

Charles Cavalli

Selected Poems



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TK

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Selected Poems. Los Angeles: Highland Press, 1945.

Table-talked

Of late we've table-talked of purer peace,
We'd carve it beautiful, a constant crown
Upon the whole world, if manswarm release
Another storm, they'd have the stars to down.
'Peace, table-talked, has risen to further heights,
The torch-light of its core is clearly plain,
Its visioned peak is found. But words are flights
Into the gulping of the wind, in vain
Ascends the well stirred word. It isn't new
Saying we'd emulate that mountain's calm,
Or this balanced night, our fighting forebears too
Have talked starred-peace. Look how nature's balm
Has cooled the torrid high noon's sting, rain-skies
Fulfilled their promise . . . promise without lies.

Hills

Bronze California has beautiful hills,
Star-strong, and they have an aura of peace.
You'd think it high time
To walk hillward, feel the strength of the hills
Straining for the mountains; to wish
Beyond the level is great. Here is your God,
Not the somber people churchward along
A oneness road, like the herd to the, easy fold.
Bronze California has beautiful hills,
Their's is balance, having long reasoned with storm.
Here is your God shining without worship.

Leader-steered

Invention is dutiful, must move on a course
Chartered by man; the ship, leader-steered, reaches
Its predestined dock. But I have seen
A whole poem in a rudderless craft drifting
Current-caught, gliding sea-crescendos.
Man too is leader-steered, must follow an image,
Or worn philosophy, or Bethlehem's thorn-crowned
Martyr; few incur the crowd's wrath, lone thinkers
Walking the wilderness round society;
I have seen a rose unswa-yed by storms clawing
Up the high sea-cliff. I will
Make my crisis-steps alone, go leaderless,
Praising God's beautiful burning days.

Wagner

Crashing break the storm-stirred waves
Reaching beautiful crescendos under the fingers
Of the endless and music-crazed wind.
Look how nature caters to man, is willing
That he interpret her neglected wonders,
Instead of tampering with the elements, a child's
Sand structure against the sea.
How receptive the coves of mind unflooded
By mad dog madness; Hitler has known
Sanity, subdued by the master of Die Meistersinger.

Fear

“When first I suffered awe
I was a child of four,
Wings born to fancy, might
Ushered me to fright.
One morning’s wakm’g bell
Cleared realities to sell;
But through the oneness-cheer
I saw the forks of Fear.

Poem I

Look inward, private peace is strange, but great;
Make loneliness the stone against the storm.
The group survives, lives dull, keeps usual form,
And sucks the marrow of the core too late.

Poem II

Look outward, having cleared the inward maze,
And the weight of our limited balance is known;
Be steelevd for this, we mostly go alone
To find our future-death down further days.

Gray Nest

Where flies the dust from windward? Where flows
The dark of time? Here, the day is still a poem,
And April stirs the Catskill's windless harp;
O Gray Nest, fast riverward, like Rip's flagon.
Mankind is wheeling the city over the mountain,
There is no peace in the crushing cog [9 That overrides, and is overridden.
O Gray Nest, now wind-lost, now time-lost.

Shorelines

Secure upon the stone-rooted cliff, watching
the storm-Pacific, hard landward,
I thought, what beautiful martyrdom
In the many shorelines about the world, so immovable
against the dark fork of the wave,
So tolerant, it seemed wasted on mankind.
Theirs is a true constancy, I have seen them under
the great wrath of a wind-goaded sea,
Maintain their time-far gaze, their face
From its calm countenance, beyond waterward to
something good. I scribbled the first
Line for a poem, O mother of earth
take pity on your tenant.

San Jacinto Mountain

San Jacinto is like a poem, has beautiful wings
In a December storm, winged blossoms
Of snow softly upon the loveliest calm,
Theirs is a flight to the good.
But man, impatient for the moon, has shorn
The airplane of its infancy,
Turned wings to the bad. success by horror;
And they are talking in terms
Of multitude, rockets to skyscraper-targets,
While mountains bloom with snow;
Is it no wonder that San Jacinto's
Dream is ever starward?

