

Myron Broomell

Selected Poems



Myron H. Broomell

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Broomell was born in Roxbury, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. He studied at the University of Colorado, Boulder, graduating in 1927. In 1928 he married Jeanne CoBourn Root in Alameda, California. His poems appeared frequently in *Poetry* (Chicago) starting in 1930. He taught in Urbana, Ohio in the early-40s before moving to L.A. in 1944. Though he moved back to Colorado in 1949, he published frequently in L.A.-based poetry journals *Variegation: A Free Verse Quarterly*, and *Recurrence: A Quarterly of Rhyme*. *The Time By Dialing* appeared in 1947; the chapbook “*City Built on Sand*” followed a year later.

The Time By Dialing. New York: Swallow Press and William Morrow and Company, 1947.

The City Built on Sand: A Poem About Los Angeles. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1948

The Outdoor Labyrinth. Durango: Herald Press, 1961.

In the Iron Temple. Iowa City: Prairie Press, 1964

The Defection

My friend who was my pupil once,
Has turned against the noise of guns.
He hears them threatening all fronts
And goes to join the Peaceful Ones,
Who bid the righteous ground his arms
Because no good can come of Force,
And for the wicked deck the charms
Of Grace to ogle his remorse.
He is my pupil now no more
To whom I did not teach in time
The story of the easy whore
Whom no one thanked who paid her crime,
But when she made her favors free,
None was so spat upon as she.

Pupil no more, but still my friend—
Because I think he leans to ill,
I ask of him the will to spend
A thought on ends for which men kill.
For first in Abel and in Cain
The deed had happened, before Rome
Saw thunder gathering in Spain
To pour forth Hannibal at home.
Death was as ancient as the hand
Of king on scepter, sire on son.
It has been dealt in every land
Where good or bad has lost or won.
No man but houses in his blood
The slain assailant clutching mud.

Of old it was the people's creed
That in a battle fought for ground,
For home, for honor, for the seed
Of great dominion, for the sound
Of the true faith on heathen lips,
For credit in a woman's sight—

God favored one man's host or ships,
And one was wrong and one was right.
But now no longer. It is said
A sacerdiess investing peace
Incriminate alike the dead,
The slayers, and the warning geese
Who save a careless Capitol
Crept up upon by the fierce Gaul.

It was that same hill at whose edge
Tarpeia, drawing from the spring,
Saw Sabine gold and took the pledge
That meant a bracelet and a ring.
To her, a single-minded girl
Intent upon the simplest good,
Not dreaming Sabine men would hurl
Their shields to crush her where she stood;
Not knowing whether, in some year
When Roman friend and Sabine foe
Alike had passed beyond the fear
A living nation needs to know,
It might not niatter which of them
Die? for Tarpeia's fancied gem.

But it could matter. Time has seen
The evil legion turned aside
By Vercingetorix or mean
Bushmen defending each his bride;
Has seen the legion, evil still,
Bear health and order among men
Noble, no doubt, and of good will,
Who fought in vain for swamp and fen;
And all that ever camè of death
Tilling its human acreage,
Was only all we breathe with breath
Or infants have for heritage.
The world, if it was built at all,
Stands on the depths to which men fall.

Before you bow to worship flesh
As martyr if the blood is shed,
Observe, my friend, the subtle mesh
In which men catch men not yet dead.
Mark the constricting cords of hate,
The ropes of privilege and pride,
The threads of lying, the irate
Thongs that indifference has tied.
Before you call death worse than life,
In whose long struggle many die,
Look if there be not in that strife
A hand too few, too pure an eye—
Which seeing only its dear peace,
Requires the warfare for it cease.

How Was The Show?

In the movie I just saw
Lechery was matched with Law,
But was punished for her sins.
Evil never, never wins.

She was more seductive than
Innocence, who got the Man.
You could see, in brief arrests,
Sin's demarked and hungry breasts.

Sometimes, when she looked her lust,
She evoked a sort of trust.
That was part of the dire scheme.
Honor moved as in a dream.

Then you saw the plot resolved.
Dazzled Man was disinvolved
By a stratagem of Good.
God prevailed in Hollywood.

from The City Built on Sand

1.

