A Collection of Poetry.
by

STEPHEN FOSTER CUMMINGS
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The purpose to which I have given my energies in this gathering of poems, and within the limitation of an integral framework, has been to pursue the possibilities of the lyric freed from the conventional necessities of rhyme and reason. To this end the poems range from the pure melody of "Narcissus the Divine at Bedlam" to the Black Mountain style of "Elegy for Arthur Goodman" to the visual poem "Morning" to the surreal "City of Glass" to the seven poems in what I can only call a "prose idiom" to the personal statement of "To Tell a Lie."
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Rivers, the braided voice of
footless in the summer green:
is this a fear of dust that glisters,
obsidian in the spawning pool?

In the alley he drags his brittle hand
across the green and yellow shadows
of her belly, and tongues her rigid eye.

Outside the utterly department store he begs,
his song
is gold, silver, bronze;
an iron cunt, the cripple’s mind
exudes
the substance of the river’s froth.

Let us build orchards upon rock.

But this, the gargoyle,
the artifact with a leer...
Of what use to the speechless
when rivers crack their skulls
with rimless sand and slowly
revolves the bleeding rock
where all men disappear?
And then there was the acidophilic poet-oyster who with a singular stretch of the imagination opened his head one day and died of fumbling in the brain.
DISCOVERY

Mountains arise in the silence
of summer, season of waiting;
dry lightening beyond the hills,
a promise of thunder.

Clouds have patched the land with shadows.

In the caverns of childhood
icy waters glitter
& abruptly gush out to cool
the summer, season of waiting;

in tunnels of secret laughter
two girls
touch together their bodies.
in her room, moon wax
down beyond
the languid
flame white
candled;
spring buds & green, fearful of the fragile
distances
she cannot lay aside in understanding:
as the rain-sprung leaf
cannot yet
float in wind
being tied.
ELEGY FOR ARTHUR GOODMAN/THE SUICIDE

(after Olson

the facts
noted in the paper,
unresolved / unpersonal
the distances focussed
in the report

feb 11 when
the phone rang & I saw
her answer it. He was dead,
the boy no one talked to, the toy
dopey dwarf of the seven, tho he was a Jew
and unlucky, as so many were
that rotted openly. But this one
secreted the fear in duck tales, stories
that ornamented the hearer, and
could change in mid-stream
entertainment to an obsession with the absense of God.

(she had listened
out of step
how God was dead when the mountains
no longer spoke) and today, confirmed
they are naked, tinged with pink,
clouds the ornament & not cover
the details across the bay
they encircle the peaks as
the foreskin dried on the nail
to commemorate an
equally absent
ritual
dead
the mountains
all laid
sideways
from where he lies
the grief
in her eyes.
9:00 p.m.; beginning to mist
distinctly, the night demands
of the city
the invisible structure
indivisible from its resonance...

der on this low bank
the tide
urgent on the rocks
we are
the road that led
blind in the forest
of rain and mosses
potholes or ditches
not even luv-stars Xed
anonymous
the fence became
the door became
the glow of the city:
what struck us
was the silhouette,
distinct, it zoned the sky,
belonged to the sky:
the earth disappeared
in the mudpuddles
the glow of the city
referred to the sea:
we are
what beach was;
the tide
urgent on the rocks.
VISITATION

of the three
something you could see
was part of the secret
as touch
the voicing heart
nudges it part way
into the vastness
between them
slowly
taking clay
it formed to mind
the bubble
of bloody clay
that was a god

that was a god
of bloody clay
the bubble
it formed to mind
taking clay
slowly
between them
into the vastness
nudges it part way
the voicing heart
as touch
was part of the secret
something you could see
of the three
THE MEETING

She lay quietly
just beneath the surface
in the shallows, in weeds.

Pale crabs scurry
over the crust of barnacles.

Her hair, long and black,
sirled with weeds to the lee
in the wash of the sea.

At midnight
she arose and walked:
a mantled figure
through mercurial fog.

Under the naked tree
she met him: the cold fire,
the white flames.

There the soft blur
of the moon-eye was pierced.