Sonnet I

The greatness of the mountain shades the storm,
I've seen its torch outshine the lightning's span,
Wind arrows fail to break its essence of calm,
Its beauty firm against the climb of man.
Mankind is wedded to Gain, and to Death,
Has missed the mountain's inner-gold, goes down
The days, God worn outside, while underneath
He worships at the winnings of the crown.
One could do worse than to cultivate the ways
That make the mountain, the divine quiet and strength
Against the snows, the grandeur night cannot fade,-
The sleep cored with peace; still we go to great length
Rising the raucous towers towards the peak,
As if we'd force the lovely stars to speak.

Sonnet II

The Ant below the trod of Time's unrest
Is unseen casualty in mankind's fray,
Is swallowed swiftly by the mouth of dust,
Untested by the doom of quiet decay;
And onward after death, he wanders here
Forever in the wind's puff, in the seas
Of whirling elements; and who will cheer
The while his brother multitudes increase?
So you who have likened yourself to a grain
Of sand beside the sun, think not of size,
Your harvest bulwark killing Famine's pam'
Stems from the wisdom that the Ant applies.
Reserve a little praising for this pest,
Put with our crimes, his crime ascends the least.

Sonnet III

With all the glories of the shining sea
Composers give to Time, the wicked side
Is still unsung, is still uncertainty,
A madness underneath the shrouded tide;
With all the glories brighter after those
Who pictured them have passed, the venom-core
Is still well-stuffed, is still behind the rose,
The inner-tiger lamb-like on the shore.
Deep in the little seas shining in man
It is the same, the flowered surface there
Concealing the Hate, and nothing we can
Bring will remove its hold; it is hard to bare
The beating waves of storm, but harder pain
Within a peopled-maze that won't explain.

Sonnet IV

I have remembrance that a certain Miss
Had deemed me pleasantrie at best, and all
The garden was a clouded wilderness,
And all the lovely blossom old with Fall;
Fast were the adolescent ills of love
That took my heart, there were no wings of sunlight
Upon my shrouded rose; vainly I strove
To have the honey of the moon in flight,
Vainly I made my poem. From then until
The moment of these lines, the garden grew
Its summer in the dark, I lost the will
For finding flowers; but the winters blew
Their creeping snows, I trembled, and I turned,
And blossomward I scattered what I burned.

Sonnet V

Now human madness, D-Day over God,
That clearest God, the sweet earth joining seas;
D-Day upon the summer's wonderful road,
Blood into death around the rose; beauties
Well tempered with the peace to emulate,
Mean little now; the individual fast
Within the surging of the group, and Hate
Is legion, and its balance, Love, outcast.
This is the Whole of humanities move,
Not perpetrated by the Part; one can
Forgive the flailing elements, they have
No plotted time to rise and storm, but man,
Eyes closed, has heard the years of ticking-doom,
And yet, and yet walks silent to his tomb.

Sonnet VI

Safe-sunk, willed-treasures from the centuries' deep
Shine in the granite coatings walled by man,
Here indications of the bitter sweep
Of violent progress, when the cell began
Its first whirl with the elements, the rise
From nothingness, war to war, death to death,
All here without humanities surprise
In finding it with themselves underneath.
Such shouting from the errors of the past,
Yet deafness walking the museum's hold;
One would think that here is the proper blast
To shake us into peace, turn frenzy cold;
But no, we follow a very cunning guide,
His tongue is glib, the truth is stirred aside.

Sonnet VII

Such coated prophecies that calm the crowd,
More granite in the peace, more gold along
The Winter road, abundance is avowed,
You'd hardly catch the trick within the song.
Early I quit the part of confusion's fool,
The dancing of another's dance, I broke the rein,
Like a frisky colt who wouldn't go to school,
But found more value in the virgin plane.
Clear came the ocean, clear sang the choric trees,
No longer unfathomed the far and rising snows,
There, where the fashion was to ape and please,
Was now the lovely level where the summer goes;
And free of leader-talk, I chose to learn
The sanity within the season's turn.

Sonnet VIII

You still exert your sterling kindness, Jack,
Undaunted by the way the surface stands,
Poor, coated, or of gold, you sink the Lack
And laud the Has; you'd grow the fertile lands
With pleasant people on a oneness—level,
And communism would be great, if only pure,
' You'd have a World to bring the Gods to revel,
_And have the human love as something sure.
Yet, Jack, from where I live, loud pounds the fight
Of flailing progress. I'd have it your way,
A voluntary brotherhood, yet in our little light
I cannot blank belief, for human sway
Keeps waring, loaded with the centurie's bones,
Up to a robot war from slinging stones.

