

Card Game
Frank Prewett, 1921

Hearing the whine and crash
We hastened out
And found a few poor men
Lying about.

I put my hand in the breast
Of the first met.
His heart thumped, stopped, and I drew
My hand out wet.

Another, he seemed a boy,
Rolled in the mud
Screaming, "my legs, my legs,"
And he poured out his blood.

We bandaged the rest
And went in,
And started again at our cards
Where we had been.

Burial Stones
Frank Prewett, 1921

The blue sky arches wide
From hill to hill;
The little grasses stand
Upright and still.

Only these stones to tell
The deadly strife,
The all-important schemes,
The greed for life.

For they are gone, who fought;
But still the skies
Stretch blue, aloof, unchanged,
From rise to rise.

Before a Bulletin Board

(After Beaumont-Hamel)

E. J. Pratt, 1923

God! How should letters change their colours so?
A little *k* or *m* stab like a sword;
How dry, black ink should turn to red and flow,
And figures leap like hydrae on the board?

A woman raised her voice, and she was told
That strange things happen at the will of God;
Thus, dawn from midnight; thus, from fire the gold;
Thus did a rose once blossom from a rod.

But stranger things today, than that the rod
Should flower, or the cross become a crown—
Stranger than gold from fire; else how should God
Bring on the night before the sun go down.

Come Not the Seasons Here

E. J. Pratt, 1923

Comes not the springtime here,
 Though the snowdrop came,
And the time of the cowslip is near,
 For a yellow flame
Was found in a tuft of green;
 And the joyous shout
 Of a child rang out
That a cuckoo's eggs were seen.

Comes not the summer here,
 Though the cowslip be gone,
Though the wild rose blow as the year
 Draws faithfully on;
Though the face of the poppy be red
 In the morning light,
 And the ground be white
With the bloom of the locust shed.

Comes not the autumn here,
 Though someone said
He found a leaf in the sere
 By an aster dead;
And knew that the summer was done,
 For a herdsman cried
That his pastures were brown in the sun,
 And his wells were dried.

Nor shall the winter come,
 Though the elm be bare,
And every voice be dumb
 On the frozen air;
But the flap of a waterfowl
 In the marsh alone,
Or the hoot of a horned owl
 On a glacial stone.

The Shark
Edwin J. Pratt, 1923

He seemed to know the harbour,
So leisurely he swam;
His fin,
Like a piece of sheet-iron,
Three-cornered,
And with knife-edge,
Stirred not a bubble
As it moved
With its base-line on the water.

His body was tubular
And tapered
And smoke-blue,
And as he passed the wharf
He turned,
And snapped at a flat-fish
That was dead and floating.
And I saw the flash of a white throat,
And a double row of white teeth,
And eyes of metallic grey,
Hard and narrow and slit.

Then out of the harbour,
With that three-cornered fin
Shearing without a bubble the water
Lithely,
Leisurely,
He swam—
That strange fish,
Tubular, tapered, smoke-blue,
Part vulture, part wolf,
Part neither—for his blood was cold.

Sea-Gulls
E. J. Pratt, 1927

For one carved instant as they flew,
The language had no simile —
Silver, crystal, ivory
Were tarnished. Etched upon the horizon blue,
The frieze must go unchallenged, for the lift
And carriage of the wings would stain the drift
Of stars against a tropic indigo
Or dull the parable of snow.

Now settling one by one
Within green hollows or where curled
Crests caught the spectrum from the sun,
A thousand wings are furled.
No clay-born lilies of the world
Could blow as free
As those wild orchids of the sea.

from The 6000
E. J. Pratt, 1927

Now with his armoured carapace
On head and belly, back and breast,
The Taurian prepared to face
The blurring stretches of the west.
To him it was of no concern
The evening gale was soon to turn
To the full stature of a storm
That would within an hour transform
The ranges for a thousand miles,
Close up all human thoroughfares,
Sweep down through canyons and defiles,
And drive the cougars to their lairs.
A lantern flashed out a command,

A bell was ringing as a hand
Clutched at a throttle, and the bull,
At once obedient to the pull,
Began with bellowing throat to lead
By slow accelerating speed
Six thousand tons of caravan
Out to the spaces — there to toss
The blizzard from his path across
The prairies of Saskatchewan.