Her eyes blackened with love;
her body tuned to a wire,
dancing the white dance in fire.
At dawn
she stiffened and fell,
and was carried
again to the shallows.

The cold fire flared out
into morning over the marsh,
searing the vacant fog.

White crabs tear
white flesh of fish.
NARCISSUS THE DIVINE IN BEDLAM

You, Love,
have iced as winter
your wild willowing waters,
the deep flowering well-spring
which is your darker heart
(I have seen the blossom
of your power over submerged rock
at high tide).
You have sealed yourself with splinters
gathered from those memories
bearing the shattered goblet
where you were the nubile vortex
strayed onto a stranger sea.

I
And all these things were wonderful and great;
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all.

On the shores are sandy bodies,
rotting where there is no tide:
tales of ships held to dry rot
by the Sargasso,
on the unopenable vulva,
in the calm the sun-blood flowed on.

Silence of noon
in the mind of the mannequin Mariner
(his manhood like bunched grass in his ears)
engenders the tale he never heard:
"A dream public, dream orgies, dream speeches.
But when the dream word
is written down, it becomes
the true word."

I saw him whistled down alleys,
a thistle in a strong breath of wind,
a ghost of exits.

I heard his giggle in the Palace
as we gathered craving
about a stone simile of Sophia,
which brilliance cast us as
shadows we were
onto the veil of our desire:
and we saw the slavering grin beyond
that was Prospero
who ravished his island
and peopled it with dreams.
I saw his face an instant
in the flare of a match
disappear in the smoke
that curled in the room.
The crab-rats, their eyes
appealing from the pinball machines,
emerged from the navel jewel
of Queen Exotica
and bore her beauty into sewers:
the blood gobbet I spit
and flushed back to her
that morning I floated from
the Holy City of Atlantis.

Lost city of reality:
even the newsboys are hobbled
by a Tiresian poverty.

Love, I have stroked desire
and seen its stuttering confusion.
Oh Goddess of Nothing
save searching, know
the contagion of treacherous dreams;
know also the terrible
friendships of divination.
II

Here in the landscape,
half memory,
a summer-swollen air breathes
through quivering lips of green
staked heads of trees, as so many soft skulls
jawless, socket-silent,
staked in a circle, gossipping death.
Beside the highway that leads forever
in two directions,
I hear these friends through
the diminishing roar
of absurd pistons.
The path homeward begins
in this loneliness.

This inland house I call my own.
Peeled as I am, I claim
its shattered patterns
and final melody:

Beyond the windows
of this skull
a sea of gnarled familiar faces
and mutterings the wind brings forth.
THIS POEM, A SHAPE OF SILENCE

I
A gaunt guitar in moonlight
under the skeletal nettles of pines;
Narcissus's skull stares up
through black waters. An owl
flies up to its silhouette. Pyramids
of pine unfold their secrets
to the presence of Satan. The night
is no less a shadow, a frightened thing
before the million strings
His right hand brushes. He looks
to the owl, its prey becomes
blue satin flame and green;
the owl is like the whitened roots
of driftwood.

II
He moves from
the forest of changes in solitude.
The air is vibrant under His feet;
the tiny birds are madness.
In His cupped hands the door
of the cathedral opens, and
from His fingertips spume
crimson flames that heal the faceless
bodies betrayed by flesh: gutters
churn with the sacrament. A priest
is shredded, becomes
blue satin flame and green
in the whitened roots
of the dead Earth.

III
From His hands falls stillness;
in the streets
solitude becomes
His presence rising
from many lonely faces.

No one is absent.
Mirrors cease to converse.

