

NEW VERSE

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WALKING AROUND

Sometimes I get tired of being a man—
when I go into the cinemas, the tailors' shops,
heavy and faded like a flannel swan
sailing a sea of beginnings and ashes.

And the smell of the hairdresser's makes me cry with anguish ;
all that I want is to lie down like wool, or like stones,
all that I want is to see no buildings,
no gardens, no elevators and no shop-windows.

Sometimes I get tired of my feet and my nails,
my skin and my shadow.
Sometimes I get tired of being a man.

And yet it would be delicious
to threaten a lawyer with an arum lily,
to do in an abbess with a box on the ears.
It would be fine
to go ranging the streets with a bright green knife
uttering howls until one died of the cold.

For I don't want to continue a root in the darkness,
hesitating, stretched out, shivering in a dream
—till the end below in the earth's dark entrails—
absorbing, thinking, eating every day.

I don't want as far as I'm concerned,
I don't want such humiliations ;
I don't want to go on as a root, or a grave,
or underground alone a cellar with the dead,
stiffened, numbed, rotting with misery.

And that is why Monday flares like petrol
when it sees me advancing with my prison face,
and screams in its passage like a wounded wheel,
leaving at nightfall warm blood in its footsteps.

And I am pushed into corners, into damp houses,
into hospitals where bones fly out of windows,
certain shoe-shops that reek of vinegar
and streets terrible as abysses.

Birds of sulphur-colour, horrible intestines
hang from the doors of the houses that I hate ;
dentures are lying forgotten in a coffee-pot ;
and mirrors,
there are mirrors that must have wept with shame and with terror ;
all around are umbrellas and poisons and navels.

I pass by calmly ; with eyes ; with shoes ; raging ; or forgetting.
I wander through offices and shops with surgical appliances,
and courtyards where the clothes hang from the line,
and where with their slow and dirty tears
shirts, drawers and petticoats are weeping.

PABLO NERUDA

(English version by A. C. and Andrew Boyd.)

Neruda is the poet-laureate of Chili. He is at present in Madrid, as Chilean consul. His most substantial book of verse is "Residencia en la Tierra." 2 vols. Madrid 1935. Neruda does not count himself as a surrealist.)

POEM

If it were not too late !
If I could mould my thought
To the curved form of that woman
With gleaming eyes, raven hair,
Lips drawn too tight like a scar,
Eye sockets shadowed with migraine's
Memory of earlier loves and wars
And her smile learned with being so human.

I imagined her lying naked at night
In warm rain when the breasts are watered
Through darkness by reflecting drops of light,
Which secret light accumulates
In pools on the skin as though on fruit.

Then her light blue dress she unloosed
Till light rose in rose and blue above the trees
Not to expel sad dreams, but to shine
On flesh that overflowed my eyes,
On life locking the senses with closeness,
O dawn of all my certainties !

If it were not too late.
If I could still concentrate
To clench my mind into a husk for love
I'd be too hot and ripe for ghosts,
Winds down side walks with swords of ice,
All betraying lies and lights.

For everything but she leads away
By brambles and along mechanic lines
To the suffering figures under trees
Of heroes who have wrecked happiness
And whose love is accomplished alone
In a spasm on the outer surface of the brain.

STEPHEN SPENDER

POEM

Birds are blown to the light, down come the wires
the strayed ewe freezes to death on the empty fells ;
thinlipped, raking a pick of fire
the unforgiving are deafened by the new year peals ;
true to the clock of frost the indecent spectre
rules the four winds from a signpost, mocking the traveller
running with his hands before him on a darkening moor.

His voice which wrestles in the firs and mist
turns to a new despair like a new fashion
and chills an implacable bed of weeds and iron
among the lenient shadows of the streams,
the ghostly carrion which are wheeling where
the uxurious streams rise like a full-moon frenzy
of drowning lovers infesting a stranger's dreams
as inalienable as moving air.

His knotted hands are fortunes in the mist
his blasphemies are flowers of the mist

the shadows of the dead as frequent as flies
the rheumy dead who will not let you rest
who fill your sleep with their cold inimical eyes.

He walks your nightly precipice of sleep
his anonymous tongue singing an epic of darkness
of riders in the night across the moon,
their angular shadows pitching into the storm,
above the bleak and weary cottages
where the soft candle dies in the hostile gloom
and the children bury their heads in the clothes, in the darkness.