The Prize Cat
E. J. Pratt, 1937

Pure blood domestic, guaranteed,
Soft-mannered, musical in purr,
The ribbon had declared the breed,
Gentility was in the fur.

Such feline culture in the gads
No anger ever arched her back —
What distance since those velvet pads
Departed from the leopard's track!

And when I mused how Time had thinned
The jungle strains within the cells,
How human hands had disciplined
Those prowling optic parallels;

I saw the generations pass
Along the reflex of a spring,
A bird had rustled in the grass,
The tab had caught it on the wing:

Behind the leap so furtive-wild
Was such ignition in the gleam,
I thought an Abyssinian child
Had cried out in the whitethroat's scream.

After War
Lawren Harris, 1922

Pain dust
Settling on the earth
After storm-stirrings —
Quietly settling
In slow sorrows.

They Never Quite Forget
Lawren Harris, 1922

When people turn a corner
They look back
From an age-old habit
Of apprehension —
Something tells them
The past waits ahead,
So they look back
To see
If it will smooth away
In the future —
They know.
They never quite forget.

**The Canadian Authors Meet
Francis R. Scott, 1927**

Expansive puppets percolate self-unction
Beneath a portrait of the Prince of Wales.
Miss Crotchet's muse has somehow failed to function,
Yet she's a poetess. Beaming, she sails

From group to chattering group, with such a dear
Victorian saintliness, as is her fashion,
Greeting the other unknowns with a cheer—
Virgins of sixty who still write of passion.

The air is heavy with Canadian topics,
And Carman, Lampman, Roberts, Campbell, Scott,
Are measured for their faith and philanthropics,
Their zeal for God and King, their earnest thought.

The cakes are sweet, but sweeter is the feeling
That one is mixing with the *literati*;
It warms the old, and melts the most congealing.
Really, it is a most delightful party.

Shall we go round the mulberry bush, or shall
We gather at the river, or shall we
Appoint a Poet Laureate this fall,
Or shall we have another cup of tea?

O Canada, O Canada, O can
A day go by without new authors springing
To paint the native maple, and to plan
More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing?

Old Song
Francis R. Scott, 1929

far voices
and fretting leaves
this music the
hillside gives

but in the deep
Laurentian river
an elemental song
for ever

a quiet calling
of no mind
out of long aeons
when dust was blind
and ice hid sound

only a moving
with no note
granite lips
a stone throat

Dedication
Francis R. Scott, 1947

From those condemned to labour
For profit of another
We take our new endeavor.

For sect and class and pattern
Through whom the strata harden
We sharpen now the weapon.

Till power is brought to pooling
And outcasts share in ruling
There will not be an ending
Nor any peace for spending.

Laurentian Shield
Francis R. Scott, 1947

Hidden in wonder and snow, or sudden with summer,
This land stares at the sun in a huge silence
Endlessly repeating something we cannot hear.
Inarticulate, arctic,
Not written on by history, empty as paper,
It leans away from the world with songs in its lakes
Older than love, and lost in the miles.

This waiting is wanting.
It will choose its language
When it has chosen its technic,
A tongue to shape the vowels of its productivity.

A language of flesh and of roses.

Now there are pre-words,
Cabin syllables,
Nouns of settlement
Slowly forming, with steel syntax,
The long sentence of its exploitation.

The first cry was the hunter, hungry for fur,
And the digger for gold, nomad, no-man, a particle;
Then the bold commands of monopolies, big with machines,
Carving their kingdoms out of the public wealth;
And now the drone of the plane, scouting the ice,
Fills all the emptiness with neighbourhood
And links our future over the vanished pole.