The flesh is nothing
attuned,
husband and wife
do not return from the silent bed;

all things emerge
in the terror of changes.
DAWN

the early morning
fog twirls
   on the lake,
the lake
   a madrigal symmetry
of blue pine & black
   wind
the carrion scent
   of a breath
out of dry lips
the taut eye
   of the night-
tree staked like a trophy
of a battle fought with gravel
against darkness and leaves.

   but the wind
turned, dived
   as talons might
   into the black
lake where no fish were;
searing the mist
   the sun
burned mist & myth,
delivering shadows
from foam
of the thrashing day.
nonsense, says

napalm and jelly
gasoline that burn
until the body is
a bubbling "mother
substitutes" for
the homes with family
boy run-
crises U Thant
ing, his pole thought "no military
whistling as solution" for central
he's singing, the control console...
underbrush a mere monitoring cardiac
laughter, high & patient not for
clear in the overeating, but
air whirling for a glandular
frost flowers defect making
over indecent telephone messages
calls to 600 legal and lying
men who walked beside the dusty
off their jobs road the real
said to cause forest leads
from
cannibalism among
some Indians.
CITY OF GLASS

The day is a forest of glassy tendrils, sawtoothed and coiled as untouchable buds. In the city, one blooms in the mouth of a dead drunk, gutter-dank and wretchedly releasing the gigantic slick beetle that ravaged his animal parts. It merely moves into a line of traffic that stops here, there, until it finally trickles into the busy parking cave, wearily falling into the business of sleep.

What shrieks in the streets is a god devoured by his garden.

The flowers unfold, one by one. The man with no legs, hurtling down the ramp on his dolly, banging his tin cup and singing to the closed windows, scuttles across the asphalt to his station.

The city awake
is a beetle dreaming of death,
his pinchers an ozone arc
encircling the glassy flowers of mid-day.
Each in the street a busy cripple,
touching and musing in epeleptic sanctum,
the faces flow blood-gold: the colors
of pleasure and wisdom
    as in the park
young lovers talk and hunch in
worn bushes
    teas are invited and
attended
the whole tawdry
spectacle expands in the
long-tongued afternoon, as
each finds happiness,
    environments
to his liking,
    understandings,
as one by one the flowers
lengthen in the senses.

    Until
in a circle they hang as wind chimes
behind the closing doors of night,
and in each memory
sways the shrunken day's head clanger
goggling out a peephole
at the busy insect lights.
THE EMPTY CHAIR

What of speech remains in silence
but the spoken? In my father's closet
a hundred nameless in a stack of photographs;
I've heard him rage alone
when night is unbending silence
beyond the badly painted walls.
Over the several voices and distance
of midnight, his own;
what of sound remained was not his own
as the room disappeared, the walls fell
apart from the scene, dark forests split;
he floated to the edge of mind incumbent,
of a voice rising from the forgotten
thickly swarming on a summer night
rising in sea-stench to the bone-smashed sea
where the speaking parts of wind
stir the depths and bring riders to rest
among hot reeds. Was it not you, my father,
and myself that I saw? The frail skeleton and texture
unshared, ungiven; seated in the tilted chair,
watchful from the withered grasses.

Perhaps it was myself alone
I saw there, the blood-freed history
of a man come to rest upon his throne
and speechless speaking to the swans
I fed there, or the lily's grace and symmetry.

It was not reverie that entered,
sheathing speech and naming,
or the howling of a sorrow or
dismembered memory, the agony machine,
but love that lifted and raged with unseen elements:
it was myself seen riding
the brief wave seaward in a chair.
What the Old School Lacks, or
The Deserted Bus Station.

We were like brothers, you and I:
among the riches of your tongue
we found anemone & crystal
& the blood-and-ruby crescent horn
of nether gods.

But I am grown old:
see how this hands shakes
about the house & fondles broken things.
See here! Is it my mirror blotched or
myself...or just my eyes? What
terror lives in style, or waits there!
Or is it you that reads me
that is the something dead?

no matter
I was desirous of young blood,
queer young flesh & sturdy bone,
a supple symmetry & flagrant eyes
that could bear this ancient rhetoric
of moon and stars and wonderous things:
I am I, and wear a noble ring.

what timbre
split my lungs and fathered nothing
but in your heart a sigh...thus
have I labored & found you nothing lacked
but tedious argument and dissent.

I am grown old

and sit with lowered pants & fevered hand in stall:
I have come back to out-wait you all!
I shall out-wait you all! And then what?