In the walled garden behind the movie star's
The poet and the peasant both sat down,
And one was poor—no villa and no cars—
While one was rich and able and a clown.
The evening mist sank through the acacia trees,
As visible as it was deadly cool,
Past the band leader's stucco box of ease
And the prima donna's hillside swimming pool.

Now not far distant lay the gunmetal sea,
Against whose wall a continent's drift stops—
Never so still as is authority,
Not to reflect the rainless mountain-tops.
There they billed drinks and ducked like comrade birds,
Each passing happy in his want of words.

4.

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5.

In the dead noontide when the fog had lifted,
The doors being closed, the gears being all in mesh,
I ran for the bus. The driver had once shifted,
But for a moment we were of one flesh.
Because my garb was fine and his was not,
Because I smiled though panting as I ran,
He let me in and we forsook that spot—
I as a fare and he a kind of Pan.

They drive their people like a flock of sheep,
Abuse the general, murmur at the odd,
Only cry out, perhaps, at home in sleep,
And may, or they may not, believe in God;

But never had I trouble with one such
For they were quiet and had traveled much.

6.

Old men and females, landladies and cranks,
Bums, saints, and zanies; travelers by air,
Enjoy on benches without giving thanks
The rank banana leaves of Pershing Square.
At the grassiest end there stands a cast-iron shell
Marked "Beethoven"—head bent in thought, or patience.
Below the forefront of the Ritz hotel
The ground slopes gently toward the comfort stations.

From here to Forest Lawn or to Skid Row
Is no great distance. Pensioner sits by pariah.
Under all this, moving the earth below,
Progress designs a needed parking area.
Upon the surface of the cumbered ground
No space remains, and more must still be found.

8.

Denmark the ward-chief, tough and foreign-born,
Potent as lye when he was in his prime,
Now wearing straw for derby, and at morn
Chanting quick death by sex in mongrel rhyme,
Rose, bathed, and donned two-hundred-dollar clothes,
Ate, and strolled down to Cadillac at curb,
The perfect type whom a Bruce Bliven loathes,
Or any master of the caustic verb.

All along Wilshire where the spurious taste
Shops and has cocktails lest the truth intrude,
And store-fronts raised with an indecent haste
Stand jade and purple, chaste and purely crude,
Denmark sped east to Vernon toward the sun,
And all the lights turned green as he drove on.

9.

What men call traffic but is scarcely that—
Rather, the age, engaged in shift and dash—
Bears the elation of the blunt or flat
On cushioned wheels and to their final crash.
Elbow to fender squeezed as through a sieve,
The tunnel-bounden jostle for a place,
With here the young, impetuous, who live,
Enhoppered with the drab, who want a face.

Through the dark poison of the traveled hole,
Where drafts of motion swirl from side to side,
Noisy as rats in whom there breathes a soul,
The passengers of haste and frenzy ride:
Each on his wheel intent, with two bright eyes
A blaze before him as to light the skies.

10.

The clergyman, the rich man, and the teacher,
Each sacred and as dazed as if by drink—
Sin's, poverty's, and ignorance's creature—
Are never told what people really think.
Unto God's vicar businessmen confess
Never their gain, but only how they fail.
The millionaire is sheltered from address,
And pedagogues avoid the county jail.

One time I saw, as Venus doused her lamp,
Some trolleys crawling through a foggy night.
The first was crammed with many a pushing scamp
And folk close-packed; the others traveled light.
So to the chancel, bank, or special class,
Bright empty cars, the unenlightened pass.

14.

Out here; where souls from Iowa and death
Are camped upon a plain of sand and sun,
Drawing by sufferance an extra breath

Before they file to heaven every one;
Out here where cult and culture and collodion
Jostle like beasts lowing before the axe,
Where mayor and sheriff play a vast melodion,
And the fashionable communist pays his income tax;

It is thought useful tourists should arrive,
Pickets breathe gas, and old men age for pay,
Cameras catch the emptiest face alive,
And gray fog drift from the polluted bay,
Sky-writers name the film that marks the week,
And Negroes love by El Sereno creek.

