

Grays

Life by William Thomas Gray

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day, The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea, The ploughman homeward plods his weary way, And leaves the world to darkness and to me. Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, And all the air a solemn stillness holds, Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight, And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds; Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower, The moping owl does to the moon complain, Of such as wand'ring near her secret bower, Molest her ancient solitary reign. Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade, Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap, Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, The breezy call of incense-breathing morn, The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed, The cock's shrill clarion, and the echoing horn, No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn, Or busy housewife ply her evening care, No children run to lisp their Sire's return, Nor climb his knees the envied kiss to share. Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke, How jocund did they drive their team afield, How blithe and good, how weary was their stouty stroke! Let not ambition mock their useful toil, Their homely joys, and their plain, grandeur, though with a disdainful smile, The short and simple annals of the race, The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, And all that to a vainglorious avarice, all that wealth e'er gave, Awaits alike th' inevitable fate, The paths of glory lead but to the grave. You, ye poor, and you, ye proud, All that are born to this wretched world, Who would be thought to tread the path of pride, Can but your mangled and mangled shroud, Where, o'er the grave, you lie, impute to these the fault, If men's eyes o'er their tomb no trophies see, Where, through the long and tedious year, The peevish and the proud, The wretched and the wretched, Can but their mangled and mangled shroud, imitated bust, Back to its morn' call to breathe, Can his voice be the us fl soothe t ll cold ear of death? Perhaps 'tis in the dust, Some t once preg ith ial fire, H that the r empire might have sway'd, O d' ecsta' ling lyre, owledge to eyes mple pag ch with th ls of time did ne'er unroll, Ch' repres' noble ra' nd froze the al cu of the so ll many a of purest ray serene, The dark som'd cave can bear, any a flo s born ash unsee waste its tness on the desert air. Some v' e Hampden, t with dauntl ast, T tle tyra is fields w So glorious Milton here may rest, Some Crom' ll, guiltless of his lood, T of list'nin t mand, The treats of pain and ruin to despise, To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land, And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes, Their lot forbad: nor circumscrib'd alone, Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd; Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne, Or shut the gates of mercy on mankind, The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide, To quench the blushes of ingenious shame, Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride, With incense, kindled at the muse's flame, Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray; Along the cool sequester'd vale of life, They kept the noiseless tenour of their way. Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect, Some frail memories still erected nigh, With uncoouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd, Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. Their name, their years, spelt by th'unletter'd muse, The place of fame and epitaph supply; And many a holy text around she strews, That teach the rustic moralists to die. For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey, This... pleasing anxious being e'er resing'd, Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day, Nor cast one loniling'ring look behind? On some fond breast the parting soul relies, Some pious drops the closing eye requires; Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries, Even in our ashes live their wonted fires, For thee, who mindful of th'unhonour'd dead, Dost in these

From East to West: bicoastal verse
celebrates National Poetry Month, April 2007

A TEXTBOOK DESCRIPTION

a poem has 14 legs, though often they are pulled off
or fall off due to injury poems are often soft-shelled

creatures, especially until they grow to maturity though
sadly, some never do poems are neither arachnid or

mammal they reproduce quite suddenly without warning,
giving an asexual impression they also seem to either refuse

suckling their young or do so endlessly their eyesight varies
from just a few inches to a thousand feet, also number

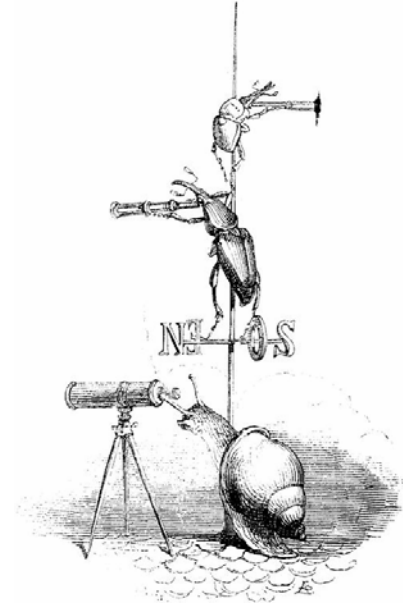
of eyes is genetically variable from one to the next,
some having none they can breathe in out of water,

swim and walk effectively some even attempt to fly
but most seem to consider it suicide if you ever see

a poem in the wild, please don't try to pet it as they
are often rabid without showing any external signs also

it's impossible to tell which ones are poisonous and toxins
vary, thus most don't survive an attack and while a skilled

breeder may tame a few eventually, it's considered best to buy
one with a heritage of timidity, we are professionals after all