But a deeper note is sounding, heard in the mines,
The scattered camps and the mills, a language of life,
And what will be written in the full culture of occupation
Will come, presently, tomorrow,
From millions whose hands can turn this rock

The Lonely Land
A. J. M. Smith, 1926

Cedar and jagged fir
uplift sharp barbs
against the gray
and cloud-piled sky;
and in the bay
blown spume and windrift
and thin, bitter spray
snap
at the whirling sky;
and the pine trees
lean one way.

A wild duck calls
to her mate,
and the ragged
and passionate tones
stagger and fall,
and recover,
and stagger and fall,
on these stones —
are lost
in the lapping of water
on smooth, flat stones.

This is a beauty
of dissonance,
this resonance
of stony strand,
this smoky cry
curled over a black pine
like a broken
and wind-battered branch
when the wind
bends the tops of the pines
and curdles the sky
from the north.

This is the beauty
of strength
broken by strength
and still strong.

Like an Old Proud King in a Parable
A. J. M. Smith, 1928

A bitter king in anger to be gone
From fawning courtier and doting queen
Flung hollow sceptre and gilt crown away,
And breaking bound of all his counties green
He made a meadow in the northern stone
And breathed a palace of inviolable air
To cage a heart that carolled like a swan,
And slept alone, immaculate and gay,
With only his pride for a paramour.

O who is that bitter king? It is not I.

Let me, I beseech thee, Father, die
From this fat royal life, and lie
As naked as a bridegroom by his bride,
And let that girl be the cold goddess Pride:
And I will sing to the barren rock
Your difficult, lonely music, heart,
Like an old proud king in a parable.

The Archer
A. J. M. Smith, 1937

Bend back thy bow, O Archer, till the string
Is level with thine ear, thy body taut,
Its nature art, thyself thy statue wrought
Of marble blood, thy weapon the poised wing
Of coiled and aquiline Fate. Then, loosening, fling
The hissing arrow like a burning thought
Into the empty sky that smokes as the hot
Shaft plunges to the bullseye's quenching ring.
So for a moment, motionless, serene,
Fixed between time and time, I aim and wait;
Nothing remains for the breath now but a waive
His prior claim and let the barb fly clean
Into the heart of what I know and hate —
That central black, the ringed and targeted grave.

Epitaph
A. M. Klein, 1936

Weep not on this quiet stone,
I, embedded here
Where sturdy roots divide the bone
And tendrils split a hair,
Bespeak you comfort of the grass
That is embodied me,
Which as I am, not as I was,
Would choose to be.

Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens
A.M. Klein, 1931

I

The paunchy sons of Abraham
Spit on the maculate streets of Amsterdam,
Showing Spinoza, Baruch *alias* Benedict,
He and his God are under interdict.

Ah, what theology there is in spatted spittle,
And in anathema what sacred prose
Winnowing the fact from the suppose!
Indeed, what better than these two things can whittle
The scabrous heresies of Yahweh's foes,
Informing the breast where Satan gloats and crows
That saving it leave false doctrine, jot and tittle,
No vigilant thumb will leave its orthodox nose?
What better than ram's horn blown,
And candles blown out by maledictory breath,
Can bring the wanderer back to his very own,
The infidel back to his faith?

Nothing, unless it be that from the ghetto
A soldier of God advance to teach the creed,
Using as rod the irrefutable stiletto.

II

Uriel da Costa
Flightily ranted
Heresies one day,
Next day recanted.

Rabbi and bishop
Each vies to smuggle
Soul of da Costa
Out of its struggle.

Confessional hears his
 Glib paternoster;
 Synagogue sees his
 Penitent posture.

What is the end of
 This catechism?
 Bullet brings dogma
 That suffers no schism.

III

Malevolent scorpions befoul thy chambers,
 O my heart; they scurry across its floor,
 Leaving the slimy vestiges of doubt.

Banish memento of the vermin; let
 No scripture on the wall affright you; no
 Ghost of da Costa; no, nor any threat.
 Ignore, O heart, even as didst ignore
 The bribe of florins jingling in the purse.

