

The elegant office girl
 is power-rigged.
 She carries her nylon hard-pointed
 breast uplift
 like parachutes
 half-pulled.
 At night collapse occurs
 among new flowered rugs
 replacing last year's plain,
 muskrat stole,
 parakeets
 and deep-freeze pie.

When brown folk lived a distance
 from my cottages my hand full of lilies
 went out to them
 from potted progressive principles.
 Now no one of my own hue will rent.
 I'll lose my horticultural bent.
 I'll lose more—how dark
 if to fight to keep my livelihood
 is to bleach brotherhood.

For Paul and Other Poems

F O R P A U L

Paul
 now six years old:
 this book of birds I loved
 I give to you.
 I thought now maybe Paul
 growing taller than cattails
 around Duck Pond
 between the river and the Sound
 will keep this book intact,
 fly back to it each summer
 maybe Paul

What bird would light
 in a moving tree
 the tree I carry
 for privacy?
 Down in the grass
 the question's inept;
 sora's eyes . . .
 stillness steps.

Nearly landless and on the way to water
 I push thru marsh.
 I lost a view . . . I saw
 (and proceed in depth in place of lateral range)
 the child with bigger, stuller eyes than sora's.
 Homer's wandering thru hell.
 And we can't afford to hire him.
 He loses ground building cabins—
 outdoor knickknacks—that block a view.
 He himself and his wife demand more elephants
 on glass shelves than we have books.
 In summer silence moves.
 Fall pheasants' cry:
 rifle shells-in-tin-box-rattle,
 over us wax-leaf poplars shine and shudder
 as my mother,
 continue after the mind is blown.

Understand me, dead is nothing
 whereas here we want each other,
 silence, time to be alone
 and Paul's growing up—
 baseball, jabber, running off to neighbors
 and back into the Iliad—"do you really believe
 there were gods, all that hooley?"
 And his violin—improvising

made a Vivaldi sequence his,
 better than I could have done with poetry
 at twice his age . . .
 so writes your father, L. before P.
 A start in life for Paul.
 The efforts of a life
 hold together as Einstein's
 and lead to expectations of form.
 To know, to love . . . if we knew nothing,
 Baruch the blessed said, would we exist?
 For Paul then at six and a half
 a half scholarship—
 turn the radio dead—
 tho your teacher's gone back to Italy
 stumped by American capital.
 In my mind, the child said,
 are rondeau-gavottes 1 to 11,
 here is number 12.

How bright you'll find young people,
 Diddle,
 and how unkind.
 When a boy appears with a book
 they cry "Who's the young Einsteind?"
 Einstein, you know, said space

that had to be sown
 in the dark of the moon
 Isn't it funny
 people run their acres without a hat
 figuring rain in the next moon change
 while you on a stool
 at numbers in a heavenly scale
 know the moon changes
 night and noon

Some have chimes
 three long things
 as you come in.
 They smile
 and give you lettuce
 because you've brought
 your violin.

O Tannenbaum
 the children sing
 round and round
 one child sings out:
 atomic bomb

is what it's made up of.
 And as to the human race
 "Why do you deeply oppose its passing?"
 you'll find men asking
 the man with the nebular hair
 and the fiddle.

If he is of constant depth
 if he has the feeling—
 numbers plus their good
 by the time he's twelve
 I want that chord, he cries,
 and the sun and moon and stars
 so what . . .
 boy, are you Greek
 without the Wisecrack god

The young ones go away to school
 come home to moon
 like Frederick the Great
 what was it he ate

Not all
 is check-writing
 but as the queen, Elizabeth,
 beside the barge that night
 "Longing
 to listen . . .
 Muzik is a nobl art"

In the great snowfall before the bomb
 colored yule tree lights
 windows, the only glow for contemplation
 along this road

I worked the print shop
 right down among em
 the folk from whom all poetry flows
 and dreadfully much else.

I was Blondie
 I carried my bundles of hog feeder price lists
 down by Larry the Lug,
 I'd never get anywhere
 because I'd never had suction,
 pull, you know, favor, drag,
 well-oiled protection.

I heard their rehashed radio barbs—
 more barbarous among hirelings
 as higher-ups grow more corrupt.
 But what vitality! The women hold jobs—
 clean house, cook, raise children, bowl
 and go to church.

What would they say if they knew
 I sit for two months on six lines
 of poetry?

Not all that's heard is music. We leave
 an air that for awhile was good, white cottage,
 spruce . . . What if the sky is gone and they hold
 the hill armed with tin cans—they're not bad kids—
 you have the world. Remember the little
 lovely notes "the little O, the earth."

This thing is old and singing's new—you
 just more full. Come, we'll sit without birds
 between city bricks. See! The sun hits.

Tell me a story about the war.
 All right, six lines, no child should hear more.
 The marshal of France made quite a clatter:
 Dear people, I know you're too hungry to flatter
 but eat your beef-ounce from a doll's platter,
 you'll think it's a roast wrapped in a batter.
 Along came the bishop his robe a tatter:
 Sleep and it won't matter.