~Deidre Elizabeth



PRITHEE TAKE MY LITTLE POEM *for laurel*

prithee take my little poem
and hold her close
when i am
gone and tell her please how much
i loved her how i never
meant
for her to be alone



~James Lineberger



SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS

A redwood leans over the fog-washed valley

Sleeping in a hollow void—
a spotted owl

There is an edge but you cannot see where
drinking ends and breath

And breath
begin

~Terry Lucas

POEMS

As often as not
it floats in,
dehydrated, half-conscious

a Crusoe made raft,
on Karmic seas
of wandering green waves,
prozac-nurtured tides

in search of some
life supporting port.

Occasionally a rocket,
a hot-orange concussion

a shot from an
empty chamber
that fires anyway
if teased
and stroked

to targets that are
never destinations.

Eventually it comes
to words

forms, shapes, carriers
full on the fingertips,
songs from tracked
purple veins,
music of the spheres

tea leaves read
in fingerprints of wonder.

~Craig Kirchner



LANDFILL CURRENCY

So you're the owner of a junkyard
and you've got this loyal guard dog,
who's been around forever.
He's big, but not fierce,
just kind of lies in the corner most days,
camouflaged with familiarity.

And then one day he eats
something rotten that someone left
in a car they dumped. Maybe pesticide
or fish guts, a jar of curdled mayonnaise,
a dead pet chinchilla. You don't know what,
just something—And he goes mad,

like rabies-mad, blood-cell fever bursting
mad, starts spinning broken circles
like a warped weathervane
in too much wind, and he's all
spittle-webbed black gums,
crazed glass eyes, and you're scared
of those eyes, (as you damn well
should be). And he can smell

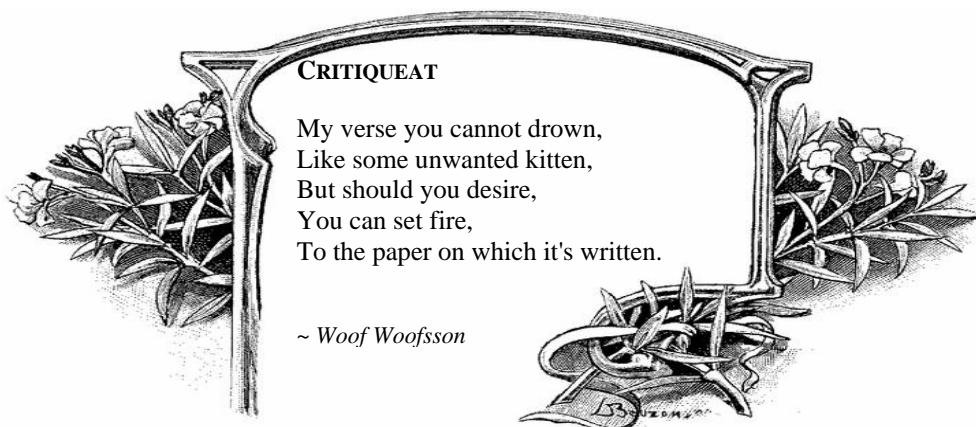
you're scared, so he starts chasing you,
because that's what mad dogs do.
So you run through the trash
and you maze through asbestos sheeting
and mangled carburetors and warm
refrigerators, until finally he traps you
in a corner, and he's growling, back-arched,
worn-out doormat fur bristling,
and he locks you in for some kind
of showdown type thing.



So you start picking up trash pieces,
sharp pieces, that jut out from mounds
like nail clippings, and you grab up
a broken bottle, throw it at his face,
crack open the left eye, but the oozing pain
just makes him angrier. So you swing
a scrap of metal at his side, gash open
a white rib, and you keep throwing
streams of trash that cut through him
in red lines, until the fucker's bled cold.

And you're left with a mound of trash,
and a dead dog underneath it—
A dead as dead dog, and shining trash
glinting in the sunlight, and it's kind of
beautiful. You wouldn't even know
there was a dead dog underneath it
if you hadn't been there for the fight.
And maybe after all there's not even
a dead dog, but maybe just the idea of one.

~Graeme Mullen





**THE C OF COY AND R OF ROMANCE
TEETER AND TOTTER**

Does the allusion

smell sweet

like the lubricant of swollen bees?

Metaphors flow

through my hands;

your exchange like currency,

waiting to be spent on foreign

pleasures, clink

in stretched pockets.