On either side the slightly bald still patter
about the days when everybody pissed-up right.
There's no one buses anymore, but flies
or trips or lies down gentle in that good night.
ON THE PRESENCE OF SATAN

what falls to the beaks
in the nest are the dead parts,
where all things fall together
gutted, bloody and swallowed whole.

Satan has flown with the eagle
carrying into night
the congestions of day.

As the brood nestled in filthy sticks
with flash in the arc,
futures are nursed with
the fertile pus of

Satan, the mind
carnivorous, powerful in clear skies.
It is from the living one cannot undo the dead, as this pale child with living hair and eyes that house a consummate hallucination is stealthy among the dreamless hillside sheep. We have seen him squatting by the roadside, gaunt and tearing meat; we accuse ourselves of tenderness. He eats in terrific silence, devouring all who pass him by.

He has been seen wandering in rich parentage, dwarfing a mansion with intrigue, or filthy in a slum street walking murder by the window.

But see this woman stop in mid-career and breed with him in shadows of her mind, jerking alone in a mancluttered house no man has lived in. Or the Buddhist-fire circling the horizon. Or the scattered smile of the suicide with a shotgun.

It is who whirl in the street, the realist checking his heart against the clock, the lyric choking in a cheap cafe, the housewife regularly bleeding he rearranges. It is who chews with him the staggered rat that drooled and snuffled on the floor, can call him child and catch him heedless on the hill to dance the bleating baccanal; it is who dances further, faster, fantastically that escape his crowded eyes.
"having soft asymmetric abdomens and occupying the empty shells of gastropods;" too, the cleaved beast that crawled into & again out of a perfect memory. Its combings of coming & going scoured off the sea edge, foam fingers as soft & regular as a cosmetic brush: beach rubble, the chaos implicit in order.

I have delighted in holding to ear the rich shell, in imagining a walk down the skin pink spiral toward beyond its beginning: an infinitely permissive portal onto ecstasy, a cornucopia of Source.

listen: the curlew-cried, bird-crossed storm above beach is resonance of circumstance, and circumstance only: labyrinth of false beginnings, false exits. Prophets read of like wings encountered in dreams, whose cries flame out of the apparent perfectly formed emptinesses: lost love, lost image, unkindred Source.

seasons give it magnitude; the sea, a shell: I am day I heard its skitterings deep in the shell that cups my brain.
senses scatter, here on the dirt floor. I am obsessed by my foot, that, taking root, begins to gesture (there is no movement of air), a deaf-and-dumb flower. such fat petals! I say to myself.

it is autumn; all the leaves are against my pink foot. especially, I discover it in piles of burning leaves, testing with the big toe that thinks itself a nose, the down-under smouldering of the leaves.

I find myself hidden in a park. children are bundled homewards; on their cheeks the first fog has settled and ripened: some scream (delight) out of an energy that may split the sky. it may snow today. I find myself middle-aged, foot-swollen: the toes wave by themselves, a gesture of mute laughter, even obscene, to the stripped trees.

from corners of the field cripples struggle toward the game-boards. they delay, talking quietly among themselves, to gather around me:

brethren, I have dangerous thoughts. today trees rose to the sky as their leaves fell. the smell of their flesh settles in the city. oh my beloved, let me speak of the long-nailed frosts. we
are all poverty-stricken: happiness has stalked me and won. oh lovers, lepers of wind, mourn: i bring you white
thoughts from the grave.

the cripples remained at the place, talking quietly: the murmuring vase from which swelled winter. snow began
to fall. trees fell from the sky.
THREE WAYS OF KNOWING A TREE

tree

the boughs without breeze, gnarled in night that
envelopes its entrails, a husk; numbs resin to
fall downward into the earth opening to fill its roots:
the water mouths

    indwelling, the heart, but its
branchings

    sightless its patterns as the flat fan gingko
leaf pressed so dead in the book I traced two lovers
on it...saw it crumble & flake when I lifted it, the
design become inarticulate, scattered on the floor.

tree

riven by the dim-breasted moon:
I saw it filled with scavenging night
fasten its twigs to the light;
its limbs hug the softness
till time snapped it free.