Laval, Pomeret, Pétain
 all three came to an end.
 Bourdet, Bonnet, Deladier
 so did they.
 They tried each other
 they sold out their brother
 the people of France.
 Let's practice your dance.

Thure Kumlien

Bigwigs wrote from Boston: Thure,
 we must know about the sandhill crane,
 is it ever white with you
 and how many eggs can you obtain?

For Thure the solitary tattler
 opened a door
 to learned birds with their latest books
 who walked New England's shore.

One day by the old turnpike still crossing
 the marsh, down in the ditch
 he found a new aster—to it he gave
 his name as tho he were rich.

Shut up in woods
 he made knives and forks
 fumbled English gently:

Now is March gone
 and I have much undone

It would be good
 to hear the birds
 along this shore intently
 without song of gun

William Morris

I

—how we're carpet-making
by the river
a long dream to unroll
and somehow time to pole
a boat

I designed a carpet today—
dogtooth violets
and spoke to a full hall
now that the gall
of our society's

corruption stains throughout
Dear Janey I am tossed
by many things
If the change would bring
better art

but if it would not?
O to be home to sail the flood
I'm possessed
and do possess
Employer
of labor, true—
to get done
the work of the hand . . .
I'd be a rich man
had I yielded

on a few points of principle

Item sabots

blouse—

I work in the dye-house
myself

Good sport dyeing
tapestry wool

I like the indigo vats

I'm drawing patterns so fast

Last night

in sleep I drew a sausage—
somehow I had to eat it first

Colorful shores—mouse ear . . .

horse-mint . . . The Strawberry Thief
our new chintz

II

Yeats saw the betterment of the workers
by religion—slow in any case

as the drying of the moon

He was not understood—

I rang the bell

for him to sit down

Yeats left the lecture circuit

yet he could say: no one

so well loved

as Morris

D A R W I N

I

His holy slowly mulled over
 matter
 not all "delirium
 of delight"
 as were the forests
 of Brazil
 "Species are not
 (it is like confessing
 a murder)
 immutable"

He was often becalmed
 in this Port Desire by illness
 or rested from species
 at billiard table

As to Man
 "I believe Man . . .
 in the same predicament
 with other animals"

II

Cordilleras to climb—Andean
 peaks "tossed about
 like the crust
 of a broken pie"

III

Entered new waters
 Studied Icelandic
 At home last minute signs
 to post:
Vétab
grows here — Please do not mow
 We saw it—Iceland—the end
 of the world rising out of the sea—
 cliffs, caves like 13th century
 illuminations
 of hell-mouths
 Rain squalls through moonlight
 Cold wet
 is so damned wet
 Iceland's
 black sand
 Stone buntings'
 fly-up-dispersion
 Sea-pink and campion a Persian
 carpet

Icy wind
 Higher, harder
 Chileans advised eat onions
 for shortness of breath
 Heavy on him:
 Andes miners carried up
 great loads—not allowed
 to stop for breath
 Fossil bones near Santa Fé
 Spider-bite-scauld
 Fever
 Tended by an old woman
 “Dear Susan . . .
 I am ravenous
 for the sound
 of the pianoforte”
 III
 FitzRoy blinked—
 sea-shells on mountain tops!
 The laws of change
 rode the seas
 without the good captain
 who could not concede
 land could rise from the sea
 until—before his eyes

earthquake—
 Talcahuana Bay drained out—
 all-water wall
 up from the ocean
 —six seconds—
 demolished the town
 The will of God?
 Let us pray
 And now the Galápagos Islands—
 hideous black lava
 The shore so hot
 it burned their feet
 through their boots
 Reptile life
 Melville here later
 said the chief sound was a hiss
 A thousand turtle monsters
 drive together to the water
 Blood-bright crabs hunt ticks
 on lizards’ backs
 Flightless cormorants
 Cold-sea creatures—
 penguins, seals
 here in tropical waters
 Hell for FitzRoy
 but for Darwin Paradise Puzzle
 with the jig-saw gists
 beginning to fit

IV

Years . . . balancing
probabilities

I am ill, he said
and books are slow work

Studied pigeons
barnacles, earthworms
Extracted seeds
from bird dung

Brought home *Drosera*—
saw insects trapped
by its tentacles—the fact
that a plant should secrete

an acid acutely akin
to the digestive fluid
of an animal! Years
till he published

He wrote Lyell: Don't forget
to send me the carcass
of your half-bred African cat
should it die

V

I remember, he said
those tropical nights at sea—
we sat and talked
on the booms

Tierra del Fuego's

shining glaciers translucent
blue clear down
(almost) to the indigo sea

(By the way Carlyle

thought it most ridiculous
that anyone should care
whether a glacier

moved a little quicker
or a little slower
or moved at all)

Darwin

sailed out
of Good Success Bay
to carcass-
conclusions—

the universe

not built by brute force
but designed by laws

The details left
to the working of chance
“Let each man hope
and believe
what he can”