DURING RAIN, I PLANT CHRYSANTHEMUMS

by

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B.A., Western Washington State College, 1964

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
Master of Arts.
in the Department
of
English.

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1965
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Date April 15, 1965
ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of a group of unrelated poems on subjects seen in shifting perspectives. Not even the traditional Absolutes remain static: God sometimes is a lover, or an abstraction, or a blue beetle. At times the temper is passion; then again, exhaustion. I have attempted to express the various, contrasting conditions of the human spirit: fire, frigidity, chaos, wonder.

If it seems that the poems have no integral relation to each other, each poetic cubicle refusing to melt in one body of water, it is because I have deliberately given them independent existences. Even the form is as varied as the concepts proposed. I feel ultimately betrayed by set assertions and solid unities which do not bend or quake with natural forces or human impulses.

I see atoms swirling in the heat of my creative energy, each disintegrating unit shedding divergent lights. I cannot see only one atom brilliant enough to guide oneself in the dark moments of life—even the atom of Love breaks into psychological complexities—but perhaps all these can bring the Self to utter confusion and to insecurity of logic. Once lost, the Self senses only the probabilities of existence, and thus, exists:
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the artist

has plunged into Void—
his art is the path
of birds in flight:
what is it?

#
The Artist Reverts To Female

Leonardo was less thereby between created fire and flowing limbs care o phple g i f o in e spr ed in n the s n a k e, a peek i e s l e to the a s n that fiery snake killed in bed.
Black Cat, Walk the Thin Fence

Here

damn linoleum days,
tiled black white black white
trapped in the thin line
of half-triangles

damn aggregate cold slabs
contrapuntal checks
lines angular cut
in a strained pattern

But where the black cat walks
the thin fence: ridge over grasping
caverns walks my lover

High as a Chinese mountain pass
its points beyond the scroll
silently expanding

There

Where the black cat walks
the thin fence
walks my lover

#
The Blind Man

desiring to cross a street
sensing someone near him, said,
"Sir, if you will lead me, please."
No answer.
Irate, he asked again.
"God! Your assistance! Show me, man, the way."
Silence.
Angry, he cried,
"Fool! You don't deserve to live."
Catching hold of the shirt,
he strangled the deaf man.
The Centipede

progressing
in self-assertion

one step yet
each pompous leg

undulating:
in a blind, vast dance

of the centipede
never touching:
bearing:
forward

the dark belly-
arc, is it a

procession

of servers with soma
to amorphous gods.
glinting in uncovered
grounds in a night

full of nuances?
or is it a cortege

bearing
a corpse-universe

each leg dragging
through cast-off space
and recurring time

an undefined existence?

#
dhanapālaka

bound elephant. will not eat
yearns for the grove in the forest
dhanapālaka an infant. restless.
till it finds
its mother's breast

#
Exhausted Peacock

I.
between my lips you put a cigarette
in my mind flashes: the miniature
Krishna feeding Radha betel-nuts.

I rub your right arm with sandal-paste
you set aside my lotus-leaves
our bodies heavy with passion
succumb after the seduction

and while your sweat pours down my cheek
I think of Shiva's temple, phallic symbol
adoration of centuries, and I am dulled.

Even here, this ultimate union
is it just a mundane repetition?
II.

across my closed eyes;
swirl the colors of love's lust
black gold seeds hurtling down
like Indra's thunderbolts
into the caves of Vala.

trees are stark, stunted:
like blunted birds' beaks
the skyline is agitated.

I see Krishna in the forest
watching for full-hipped Radha—

your breath cuts the stills.
ending my induced movie
I listen to your ominous rumbling
clench my teeth and think
yes, love, that's it, get over with it
so I can return to my visions.
III.

waking up, my arm outstretched.
I find you still here
suckling at my breast

I had hoped you would be gone.
the morning—you dispels our dream—night

this is too coarse: I see
your hands' veins and hair
your white flanks; the night was colorless
without lines

are those the lips that transported me?
they're cracked.
sometime, they'll rot; once in a magical
night they were immortal

but here you are—
a protestant document tacked on my door
you had entered into a mythical cathedral
but now this room is airless

what does one do with a faithful lover?
this is too stifling: I must
GO

Tagore whispers in my ear:
'once gone, forever going'
watching, your finger on my navel
I wonder if your mother
had severed the cord.

my cord. hangs from the skies
where Krishna hid
from his jewelled cowgirls.

but as it pulls me up
I will throw down the veil
to you, my love
that you may sleep a while longer.
exhausted peacocks do not play
on the swing below the mango trees
they lie beside the lotus-pond.
watching the shaft and the leaf.