tree

I fell your scrape & surge that instant the sun
brands your green white-hot in my eye.
before the fire, her face only half visible, seated on the floor and leaning against his thigh... in the flicker, only the caress she surrenders is important; the fir branch crackling in flame.

her face, recovering shadows milder than the blackening dowels scorched of tassle nettles, that twist in the heat waves, and then sunder among the flames, is dream-set, knowing he understands the distance she requires.

his face invisible, discovered only in the twin glints from his glasses that seem a flow of molten gold over a colder red: invisible, knowing she understands the distance he desires.

and in the silence they discover the white spilled seed upon the hunger thigh, and the fir's white ash scattering in the musty air beneath the trap, and the white scar skeleton of the fir branch, and the wood still stacked beside the hearth.
BERYL STONE

"...the beryl stone was enchanted by our fathers that it might unfold pictures in its heart, and not to mirror our own excited faces, or the boughs waving outside the window." —W.B. Yeats

i gather the personage of the evening. its wraps me with a tiny slithering grasp as starving amoebas next to the skin; constructed in the concrete & glass street, of rain & neon, the shattering mirror of myself, in gait with the rhythm of the street, on my way to the party.

the house of the party is recessed, standing back, among street-light shadows; its features penciled into the darkness: a Gothic scowl. i stand with the evening, in a circle of street-light, watching its sullen mouth of a door gaping & closing upon the people before me. thus i fear the house & move to the right rattling in its socket of an eye, & into the window, i see me & see into the room & see into the party beyond: i see upon the window, that in the left eye radiating outward, an anonymous raked face bleeding, crying, helpless before the hulk whose laughing fingers of glass bottle are dripping. in the hollow right eye, upon the straw pallet a slow motion etching hydra of loins.

m ferguson & the steel high sound,
like the wind startled glass chimes of the house are only subtleties of the street i turn to reassure myself with. & returning, upon the window that black flower of mouth rattled by winds is unpetaled as the trumpet severs them one by one. rhythms of our fear, that the people define in their movements the columns & caves, layers & curves of the smoke: the face i have seen does not feel the rain that i feel and the face beyond, there being defined in the room, belongs, yes, to the hand of the evening.

these are the histories.

& later, the people congratulate themselves, putting on raincoats: blear eyes dropping to membrane upon the floor where praise wiggles & seeps to oblivion.

i too, with them, spit by the house, feel again the wet palm of wind upon my back. i do not look into the window, into the empty room; i do not smile back into the face smiling at me from the concrete-edged puddle.
THE TRAIN

an easement, this mumbling to itself in a violent
ditch of winter mountains: the rails merge elsewhere;
always the black column under a full moon, verges at
the vertex of these white thighs, undulant beyond heat
waves that sheath the thing. but black trees, sym-
metrical & distinct, wait on the slopes; geometrical
abstracts of trees that on the plains were, each branch,
subdistinctions in the sunset that was definition of
horizon.

in Chicago, tendrils of skeletons curled in
the wind, a human river with a hardened fashion; faces
against the wind as distinct as memory reels on com-
puters that are gathered in the banks: the carpeted
computer room in a bank with six elevators. the cop
on the corner standing in a vortex of tickets to some-
where that tallied in a gutter.

the bird fell, flying
south, crowned with a sucking tick that broke its
brain. what to make of this crying thing in an autumn
swamp, my gun in hand, but blast it from the fallen
leaves and mark the spot, and hope nobody saw?

this
train, gliding through white mountains, intent on
whiteness, the abyss of white, on time and lost in a distant and pre-wired brain.
SNOW-BOUND

Wherever snow falls,
there too the sun
makes of death a breast.

The wind-harried crocus
is the mind at crystalline verge
immersed by snow in sunlight--
the last identity fixed to the abyss,
the final jut of landscape
between self and whiteness--

Or sleep,
and the gentle downward self is cut a-drift
where the white worms stir in soft and secret depths.
SPRING

I

Cold Snap

Under the back stairs
I found it breathing heavily:
the young Spring, its coat
mottled with green. Easily
I identified it: four legs, genitals,
eyes the color of skin.
(under the bridge floats
the corpse; a starfish clings
to the shoulders, eats
from where the head was)
From the fridge I took a memory
and fed the beast.
For days it laughed;
it's sleek green mange tore the skin
and all the roots fell out;
I saw cancer in its eyes
where it stood at the low window
looking in. And finally,
in a fit of foam,
it buried itself like a bone
in hot moss, beneath
the bitter, strangled flowers.