Death as an ancient cross by an inland shore
death the sophisticated district-visitor
death as a rusty broken-ribbed umbrella
death as a bright and poisonous miasma
death as an icicle, death as an *Ecce Homo*
the ring in cottonwool in the writing bureau
death as the roar in a shell, a deck of cards
the sea-troll screaming in the northern fiords
death as the spiked embrace of the metal virgin
death as a holy terror of breathing
the invalid propped on his pillows, livid and panting
the nerveless fingers blotting the unfinished sentence
the old hound's failing sight, the unanswerable questions.

His the bleached image in the abandoned well
the luminous head of destruction over marshes
the remarkable sanctus of the stake and wheel
the plural blight puffed on the glossy rushes ;
he is there in a flash of lightning by the lych-gate
the thunder reverberating down the inky lake.

The sheen of treacherous sand, the salmon lights
the moth in the silk of conscience, the savage future
the judge's smile, the knuckle of rock in the straits
the monsters moving round the silent crater

their hearts against their ribs, shadows on stilts
fire-damp and fever, these are his signature.

He saddens the sky, he stales the tidal water
he is the vanishing-point of the long arcade
he swells in the tragic dark outside your room
a vast unfurnished dream of doubtful fate
an active Roscius of general doom.

KENNETH ALLOTT

August 1936.

ABOUT LIFE

Wall-rue's busy growing high in the granite : mountain men
In Karakoram also are busy with life, and are

no more alone

The close faces at the lighted end of the arch or the beetle
Shoving a clay ball up the shale between the black
of the mountains.

Incidents of health all are mythical to the sick. Now stretched
Over boarded panes of a broken house, a notice
begging recruits,

And lamps murder the moon, the dead king lies
Under a lid, heart-failures vanish from cafés,
mortuaries

All are hidden, the living now don't pray with the dead :
Yet can we live, O, ignoring these actions of death ? Incidents
of health indeed

Are mythical to the sick, but the tufted duck still drops
On the scattered eyes of water in the wide scab
of our houses,

And certainly the smoke is most bitter in the nose
Of the pallid patients, travelling now in the slow trains
to a surgeon.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

THE FACE

The man with the acid face
Under the hammer of glass
Imperils the pure place.
The emotion of the mass,
Inverted, seems to ask
The jack queen king and ace
To do the task.

Wait for a sure thing—
Card into sleeve blown,
Arm out of sling,
Friends posted at phone ;
Then when trumps are declared
And partner's strength known
Overpower the guard.

But keep the face mum
Till the right minute come.
Look left and look right :
Whose hand will you bite
With the safest delight ?
Whose safe will you crack
With a pat on the back ?

* * * *

Replace the slave state face
With a face of bread :
Each shall choose his place,
Be Dead, or Red.
The cards are no way stacked
And he may live by grace
Who wills to act.

A. J. M. SMITH

CHORUS

Moveless, unmoved, caught in the dead face,
The torches make a slow wound on the gray mist,
A ragged circle the color of fox fur.

Sharp beak and still, translucent water kiss :
Wry lips, dank hair, taut throat, and marble eyes
Mix in the pulpy salt of foam, and hiss.

Knifethrust of silver, sunlight on fishscales,
Waves out of the bay's bound, *Îo* ! Now the new wind
Wafts Iphigenia to Aulis, bellies our creaking sails.

A. J. M. SMITH

NOCTAMBULE

Under the flag of this pneumatic moon
Blown up to bursting, whitewashed white
And painted like the moon, the piracies of day
Scuttle the crank hulk of witless night.
The great black innocent Othello of a thing
Is undone by the nice clean pockethandkerchief
Of 6 a.m., and though the moon is only an old
Wetwash snotrag—horsemeat for good *rosbif*—
Perhaps to utilise substitutes is what
The age has to teach us.

Wherefor let the loud
Unmeaning warcry of treacherous daytime
Issue like whispers of love in the moonlight
—Poxy old cheat !

So mewed the lion,
Until mouse roared once and after lashed
His tail : shellshock came on again, his skin
Twitched in the rancid margarine, his eye
Like a lake isle in a florist's window,
Reality at two removes, and mouse and moon
Successful.