Sonnet IX

The whole night standing like a tree of stars
Above the citie's wheel, dark peace as deep
Cored as the mountain. A train with war cars
Burns through the windless quiet, it cannot sweep
Aside my marveled thought, here is a poem,
This lovely night too balanced for madness
To blow it to the flame. Though people doom
Themselves to war, the sanity digress,
The dawn resound its raucous waking bell,
The day protrude a warring world, I'd have
A wish to lock the night to where it fell,
Let darkness hide the horrors men revolve.
O night must have been beautiful before
The ships of progress pushed upon the shore.

Sonnet X

Sometime you will exist alone to solve
The ever rising wilderness about
The road, the dark where no beacons revolve,
Like the seaman follow when in doubt.
Alone to hear Confusion loudly orate,
Tell you eloquently that man is king,
Is fool, alone to balance Love and Hate,
To witness what the wind is blowing.
So praise the individual on the shore
Where the oneness-people cannot reach;
Be acquainted with an island; pause before
Great loneliness until the final speech.
Such cleamess circles solitude's lone light,
And stings the unfroked fallacies to flight.

Time

Its throne is beautiful above the peaks of poems
Against the high fires of the ages,
O mother-queen of the kingdoms of the sea
And the mountains, O womb over all.
Here is a lovely proof that nature is one
With the truth of Time, dear Capistrano
Swallows, true as the falling of desirous m'ght,
Dear birds returning, and time-winged.
The Mission empties its sightseers, the contrast
Is very remarkable, birds and man;
The people with their undulant love, I have
Seen them nailing wings to silence;
These birds wheeling with Time; the people
Dreaming outward from Time, dreaming of
A starward escape over an endless road.
From where I watch, I'd say
That the birds have gotten to the stars.

Election Day

Now comes the parties culmination,
Vote of the multitude erects the shining figurehead,
And the nation owns a president.
One of the buyers, I walk along the beach,
Thinking of the unbidden sea,
Of the unbroken mountains beyond the hills;
They have such beautiful wings
Unclipped by the fickleness of a peopled-power.
Go and take of the rose again,
That's twisted, we've never really taken;
I've often wondered how the seasons
Remain so lovely in their turns of loneliness,
Few eyes have they truly held.
From father Washington to the present, we've bought
The candidate with vote; I dreamed
That the mountains and the sea were gifts
Of man , 'b'ut reality loves its _torc_h..

Toward Yosemite

Trees are ever cloaked with peace,
Cored with a constancy of calm, look how they clm'g
To the earth, are beautiful in storm.
Great redwoods choric for the stars, such height
The trees dream of, but do not seek,
Wearing the wings of war. The present is full
Of varied creeds and clashes, the races,
Whites and blacks, and the tortured in-betweens, like birds
Vainly attempting the moon's round wall;
And the present wears a crown of beautiful trees,
But why is the past so deep,
Darker than a dreamless sleep? It is good
That the trees are rooted in
This present, and that past, for here are the legs
Of time's true balance. For avarice only,
Progress minus past; I have seen whole acres
Of tree-stumped earth, toward Yosemite.

California

Choosing where to contemplate the Winter's
Most certain and beautiful sea, I chose the land
The least unstirred, peace at its summer
Blossomed in California's lovely reaches of calm;
For me, the peopled-progress was dead,
Life was the poem in the flower morning, and in
The snow afternoon, and cleansing wmds
Pure upon the uncited land, dearest land
That in a century from now
I shan't have to suffer its towered-pollution.

Interment-system

L2”0 U’D think us well glutted and reeling enough;
Yet we’ve come to profiting with the dead,
Invented a smooth interment-system, clock-work
To the core, and the rites well-wheeled.
Here is no tribute hard rooted against the storm,
The hastened flowers tell nothing; for only
In the calm of afterwards is the sum revealed;
Harder, words stirred by true meaning,
Harder than the tallest monument. I thought of
A bird’s ending, earth-held and silent,
And sailing the element’s unchartered waters,
The freedom of the time-far winds.