IV

Jehovah is factotum of the rabbis;
 And Christ endures diurnal Calvary;
 Polyglot God is exiled to the churches;
 Synods tell God to be or not to be.

The Lord within his vacuum of heaven
 Discourses his domestic policies,
 With angels who break off their loud hosannas
 To help him phrase infallible decrees.

Soul of Spinoza, Baruch Spinoza bids you
 Forsake the god suspended in mid-air,
 Seek you that other Law, and let Jehovah
 Play his game of celestial solitaire.

V

Reducing providence to theorems, the horrible atheist compiled such lore that proved, like proving two and two make four, that in the crown of God we all are gems. From glass and dust of glass he brought to light, out of the pulver and the polished lens, the prism and the flying mote; and hence the infinitesimal and infinite.

Is it a marvel, then, that he forsook the abracadabra of the synagogue, and holding with timelessness a duologue, deciphered a new scripture in the book? Is it a marvel that he left old fraud for passion intellectual of God?

VI

Unto the crown of bone cry *Suzerain!*
Do genuflect before the jewelled brain!

Lavish the homage of the vassal; let
The blood grow heady with strong epithet;

O cirque of the Cabbalist! O proud skull!
Of alchemy O crucible!

Sanctum sanctorum; grottoed hermitage
Where sits the bearded sage!

O golden bowl of Koheleth! and of fate
O hourglass within the pate!

Circling, O planet in the occiput!
O Macrocosm, sinew-shut!

Yea, and having uttered this loud *Te Deum*
Ye have been singularly dumb.

VII

I am weak before the wind; before the sun
 I faint; I lose my strength;
 I am utterly vanquished by a star;
 I go to my knees, at length

Before the song of a bird; before
 The breath of spring or fall
 I am lost; before these miracles
 I am nothing at all.

VIII

Lord, accept my hallelujahs; look not askance at these my petty words; unto perfection a fragment makes its prayer.

For thou art the world, and I am part thereof; thou art the blossom and I its fluttering petal. . .

I behold thee in all things, and in all things: lo, it is myself; I look into the pupil of thine eye, it is my very countenance I see.

Thy glory fills the earth; it is the earth; the noise of the deep, the moving of many waters, is it not thy voice aloud, O Lord, aloud that all may hear?

The wind through the almond-trees spreads the fragrance of thy robes; the turtle-dove twittering utters diminutives of thy love; at the rising of the sun I behold thy countenance.

Yea, and in the crescent moon, thy little finger's finger-nail.

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

Thou art everywhere; a pillar to thy sanctuary is every blade of grass.

Wherefore I said to the wicked, Go to the ant, thou sluggard, seek thou an audience with God.

On the swift wings of a star, even on the numb legs of a snail, thou dost move, O Lord.

A babe in swaddling clothes laughs at the sunbeams on the door's lintel; the sucklings play with thee; with thee Kopernik holds communion through a lens.

I am thy son, O Lord, and brother to all that lives am I.

The flowers of the field, they are kith and kin to me; the lily my sister, the rose is my blood and flesh.

Even as the stars in the firmament move, so does my inward heart, and even as the moon draws the tides in the bay, so does it the blood in my veins.

For thou art the world, and I am part thereof; he who does violence to me, verily sins against the light of day; he is a deicide.

Howbeit, even in dust I am resurrected; and even in decay I live again.

IX

Think of Spinoza, then, not as you think
Of Shabbathai Zvi who for a time of life
Took to himself the Torah for a wife,
And underneath the silken canopy
Made public: Thou art hallowed unto me.

Think of Spinoza, rather, plucking tulips
Within the garden of Mynheer, forgetting
Dutchmen and Rabbins, and consumptive fretting,
Plucking his tulips in the Holland sun,
Remembering the thought of the Adored,
Spinoza, gathering flowers for the One,
The ever-unwedded lover of the Lord.