A. J. M. SMITH

TEN URAON POEMS

1. Whose is the blue grove where the koels are going ?
It is the blue grove of the rajah which the koels are filling.
2. On a kend pole a dhichua sits
In the paddy fields a parrot swoops and wheels
Like today the dhichua sits
Like yesterday a parrot swoops and wheels
On a kend pole the dhichua sits
In the paddy fields a parrot swoops and wheels.
3. Under the peepal tree the black cows are sitting
A heron sits in the peepal tree
Who was the girl who broke a branch
And sent the sitting heron flying from the tree ?
4. At Bassia's spring
The kewar grove is planted
O rider come and pick the blossom
In the planted grove.
5. The Thakur sits in a tufted chair
Gold are the legs and silk the strings
The Thakur sits in a tufted chair.
6. The deer barks in the four sections of the night
Jungly boy, where is the abandoned calf ?
The infant calf
Jungly boy, where is the abandoned calf ?
7. Before the windows and the doors
Lakho Mahto rides his horse
Winner of renown in the rajah's house
Before the windows and the doors
Lakho Mahto rides his horse.
8. The tiny tamarind
A shining shelter
Hare haire

Come, my gallant, to the spring
And I shall dash your clothes with water
Hare haire

9. Very small the mahua
Many the branches
On all sides falling
Hare haire

10. Image, image, image, Babu
Image of a face with hair
Oh when were they carved the eight parts ?

Of the father its creation
Of the mother was its birth
Out of the future were the eight parts.

EIGHT URAON MARRIAGE POEMS

1. The brown dove coos in the different hills
Dove, my mother is not here, I cannot sleep
Dove, my father is not here, I cannot sleep.
2. The dove, the dove
Calls in the hills, the hills
I have no mother and I cannot sleep
I have no father and I cannot sleep
3. Under the hills
From the clear springs the water flows
Water that the doves sip and the pigeons drink

In pairs they have come down the swans
In pairs they have come down

No. It is not the swans. It is not the doves.
It is the girl the elder brother chose.
4. The fawns frolic in the ploughed fields
No. It is not the sambur. It is not the barking deer.
This is the girl selected by the father
The bride chosen by the mother.

5. Mother, in Kidili jungle
Alone I wander
The cock has crowed
It is the point of morning.
6. Mother my darling, father my darling
The blue flag of the mother
Is stolen by a band
Is lost to a gang
Scour the villages
Scour the villages
O mahtos and bandaris
Thikedars and subedars
The blue flag of the mother
Is stolen by a band
Is lost to a gang.
7. The deer graze on the slopes
The deer graze on the slopes
The deer graze
The fish sport in the pools
The fish sport in the pools
The fish sport
The bride sits in the mother's lap
The bride sits on the father's knees
The bridegroom catches fish
The bride jumps in the corners
Jumps, holding herself with glee, in the corners.
8. The bright and shining flutes
My brother has released the cattle
He fights with the bees, he fences with the bees
You, flute, must go to your mother
You, flute will go to your father in law
In the four quarters of the night will your sleep come ?
Flute, can your sleep come ?

URAON MARRIAGE SERMON

1. I shall speak in riddles. In an ebony bush it looks to the sky. God is above and the elders are below.

Attend, boy and girl.

2. Imagine you are out for hunting, boy, and you kill a deer. You will bring it home and the girl will cook it. When she has cooked it, she will cut it up. But mark. For all others, she must serve the flesh on a tiny tamarind leaf; but for herself, she must take it from a large korkot leaf.

3. Attend again. When the bull is killed for meat, girl, you must insist on having the flesh, on having only flesh—nothing else. The boy will have the bones, nothing more than bones.

4. Then again. When on a hunting expedition, he slips in a ditch, laming his leg and losing the use of his fingers, never say, never say he has become a wreck.

5. And listen, boy. If your girl, going to pick leaves from the koenar tree, falls from a branch and breaks an arm or a leg, you must never say she has become useless. Oh do not tell her she has lost the use of her hands.

6. As the fig tree gives many fruits, so you will have your children.

7. Rise and salute the elders.

(English by W. G. Archer and Edward Kujar.

The Uraons are an Indian people parallel in many ways to the Gonds—see the note to the next poem—though their cultures and image systems are different and the regions in which they live are separate. They are alike in having the same kind of agricultural background, an isolation based on the jungle, a necessity for dancing, a freedom from Hindu and Mussalman convention, and the same type of aboriginal sensibility.)