From the pavilion Krishna's flute-
notes twine with jasmines
but still their feathers droop
tired of brandishing the Self
bellowing from rooftops
"I" "I" "I"
"here I am" answering: "here I am"
like resonating Sitar strings

but do plucked-out peacocks know
from here, where shall "I" go?
V.
From Vishnu's hair, black
eclipsed-moon Krishna
you leap into Lakshmi's
like a dazed louse
beneath my comb's teeth
Too many dragons: stay for dinnertime
spring up after hors d'oeuvres and wine
to beat out their bellyful of fire
which remains a spastic cigarette stub
scorching only the table top
Thrusting: their terrible tongues
into teacups, which in disintegration
feed the beasts to expansion
But I've St. Georged the dragon
its head my doorknob gargoyle
And in the luxury of my bath
I rub my navel: an Aladdin's lamp
pregnant with unborn wonders.
VI.
In Asarh month, dark June
with its hovering clouds
Krishna dallies with his love
loathing the impending separation

But the rains are my release
I beam in anticipation
I love rainsheets, hard.
as brass ware lids covering
each inch of my soul's vessel

Rain like cool Jazz.
muffled muted trumpet
and steady drum beat
making time in a hot room
full of multiple Kafkas

Between the alienated Asians
are the rains;
not Eliotic wastelands.
But I could turn my isolation
into rejuvenation

Alone, drive my rain-car
around the world
quenching political fires
crashing through social dams

My deluge would demolish
the walls of China and Berlin
across the fields would flow
the flooded Indus
and when the fruits are born
I would emerge with the rainbow.

But who hasn't seen that film before?
And I abhor seasonal reels of prophets
with flinging arms and divine sweat
pouring from their armpits.

So I shall step aside and sleep
behind the rain-shields.

#
The Hunchback

Tortoise-stigma, hard-rock
my house—God!—please break!
I fall back on the wet dust
from boy's stones, a beast
whose knees fold under the pack.

#
I, A Priestess:

I, amid chants
perform sacrifice
against a white winter sun.
while the West thrusts Persephone
into that underworld

Mine expands into a pale void
as incense smoke ascends
(swaying like a Chinese dragon
its fire darting everywhere
and nowhere)
feeding the gods its fumes.

I, amid chants
perform sacrifice in the sun
while the West ejects pomegranates

As I watch the mangustan
(its fruits like a Benares ware
smelted soon in my furnace-mouth wide
and wild)
await the luxury of its taste.

In the monsoon after the sweat
final season of madness
milk flowing from my breasts.

#
God's Passion

Wine flows
to Vedic veins
from Sanskrit vineyards
Wine flows

Gautama bleeds
for this Communion
of man and man
Gautama bleeds

Wine flows
to Saxon glands
from gothic Rhinelands
Wine flows

Gautama bleeds
for this Communion
of man and woman
Gautama bleeds

Wine flows
to tribal organs
from African orchards
Wine flows

Gautama bleeds
for this Communion
of man and God
Gautama bleeds
God, the Lover

god, the, lover,
dim-eyed,
    i, am, the, engine,
ravaging,
    him--insipid,
weakling;
    i, am, the, rejuvenated,
ravishing,
    him;

lover, flickering,
ancient,
    i, am, the, blaze,
consuming,
    him;

and, having, gorged, myself,
i, may, bloat--pregnant,
or, vomit, him.

#
I do my God.

I do
my God.
Only when
I do
my God.
is He.

Thus Mahatma's
eye
showed me.

God does me.
Only when
He does me
am I.

Thus Mahatma's:
eye
showed me.

When I undo
the God
I do
Who does me:
This is Idolatry.

Thus Mahatma's:
eye
showed me.

#
To My God.

mi caballero
I must go.

