

**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.