Heirloom

Abraham M. Klein, 1934

My father bequeathed me no wide estates;
No keys and ledgers were my heritage;
Only some holy books with *yahrzeit* dates
Writ mournfully upon a blank front page –

Books of the Baal Shem Tov, and of his wonders;
Pamphlets upon the devil and his crew;
Prayers against road demons, witches, thunders;
And sundry other tomes for a good Jew.

Beautiful: though no pictures on them, save
The scorpion crawling on a printed track;
The Virgin floating on a scriptural wave,
Square letters twinkling in the Zodiac.

The snuff left on this page, now brown and old,
The tallow stains of midnight liturgy —
These are my coat of arms, and these unfold
My noble lineage, my proud ancestry!

And my tears, too, have stained this heirloomed ground,
When reading in these treatises some weird
Miracle, I turned a leaf and found
A white hair fallen from my father's beard.

A Psalm to Teach Humility
Abraham M. Klein (1946)

O sign and wonder of the barnyard, more
beautiful than the pheasant, more melodious
than nightingale! O creature marvellous!

Prophet of sunrise, and foreteller of times!
Vizier of the constellations! Sage,
red-bearded, scarlet-turbaned, in whose brain
the stars lie scattered like well-scattered grain!

Calligraphist upon the barnyard page!
Five-noted balladist! Crower of rhymes!

O morning-glory mouth, O throat of dew,
announcing the out-faring of the blue,
the greying and the going of the night,
the coming on,
the imminent coming of the dawn,
the coming of the kinsman, the brightly-plumaged sun!

O creature marvellous — and O blessed Creator,
 Who givest to the rooster wit
 to know the movements of the turning day,
 to understand, to herald it,
 better than I, who neither sing nor crow
 and of the sun's goings and comings nothing know.

For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu
Abraham M. Klein (1946)

In pairs,
 as if to illustrate their sisterhood,
 the sisters pace the hospital garden walks.
 In their robes black and white immaculate hoods
 they are like birds,
 the safe domestic fowl of the House of God.

O biblic birds, who fluttered to me in my childhood illnesses
 — me little, afraid, ill, not of your race, —
 the cool wing for my fever, the hovering solace,
 the sense of angels —
 be thanked, O plumage of paradise, be praised.

from Autobiographical
A. M. Klein, 1951

I am no old man fatuously intent
 On memoirs, but in memory I seek
 The strength and vividness of nonage days,
 Not tranquil recollection of event.
 It is a fabled city that I seek;
 It stands in Space's vapours and Time's haze;
 Thence comes my sadness in remembered joy
 Constrictive of the throat;
 Thence do I hear, as heard by a Jewboy
 The Hebrew violins,
 Delighting in the sobbed oriental note.

Green Rain
Dorothy Livesay, 1932

I remember long veils of green rain
Feathered like the shawl of my grandmother –
Green from the half-green of the spring trees
Waving in the valley.

I remember the road
Like the one which leads to my grandmother's house,
A warm house, with green carpets,
Geraniums, a trilling canary
And shining horse-hair chairs;
And the silence, full of the rain's falling
Was like my grandmother's parlour
Alive with herself and her voice, rising and falling –
Rain and wind intermingled.

I remember on that day
I was thinking only of my love
And of my love's house.
But now I remember the day
As I remember my grandmother.
I remember the rain as the feathery fringe of her shawl.

Spain
Dorothy Livesay, 1937

When the bare branch responds to leaf and light
Remember them: it is for this they fight.
It is for haze-swept hills and the green thrust
Of pine, that they lie choked with battle dust.

You who hold beauty at your finger-tips
Hold it because the splintering gunshot rips
Between your comrades' eyes; hold it across
Their bodies' barricade of blood and loss.

You who live quietly in sunlit space
Reading The Herald after morning grace
Can count peace dear, when it has driven
Your sons to struggle for this grim, new heaven.

