen lump of melancholy
Says that on this side of Armageddon,
"Luscious lemon pudding cake
Seems sadly out-of-reach. Might
Settle for a 4 lb bucket of
Marbled corned beef brisket,
A geisha girl and a biscuit."

4.

Cockalorum's beard found a kitchen midden
Of seashells and broken, dirty dishes.
The beard's conclusion:

"Death
sparks death
sparks
Sun,
Sun..."

This is where you get unbuckled and let some other kid ride. Tsum vider zeen....