Ataraxy of an old man
is a timeless entity.
And I, who am filled with youth
rage and quiver with the wind.
And when I turn to gaze at nesting
birds, I twinge: know it is Time

mi caballero
I must go.

O dolor, mi amor
why am I tangled in birds' nests?

#
Death, I

am so very am
so haunted
by that hooded blue monk
who throws his black face
in my brain's imaginings

urging, urging:
that I follow the maze
of lacerated life
to the uncovering
of his dark sun wherein
is the Potion

#
Death: II

man-meat
yearly he fed a red infant.
crocodile
its mouth: a huge yawning Hunger;
till
that year it snapped the air and in fear he gave himself thinking to appease red crocodile:
and after the feeding yearly it was hungry again.

#
A. Jade Evening

a jade evening clasps around me
the many arms of Buddha.
and i feel the bondage of Void
descending innumerable steps
of a Hong Kong street
i see below a beckoning ruby glow
and find in the glowing pits
the freedom of Passion

#
Night forms a solid sheet

Night forms a solid sheet
across their window
and they begin to tremble
The elephant, they read, is slow to mate
but we are not beasts, he whispers
then shall we be quick?, she murmurs
we are not beasts, he whispers
The elephant, they read, is slow to mate
and they begin to tremble
across their window
night forms a solid sheet
he slits.
On The Third Year After Her Death.

Under the bodhi-tree
in the third watch
I attained Sammā-sambuddh

Thus, Buddha beheld
Life's upward stages long-linked, from levels low
Where breath is base, to higher slopes and higher
Whereon the Ten Great Virtues wait to lead
the climber skyward.

Five hundred lives and fifty
flitting up the hills.
and in the multitude of me
I see
my sister, sister still?

In the recurring precipices
my face again and again
whirling in a thousand ridges.

Yes, vast bridges tremble
in the weight of me
and my sister, sister still?

And in the mountain-summit
Our Lord attained Abhidjna—-insight vast
Ranging beyond this sphere to spheres unnamed,
System on system, countless worlds and suns.
Moving in splendid measures, band by band
Linked in division, one, yet separate
Where the body is wind-numbed
each word spoken becoming wind
dispersing in space without time till
wordlessness overcomes Kalpas,
Mahakalpas,
and my sister, sister still?

I gaze at my ancient neighbors
and at the rest of me ascending the mountain
backs and fingers bent to the stick
and the unborn dead in the valley
doubled-up as in a basin

My sister, sister still?
The wind that fills
my wounds, eroding my skin
is it she released from the earth
sculpturing with tender fingers
out of the thousand, nameless I
a change which never changes?

She and I are
Released from all the Skandhas of the flesh;
Broken from ties—From Upādānas—saved
From whirling on the Wheel, aroused and sane
As is a man wakened from hateful dreams.
Rain falls on the morning's dust

Rain falls on the morning's dust
and our discussion ends.
Evening birds begin their chant
with temple bells.
I open the shutters; you, the wine
and we release our ghost.
Prelude

i close the gates.
moon-shadows begin their game.
i close the door;
lying on our mat, i see your
shadow behind the screen
During rain, I plant chrysanthemums

During rain, I plant chrysanthemums
where the soil is soft and wet
and string orchids together for my lover
sleeping behind the reed screen
on feather pillows.
husking coconuts

husking coconuts
beneath the palm
i look across the sea
the sun is gone!
the sea line is indiscernible
and i wonder if i am here.

#
God
was a blue
beetle
on an elephant's head
who had elephantine
ideas
and felt
#
Endeavouring to copulate with God.

0 is: Insanity.
He's too feeble. Without energy.
But I love Him 0 for pure joy
of Insanity! 

#
This is the way

This is the way a
pink heron eats, a green carabao:
it spits on the rice-fields
perches on the dumbbeast's neck
and pecks;

the pink heron, it's stubborn.
It will peck until it reaches the bone.