Catalonia,
Dorothy Livesay, 1939

The flag of darkness lowers at half mast
blotting the blood stained hieroglyphs from eyes
strained from the smoke, the flares, the rat tat tat
of guns' incessant bark. A sudden lull
fans wind on brow, recalls from far off hills
the ones who rest . . . oh unbelievably
a girl who rests tired head on easy arm
and sleeps encircled by her own heart beat.

But we, grey snakes who twist and squirm our way
from hump to sodden hump, roll in a hole
of slime, scarring our knees to keep awake
(earth's fermentation working overtime).
Horizons reel, groping for an axis,
stars burn in whirling rockets overhead —
we wrench ourselves over the last trench, down
down, down in scurrying scramble tossed
towards lost lines, lost outposts, lost defence . . .

The captain of the third brigade
sprang from a hillock where he peered
into the flare lit dark. He crouched
and doubled up, ran to a gunner's nest.

"They've quit" he hissed. "They've left the ridge
and swarmed to cover, in the wood . . .
The tanks? they've left the bloody tanks
defenceless . . . wounded men will be inside."

Then Sorensen came up. He'd seen
the tired retreat from our right flank.
Tall, lean — as a stripped tree —
he hung above the captain, panting words.

"What's that?" The captain thrust a fist
in the man's face. "You mean it, Sorensen?"
"I'll go" the lean one said . . . and down
he slithered on his knees, towards the tanks.

Inside a tank the smoky darkness lurched
and stupidly the air, acrid with oil,
clutched at a face. It shoved his nostrils in,
clung to his palate with a gritty clamp,
branded his lungs. He choked and coughed
tried to restrict his chest from heaving rasps -
crouched on the floor, head thrust against steel wall.
And now again pain stung his shoulder blade
his arm, still bleeding, hung beside him limp —
a stranger's arm. He looked at it, and saw
himself the same, inertly cut away
from human contact, blood of brotherhood.
The sweat broke on his brow, the blood closed down
against all sound of guns. He swayed, and fell.

The boy he fell upon stirred from his dream,
moved, and felt out the knife wound in his side.
The soggy bandages were now a wad
of blood, clotted and warm; the quivering flesh
throbbled like a heart beat pounding through the room .
his room at home so clear now in his mind
shuttered with slanting shafts of light, the chinks
of day on rosy plastered wall, his chairs
hunch backed, the cool tile floors with candle grease
scattered in silver coins beside the bed . . .
But O, that voice . . . what voice sang out to him
screaming in siren tones, Arise, awake,
stand up and strike, strike back and shoot,
shoot till the last strip fumbles in your hand — ?
till silence huddles in the muffled tank.

The tank ! He rose up, leaning on one arm
then crawled away from his companion's side.
The fumes, the oily fumes, spluttered within his brain
but dragging himself up, he reached the slit
and peered outside. The earth still seemed to heave
with showers of fire still bursting from its bowels.

Then something moved, a shadow writhing low
upon the ground ; and Sorensen burst in
upon the tank, gasping and hurried, thrusting bandages
towards him, helping him stand up and breathe.
"The other soldier's dead." They took his gun
and letters spilling from his pockets, these
the two remembered. Then ploughed on to find
the next tank, and the next, where other men
lay trapped and helpless, ammunition gone.

Now we retreat in better order, confident
of gun on shoulder, captain in command.
The wounded swing in swift-made hammocks, safe
from guttering death or prisoner's assault.
And as they move others are marching down,
people are shuffling down the roads of Spain
bundled with babies, chattels, cooking-pots
a donkey-load of warmth; a basket, light
with bits of bread, dried beans, remains
of other hasty meals, swallowed between
the zoom of air-raids over village streets.
People are marching with all song
gone out, all sunlight flattened grey
upon their faces; now in steady haste
pushing ahead to valleys where the mountain shade
leans kindly down, where snow
looks good to sleep upon. No winds can blow
more fiercely than a bomb, and winter's frost
will pierce steel needles lighter far to bear
than thrust of shrapnel splitting under skin.
People are marching, marching, and they meet
the tattered tunics of the soldiers, some of whom

walk bare-backed in the cold. A woman stops
and gives a shawl, a skirt for covering
for soldiers on ahead, who march to make
a further stand.