II
Suspension
This morning I am like
a thought misplaced in
a mindless landscape.

Snow hasn't begun to melt
from the higher slopes;
the stream is silent.

My winter skin has gone bad
inside me; the meshing trees
are dry under the sun.

no rain.
wind.
this dryness is no thirst.

Something the sun has not drawn
from beneath the grey scales
that litter my eyes.
The Sense of It

The rain finally vomits onto the frost, 
hisses in the ashes, 
the long sleek scar of wolves 
dissolves in the sun where 
spiderous fungi dry screaming.

On the lawns, women 
begin to speak between their legs; 
crocus and daffodil are lovely cups of wind.

I return from the melting slopes 
in the outward curve toward spring, 
tumbling, skinned in a mountain stream; 
crashing seaward. 
I had thought to catch a flower 
would save me from the summer salt.
DISCONTINUED RITUAL

It was a dream of
goat and master,
the spring we wish
to forget.

The white bearded goat
revered because flowers
grew from its sides and flanks;
one crocus to a nostril.

But its other eyes flared
in the sacred flame
and tallow that dripped
from whirling girls.

The ceremony was obvious.
A priestly eunuch with a knife,
a goat made savage with flowers.
And all the girls fell down fecund
under shaggy thighs where the master lay,
his brown robe mottled by the blood-thing
chewed from his throat.
Commend thee, philosopher!
Those centuries of prodigious symmetries,
the lacing by dewy mandalas...
Scientist-spider, speak!

First knowledge by shimmering:
I have charmed this wilderness
with issuing from the belly at night.
With magical cords from the twelve leaves of knowledge
I have caught the sun; placed myself in the center;
achieved identity with Source.
I am impervious to the irreducible
metamorphoses of maggots.

splaat!
Sorry, old fellow.
The Lady of the House
wants her garden rearranged:
your bush has to go.
FAMILY PORTRAIT

The man dusts his son in the desert.
Furniture
in a landscape gone stale. The obvious
sun rakes in the sand.

Dust the corpse...
in all that ache of dryness
only the dead flesh sweats;
skittering violins, crab-like,
cover the rocks.

Dust...
imperceptibly
the horizon oozes.
Almost swamp,
the sun itself swam in your liquid eyes:
Friends! Why must I drive
hundreds of weed-strewn miles
to visit, holding us
together in these distances?

But in this desert
I once thought it mirage--
some strange caravan
beyond the hump of the farthest dune--
but as the sun approached zenith
the circle of plodders became complete:
dusty men, fiery-eyed,
bent under packs;
each seeing in the back of the man ahead
a smile concealed in shaggy hair.

Now, in mid-afternoon,
I can see their faces--
they have all turned to me
and approach with
outstretched hands of thistledown....

Shall I pray? for rain?
What report shall I leave? To whom shall I say these friendless men have come? How gather myself when each has another bit of flesh to add to his pack? How speak transported thus to the systole, diastole clock-wise plod?
TO TELL A LIE

And if you gaze into an abyss long enough,
The abyss will gaze back into you.

I have reached out to touch you,
extended with cunning my
one thin finger of despair...
and touching
found a little fragrance,
attributes, those thousand lies
I know you by:
there is nothing;
no toucher, nothing touched.

What of madman Stevens,
howling in the sun, that
"yellow grassman" quivering behind
life pension plans, vice-president
to a desk? Do you "accept the structure
Of things as the structure of ideas?"

No toucher, nothing touched.

I should have been a pair of ragged stones.
No matter. Let us walk
where the sun is most brilliant,
where trees are bent and broken
with the nesting of the birds;
 seduce ourselves with charity,
 confuse ourselves again with tenderness.
 And in such moments
 contrive the silence
 of fantastic death.