I know we love.

But from the F in friendship

to the W of wicked,

where does the needle lean?

~Yolanda Calderon-Horn

MARMALADE

i got poems like blue bananas

like orange apple cider
and purple meringue pie
better than Montel and Maury

i got poems like Phil Donahue
and Oprah Winfrey
i got poems like humpback whales

and charging rhinos like
Mother's Day and Passover
i got poems like lesbians holding

hands like two boys caught necking
in the bathroom after the bell sounded
and they're about to commit a drive-by

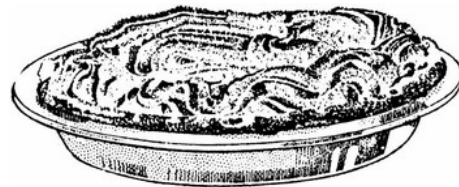
shooting on hollywood and vine pop
pop 22 to the back of the head
surprise, it's your husband, dead

minutes after contracting aids
from \$20 drag queen blow-jobs
blood splattered on the present

he just bought for your 6 yr old
girl, tomorrow's the big day
yeah i got poems like giant fluffy

teddy bears that squeeze into nothing,
with ginned breath and bloodshot eyes

~Deidre Elizabeth



OR WRITE OF NOTHING ELSE

I could spin a poem
of quiet obsession

that fills the silent
corners of my house

during mindless swipes
at gossamer and black

heel prints on paint -
of how you corner my mind

a slight fever fueling
the licorice lilt of words

yours or mine
masquerading as yours

a dark sweetness
a curl of smoke

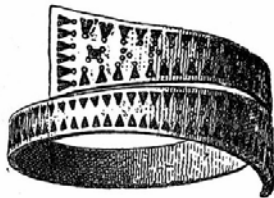
from the joss stick
before the idol

yours are the wind-fingers
that lift the hems of my dresses

you the cool trickle of sweat
behind folded knees

covetous keeper of
my otherness

~PJ Nights



COUPLETS

It's easy enough
to write in couplets

if you break your lines
just right so that it all

looks deliberate even
when you screw up

the sense of things
and pretend as your cat

pretends when he arches
his back and licks him-

self after a fall as if his
every mistake was inte-

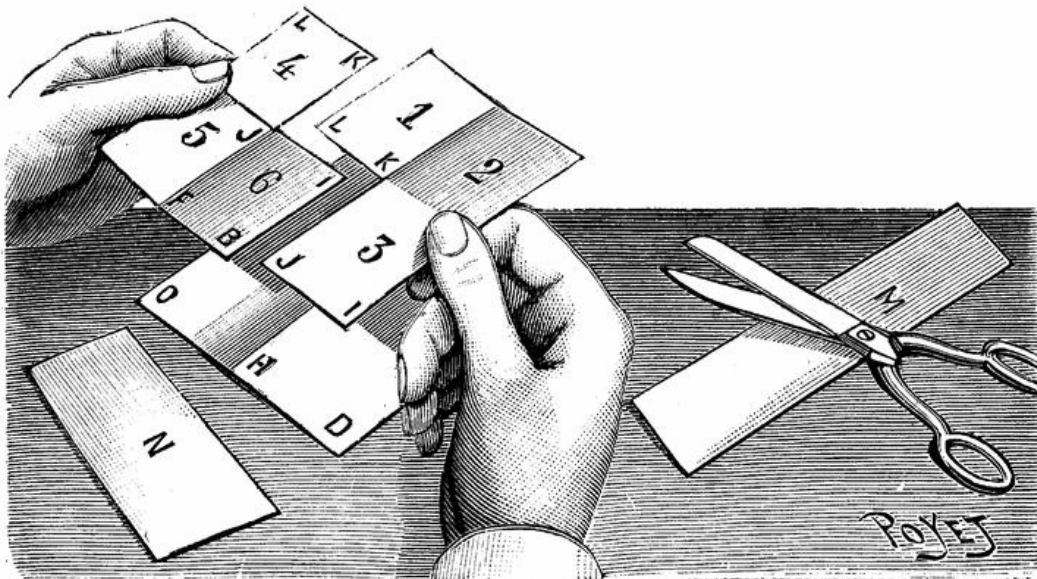
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~James Lineberger

{THE} PERFECT POEM

First, we took away the rhyme, rhythm too
That's what song is for,
Then we took away the emotions and those abstractions around the navel
That's what therapy is for,
Then we took away the narrative, {the} articles, conjunctions, periods,
all the flowery language, the ugly caps and ings
That's what prose is for,
Then we made a list of all the words we can't use
Like heart and moon and June and lips and rain and summer, soul and root
It became very long.
Then we took away all the phrases that people use everyday
Heck, you want that, join a chat room.
Then we fell in love with the line break
Cause how cool is that?
Then we took away the m's and q's
Too damn curly,
Then we took away the k's and t's
Too damn aggressive,
Then we took away all the consonants
They just got in the way.
Then we savored just {the} {v}o{w}{e}{ls},
But that was just too damn sweet,
As everybody held hands and went O O O O O
Then we were left with only 'I'
And you know we can't use that.