CHAIT-PARAB SONG

FROM JAGDALPŪR-TAHSIL, BASTAR STATE

Woman : I bow to the three worlds, to the sun and the moon up
above,

And to the goddess of the earth Dantēshwarī.

Man : O my sweet rose, I have sprinkled water on the back
Of our Mother Dantēshwarī, and scattered parched rice
And put lights in front of her.

Woman : Our Mother Dantēshwarī, shining with bangles and
bracelets,

Sat on her throne. This was her order : Let my beloved
Princess, the Bābī Dhānī, swing on her royal chariot.

Man : Ré, ré, in our Jagdalpūr there are hundreds of goddesses.
I will offer only one cock to them, I will offer them flowers
And betel leaves and parched rice.

Woman : O you sweet wreath of flowers of my heart, copper
mines

Abound in old Bastar and Jagdalpūr. If a bee entered
me,

My body would find it cool and pleasant. My darling,
You cannot know how sweet the orange is till you taste it.

Man : I have sat by you hopefully, my beloved. I am looking
round

For a fruit I can eat before it is ripe. Have I found it
in you ?

Give it to me now, while I still hope to find it,

For I shall never get it at my home

Woman : O my dear, you have toddy and cocoanut palms in your
garden.

I have only grass now in mine. Choose another time when
the

Fruit is sweet and ripe.

Man : O my sweetheart, with graceful locks of hair on your
head,

A pitcher in your hand, where is your home ? I will
come

When I have supped. Give me just a little

And I will not try to eat all.

Woman : Sedges and wild rice grow where water stands, grass
Grows on the level ground. If you want to eat,
Then come to my home at Kharakghāt.

Man : The coppersmith makes mattocks of bronze, the carpenter
Makes wooden seats. At this moment of hunger and thirst
I have run to you with a tooth-stick in my loin-cloth.
O darling, favour me now I have come. I might not
Find you at night.

Woman : You have made a dam with your spade, but water
Leaks through and escapes. Where would you be off to
From my arms ? O my dear, I would beat you
If you tried to escape.

Man : I had grown fourteen sweet gourds, and their smell
Was delicious. Sweetheart, there is no sin in a man
Who returns a woman when he's enjoyed her.
But I will not lose sight of you, even if I go
To kill a rat in that house.

Woman : The tree is as tall as a mountain, but the leaves
Are tiny. I do not ask money from you, I do not ask
Piles of cowries. I ask only for love. It is only for love
I tangled myself with you. Without your love,
I shall have lost my name for nothing.

Man : At a price you would give the rose that's as red
As the highway gravel and the basket of green bamboos
To all who want them, but you do not ask a thing
For quenching the thirst of my passion. Certainly a
woman
Finds joy in a man, and they tumble together during the
night.

Woman : O my dear, you have toddy and cocoanut palms in your
garden.
I have only nuts in mine, which are ripe and falling fast,
Since no parrot comes to enjoy them. And you, only
wealth

Of my heart, will not enjoy them,
Thinking you must buy them with money.

Man : Sweet and scented flower wreath of my heart, does not
The breath of the wind shake the leaves and the rivers ?
When he drinks, the parrot with the red head
Dives again and again !

Woman : We store the paddy in the wicker bin, the husker
Is kept in the corner. We cannot eat it all by ourselves,
You come as well, and take all that you need.

[This song is translated from a Halbi original, sung by Murias and Bhatras in villages around Jagdalpūr, the capital of the large and little-known Bastar State, in the extreme south-east of the Central Provinces. Murias and Bhatras are of Gond affinities. Most Murias still speak a Gondi dialect, but in the plains around Jagdalpūr, where they are most in contact with hinduizing influences, especially that of the palace, Halbi, a mixture of Hindi, Marathi, Uriya and Gondi, is steadily replacing Gondi, and Hindu ideas are influencing the primitive tribal religions. This song is one sung by dancing parties of youths and girls at the spring festival in the month of Chait, which precedes the sowing of the rice. It is erotic, like nearly all their songs. Dantēshwarī (Stanza 1) is tutelary goddess of Bastar. Bābī Dhānī (Stanza 3) was the affectionate name by which the people of Bastar called the late Maharani Prafulla Kumari Devi, of Bastar. At the Chaitrai spring festival or at the Dasehra festival in October the Ruler of Bastar sits in a swing on a processional rath or chariot, which is dragged around a square in front of the palace at Jagdalpūr by hundreds of Muria and Maria Gonds.