Though darkness fall once more,
a tattered flag, the men will stand upright
spirit sustained, the floor of Spain
a ground not tilled in vain with blood
with bones of young men scattered far;
not fertilized in vain, grey green gloss
of olives, wind bent on a hill, of earth
supported by the vineyards' yield, and wheat
crisp in the sun. No more sterility
or drouth or barrenness is yours
rolling plains; who make a covering now
for breath and bone; for growing hands
whose fingers work beneath the roots, to burst
out of the earth again, another spring!

a lonely man, but truth unfettering me!
Here on this earth to fight for freedom's light,
here in this flowered land to end the hate.

**From Call My People Home
Dorothy Livesay, 1950**

THE PHILOSOPHER:

To be alone is grace; to see it clear
Without rancour; to let the past be
And the future become. Rarely to remember
The painful needles turning in the flesh.

(I had looked out of the schoolroom window
And could not see the design, held dear
Of the shaken maples; nor the rain, searing and stinging
The burning rain in the eye.

I could not see, nor hear my name called:
 Tatsuo, the Pythagoras theorem!
 I could not think till the ruler rapped
 On the desk, and my mind snapped.

The schoolroom faded, I could not hold
 A book again in my hand.
 It was the not knowing; the must be gone
 Yet the continual fear of going.

Yes, to remember is to go back; to take
 The path along the dyke, the lands of my uncle
 Stretching away from the river—
 The dykeside where we played

Under his fruit trees, canopied with apples,
 Falling asleep under a hedgerow of roses
 To the gull's shrill chatter and the tide's recurrent
 Whisper in the marshland that was home....)

So must I remember. It cannot be hid
 Nor hurried from. As long as there abides
 No bitterness; only the lesson learned
 And the habit of grace chosen, accepted.

CHORUS OF NISEIS:

Home, we discover, is where life is:
 Not Manitoba's wheat
 Ontario's walled cities
 Nor a B. C. fishing fleet.

Home is something more than harbour—
 Than father, mother, sons;
 Home is the white face leaning over your shoulder
 As well as the darker ones.

Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
 The hard doing, and the rest when done;
 A wider sea than we knew, a deeper earth,
 A more enduring sun.

Bartok and the Geranium
Dorothy Livesay (1952)

She lifts her green umbrella
Towards the pane
Seeking her fill of sunlight
Or of rain;
Whatever falls
She has no commentary
Accepts, extends,
Blows out her furbelows,
Her bustling boughs;
And all the while he whirls
Explodes in space,
Never content with this small room:
Not even can he be
Confined to sky
But must speed high and higher still
From galaxy to galaxy,
Wrench from the stars their momentary notes
Steal music from the moon.

She's daylight
He is dark
She's heaven-held breath
He storms and crackles
Spits with hell's own spark.

Yet in this room, this moment now
These together breathe and be:
She, essence of serenity,
He in a mad intensity
Soars beyond sight
Then hurls, lost Lucifer,
From heaven's height.

And when he's done, he's out:
She leans a lip against the glass
And preens herself in light.

On Looking into Henry Moore
Dorothy Livesay, 1956

1

Sun, stun me, sustain me
Turn me to stone:
Stone, goad me and gall me
Urge me to run.

When I have found
Passivity in fire
And fire in stone
Female and male
I'll rise alone
Self-extending and self-known.

2

The message of the tree is this:
Aloneness is the only bliss

Self-adoration is not in it
(Narcissus tried, but could not win it)

Rather, to extend the root
Tombwards, be at home with death

But in the upper branches know
A green eternity of fire and snow.

3

The fire in the farthest hills
Is where I'd burn myself to bone:
Clad in the armour of the sun
I'd stand anew, alone

Take off this flesh, this hasty dress
Prepare my half-self for myself:
One unit, as a tree or stone
Woman in man, and man in womb.