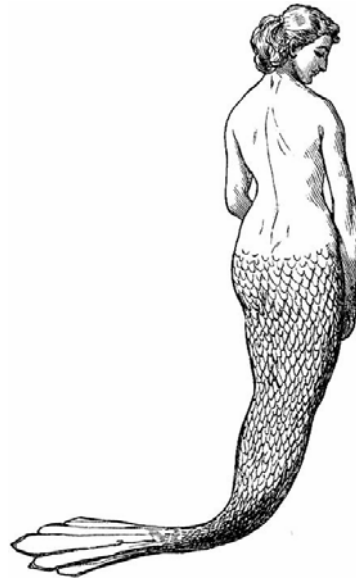
~Ray Sweatman



BUFFALO GRASS

the world is not flat
this is not a poem
and the wind that races
across the rolling hills
of eastern oklahoma
is not the same wind
that used to play its song
on the washboard of injustice
or in the dry gulch of shame
if i could be free with my words
the way that songbirds are free
in april after a tornado has run itself
past town and shook up all the neighbors
i would wrap them up in a thundercloud
i would wrap them up in a rolling rock
i would wrap them up in the red red dirt
that goes this way and that
i would wrap them up in the yellow bark
of a willow tree that i saw growing
on the banks of the north canadian river
if my tongue was more easy
if my mind was more free
if this house was still standing
if my eye was not made so blind
by the way things actually are
in this sad old country sometimes
i would wrap this poem
in oklahoma surplus
i would wrap this poem
in oklahoma mystery
i would wrap this poem
in sunlight and ceiling flowers
and skyscrapers and mermaid memory
and i would roll it on down the road
to a place beyond shawnee
where the world is not flat
and buffalo grass
still grows on a biscuit.

~George Wallace



OH SYLVIA, REALLY

Oh Sylvia, really.
Was it necessary to burn
the blue-long day
into filaments of dust,
shake the pie-pans out,
grease the rugs?
The two gods you call
want and desire won't abate.
We've set the plates and now
there's nothing left that
you can do.
So fold the napkins,
polish the spoons.

Sylvia, we're tired.
We've coifed the do,
ironed our skirt.
In the living room
last week we killed
one hundred bees,
each minute unit of life
going bang bang bang
against the window pane.
We heard them scream.
We closed the flue.

~Michelle Morgan

IRONING BUGS

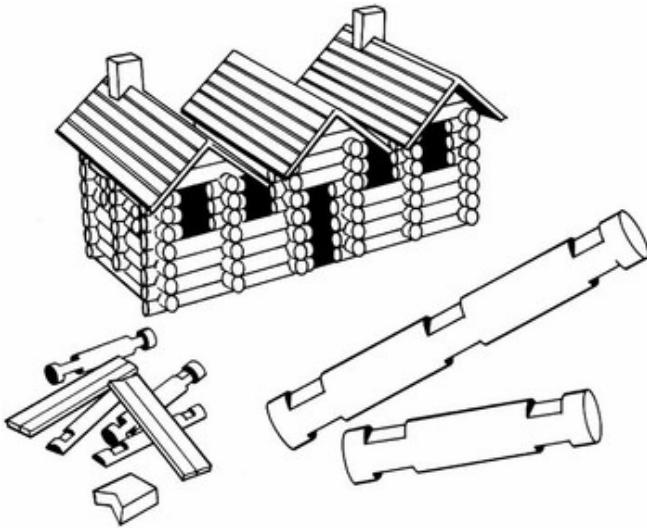
singular reader at amphitheater rugged
unexpectations standing deep in white
spot; up to the neck with lincoln logs and legos
and no directions home

lonely on this
bench with steady stares from some cryptic
person; dropped a page in our lap saying it
was a present
so shows unwrapped;
shiny and mysterious foreign object with the
surname of our common family; eager, curious,
hungry, cautious.

might be tinnitus
gone berserker
several rotations later
lapses into lingual snaps, crackles and pops
milk between the margins pleased to facilitate
absorption of syntactical synchronized
swimming.

one for the money
two for the show - dollars to
doughnuts, lira to euros; build a story and let it
go somebody out there has a trap set
for wildlife, keeping watch with timeless.