W. V. GRIGSON

“HONEST DOUBT”

Owing to illness, the authoritative answers which were promised to the questions about Surrealism, published in the last number of NEW VERSE under the heading of “Honest Doubt,” must be postponed to a later issue.

Meanwhile we would draw readers to examine the *International Surrealist Bulletin* No. 4 (Zwemmer, 1 shilling) issued by the Surrealist Group in England. Most of it is plain and simple exposition, though so much goosefoot as there is among the signatories does not make one very sure about the militant honesty and good sense of the Group promoters. Surrealists at least should be able to recognise the weeds of literary adventure.

Note also that Mr. H. R. has at length retired from the pedantic pill-box of SUPER-REALISM.

BUY THIS BOOK

The Assassins. By Frederic Prokosch. (Chatto and Windus. 5s.)

Every active maker or sharer of an attitude is now obsessed with the quick arrival of the Doomsday of human culture. Things are all threatened, Mr. Auden and the Archbishop of Canterbury would agree, but the Established Archbishop reads Berdyaev, deplores Communism, dreads a shrinking of Christendom, and puts his hope in God, while Mr. Auden reads Lenin, deplores Fascism, dreads attacks on Communism, and puts his hope in Marx, Freud and, so to speak, Matthias Alexander. Nearly every writer, every thinker, every poet of worth stands (whether Mr. Wyndham Lewis and Mr. Yeats and Mr. E. like it or not) nearer to Mr. Auden than to the Archbishop in this matter; but in between Mr. Auden and the half-way line there certainly are such poets as Mr. MacNeice and Mr. Prokosch. Either through a weakness, a caution or a wisdom, they are readier to observe than to observe and dispense. All Mr. Prokosch's best poems are statements or myths of decay. He observes "*the white Death of stagnant centuries*," the people who live in death such as

*the sisters who alone
Shed tears and on the entry of the Countess
Like owls rise and are gone.*

Stating that he sees "*the forgotten honour of my human Race hinted at once more*," he tells nothing about how we should act, but perhaps much about how we should feel, for the second mark of Mr. Prokosch's poems is a remarkable tenderness—" *I can see veins in the dark flesh of the world*"—" *the English Deep in their moist nocturnal island*"—young lovers lying "*in inexperienced postures*," a tenderness over human relationships and over the length of human history which is now ending.

So, also, Mr. Prokosch's way of writing is rather sensuous and feminine. He is not tough like Mr. Auden, or sharp like Mr. MacNeice, and though he writes with several changes of pattern, he is not very dexterous in varying form or sound. One Prokosch poem is usually more effective than 2 or 3 read consecutively in a book, and though his poems mostly come from one attitude, what

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Editor:
LAURA RIDING

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7/6

Times Literary Supplement: "This is a strange, but interesting, if
 rather cynical, book. Its chief value is in the picture of life half a
 century ago in a small German community. There are no complaints
 or excuses and there is no moralizing. It is this perhaps that gives the
 book its unusual character. It is frank and honest, and there runs
 through it a genuine appreciation for beautiful things."

10 Orange Street, London, W.C.2

they say is really different enough to demand more variation. The almost single tone and feminine speed with which they run make them more inactive, more smooth, more *slick* than they should be. This enervate flow of light syllables may come out of Mr. Prokosch's nature, but nature can be criticised by its owner. And Mr. Prokosch's writing has these virtues: he never goes too far from common into used-up speech (though poeticisms such as "*vigilant and proud*" "*our passionate and forever Unregenerate speech*" are boring and can be left for Paul Engle and the other posturing rhetoricians of the U.S.), he does not pick up, for no good reason, too much from others (though there are dying falls from Mr. Macleish and balancing adjectives—"the stare at the extended arms on the tender bed"—and anthropological and mythical mannerisms from Mr. Auden), he is not often syntactically obscure. So much of these poems, in sum, is Mr. Prokosch's own property that it will be disappointing if his talent does not take him much higher than most of the English or American chickweeds.

NELSON

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So much the rather Thou Celestial light
Shine inward and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate: there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight."

—
CONSTANCE ROWE

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THE OLD JANE

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