#
A white bull

ties to its belly
black wings of a fly
to defy gravity.
two crossed sticks
do not. two crossed sticks make
a christian says to take
them as a symbol

mathematics
shows us positively though
that two sticks are just so
and that is logic

two crossed sticks
are neither two nor magic:
both are a delusion;
sticks are an Illusion.
"If you're passing by, Boethius, cut me loose from this wheel of tail. Like the mad dog, I chase my own in a circling gale of generation after generation and I've forgotten where this thing begins or ends."
"Such is life," he said, and came with his knife.
I bled a lot but blood clots.
To Kali

I. A door lies
between us
the key
Kali, is
under the mat
take it

II. Destroy me
Kali, I
beseech
my destruction
is, Kali
your life

III. At twilight
Kali, come
kill me
I will be in
your bosom
at dawn

#
Ten Miles to Buddhahood

I see the gong's gold ball
poised in the distance
a pea in my brain
and there are ten miles to make

Sun from the gravel
heat my bare feet
and the petrified sparrow
is burrowed on the bough

Rain slices earth
filling my feet-crevices
and the Chinese concubine
plaits her hair by her lord's bed

Still there are ten miles
between my right and left ears
where the bodhi-tree stands.

#
Rape of the Tiger

the snake sunlight
slithers into the den
and sucks the sleeping tiger

bleeding tiger
crawl in your cave
and bleed

until you can bleed
no more!

the ming vase moonlight.
shows its face in your den
and makes you its ornament.

bleeding tiger
crawl in your cave
and bleed.

until you can bleed
no more!

God! Now let the tiger be ugly!
then may the mystic of twilight
appear with his Love.

#
This is Geometry:

there are two foci
His and mine;
there is no Confusion.

The problem dawns
when two lines are drawn
across the ellipse
which make Tangent:
and an angle of Morals:
This is Prostitution.
The toilets, ah, the toilets!

Ten cents will give you comfort
Bowls clean, white clean
set off the Negress attendant.

Deodorized, ammonianized.
Make you feel Civilized.

Nothing like an American toilet
They boil it and boil it
squeeze their dirt out
their hands undefiled.

But the Indian open fields
where a man returns to earth
what he receives
rubs sand on himself
and delights in the friction

that sensation
the American has dulled.
An Asian in America.

is preposterously paranoic.
pathetic
shrinks from each stoic: passerby's
eye
notes the Difference
calculates his accent.
crawls to a corner and dies

at the first interjection
of discrimination
but revives at the second and
sends
a spittle on a statue
of some hero
who saved his land without demands
of 99-year sugar lease
and still generously left babies.

He's blaringly Asian
blatantly
dark-haired and dark-skinned.
constantly
notes the Difference

rejects alliances
denies allegiances
to Union flags and all that
in taste always aristocratic
no Woolworth framed landscape
hangs on his wall

He'd rather he hanged himself
or his soul
and worst of all—

leaves rows and rows
of 19-cent hamburgers alone
yearns for his dog-meat at home
picks up his culture
and goes!

#
Garret-wits

gone to the Ganges
Ginsberg in blue swimming trunks
bathed with dead cows:
Orlovsky near the ghat
watched burning bodies.

Insulated
in Vancouver galleries
an African dark fetish
beggar's bowl, neck rings
roped-in curios, racked colored rugs
remind visitors there's an Africa
out there!

where Peace Corps girls
marry the chief's sons.
and white seeds spill on black sands.

The scholar translates Basho
and Li Po is pounded out
after the August harvest
gathered into the barn by blonde-bearded
Lipoites awed with the Yangtze.

We'll get our time-machine yet
before the Tower of Babel deal
Be One People, no black, no white
just one glorious Grey
or blah!

#
In Vancouver

I'd hate to grow old in this country
with its wintry arthritic rain
and scanty limb-crackling summer.

Walking near Victory Square
I see a withering man
mumbling to the monument.

and I remember grandmother in India
drinking soma-juice with her sons
and grand-daughters till evening.

#
Kama, God of Love

Kama... concealed behind the curtain with two oranges come tear away your hot sword from my breast---

the mango tree a bulk in the shadow i will chop down and build a house without doors open only to the sky.

#
Young Maria: Milkmaid

Young Maria, milkmaid
couched beneath her mother's
umbrella, as it sunned and rained
watched her lover kick her pail
as her milk dried at her nipples.

#
Butterfly

cocoon-freed, flutters
smashes against the pane:
i watch and turn away

#