~Neil C. Leach, Jr.



THE READING

In the garden,
adopted, accepted,
the sun-flowers smile,
the reading went well.
The punch was spiked
quite nicely. Your friends
shared valium &
ate their word hors d'oeuvres.

We brushed touch,
my thigh, your ass,
no one noticed as they left
the grass perceptively growing
around a dead fallen oak
with one erect green bud
reaching for light
and denouement.

You came. Twice.

~Craig Kirchner



PERFECT POEM 2

what's your favorite poem, the fan
asked the famous writer.

he exclaimed are you serious?

oh yes.

then hand me that?

what, that that that!

what this blank piece of paper?

yes, yes, yes! that's it.

wow, the fan, sighed.

wow wow. shit. wow. shit.

will you sign it?

~Ray Sweatman

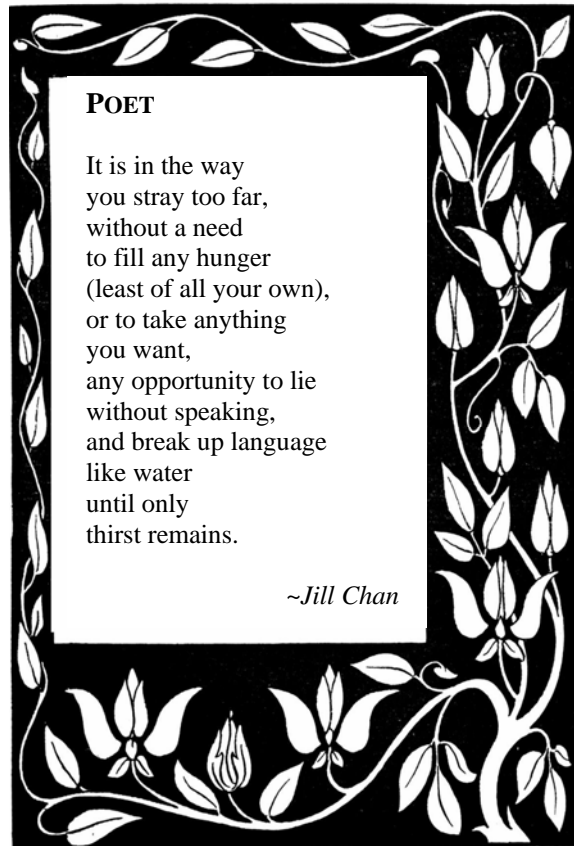


EZRA, YOU'RE A CRAZY MAN

Ezra, you're a crazy man,
but I named my first born after you,
thinking the blood and birth would
suit your mind's hell.
That black electric shock of hair,
your fiercely furrowed brow,
and you were just a poster on the wall,
an idea, a place no longer remembered
but once traveled well.

Ezra, you're a crazy man,
but my first lover and I listened to the old music
and played out the small things we understood:
A body or two suspended on hooks,
the politics of divided countries, war.
Ezra, you're a crazy man.

~Michelle Morgan



POET

It is in the way
you stray too far,
without a need
to fill any hunger
(least of all your own),
or to take anything
you want,
any opportunity to lie
without speaking,
and break up language
like water
until only
thirst remains.

~Jill Chan

ENTROPY

they say my thoughts are losing heat,
that the effort to write
wastes the bulk of my soul.

long before brain cells die
i will have lost my skill
at forming impressions.

every poem
destroys a potential
to write many more—
it comes down
to inevitable failures
of heart engine and ache.

nor can i become again
what i was,
or collect the years of emotion
babbled away or cried—

they cannot be reforged
into sweeter karma,
or distilled into another
naïve seed.

~Chris Crittenden

Originally published in *Lily Lit Review*



ON THE LAST PAGE

there were dark corners in the house
imagination left to green trees and new games

the whiteness and fragility were curtains
stunned by freedom ---- so what!

we are strangers - nevermind voices
on the phone, nevermind

how I cared for you on the riverbank
forget the moons and tigers

forget oysters on your tongue
tomorrow has its eye on you - tomorrow

holds the key to the cupboard
what a joy! what a crashing!

~PJ Nights