The Peace

The Peace, not great enough to fell the sword,
And in our merry dance the sword survives.
The guns abandoned, the war's momentum fades,
Falls motionless, becomes a windless wheel;
The winning rocket spent, the core lies split,
Under the shambles the fine boys sleep.
To mankind this is nothing new, warring
Until destruction and defective Peace,
Our forbears plotted for a broader land.
The Peace becomes a holiday, a public
Merriment. the cunning leaders loudly orate
Past the past; but unmarred Peace is fashioned
From what the past divines, from what it proves;
Our heritage is not the sword, but to
Ascend the rose, to keep the pastoral life.
In battle nothing is a reality,
Only puppets pulled to warring pitch;
The individual will be conquered by
The group, it is high time to work it now.
The Peace, not great enough to fell the sword,
And in our merry dance the sword survives.

Poem A

There, where death pounds upon the manswarm,
where the seasons fly flecked with blood,
tomorrow the wounds will be flowers,
and the rose and the summer and the moon
once more rise and resume.

Tomorrow the power topples the captor,
War is exiled to a convenient island,
and mothers bear a thousand thorns,
and the rose and the summer and the moon
once more rise and resume.

Crueler Claw

Such a cunning change of sea covers tragedy's recent
mark, as if its duty were to trick the memory
Out of remembrance. Hearing the after-calm,
The quieted waters sing softly shoreward, one would
not think that the sea a few tides back
Surged darkly Northward, great against the futility
Of a prodding boat, while on the cliff,
Carlotta's summer passed whirling to premature
Winter, love wedded to widowhood. Down in
The blackened wave gulping its toothless mouth,
Fernando washed homeward, drifting the water's
Belly. His end, clearly a purer way to the dark
Than the present barbed ways of the world;
like mankind, the sea cloaks storm behind the rose,
But conquers easy, like an ether-conquest, to sleep;
Unlike man's show, its erupting stage,
its groaning cast. Clearly the sweet earth
Keeps a crueler claw than in the wilderness
Downward from the shore.

Apparel

The clothes abounding and abiding,
many colored fashion for the dead,
apparel of eternally perfect fit:
I shall adorn this pattern
cut from the world's elements.
I have seen a lovely butterfly,
no longer wind-doomed, but earth-wrapped,
and lovelier in its stillness,
as sheltered as the ocean fish:
O apparel of eternally perfect fit.
I have seen the winging rain drops
diving for the sweet summer ground:
O many colored fashion for the dead.
The clothes abounding and abiding:
I shall adorn this pattern
cut from the world's elements.

Escape

Time, vainly I run from it,
Ride from it to flight,
Time, like an arrow
From womb into night.
And W'interward turns
The path of Spring;
Not over the moon
My heart's wild wing.
And death in my bones,
And a little beyond,
The frosty lips
Of the gulping ground.
And hungry silence
And snow dark and deep
And Time abiding
The while I sleep.

Imagery

A wave, moment-queen
Of the others, stately rising,
Flaunts a flash of rainbow,—
Out of her depth
A lone swan
Flying pondward
Over the sands.

The Balance

Christ to correct us, we kill to win the world
A balanced scale, outweigh the weighted
Down-bridge of a Hitler time, unbalanced.
But the errors cloud the centuries; Caesar's
Predecessors and successors unprevented;
And the Judas—silver greatly multiplied.
Dumb stands the cross, a darkened symbol twisted
To adjust the scale, a little charm
Under a beautifully balanced heaven.
I can think of many a proper level to praise,
One is the peaceful poise of the sea;
True, it has its wrath, but balanced.

Patience

Walking a laughter-claimed shore, one almost forgets
That misery grinds great contments.
Here, temptation shouts for a pale poem,
Ironless, more of the raucous girls
And boys, beach-frolicking, a flimsy adolescence
Flying its wann'g pleasantries.
I contemplate a sonnet, but a few gulls dive
Shoreward, demanding my attention,
Like indicating arrows toward the cove
Secluding Patience, that cunmn'g
Fisherman; Time long ago stuck down hls' name
While witness to his profitable silence.
To wait the stars, or nearer beauties, would be
An act to praise; not spider-like
Patience flaunting a beautiful bass, the prey
In the net. O beauty beware the web.
But here is the core for my km'd of poem,
Patience like an iron impression
While adolescent pleasantries dissolve.

A Wide Sea-mirror

Bright beacon of high noon, sun upon the Pacific,
The while a Laguna flower cliff smiles
In a wide sea-mirror, shines deep in my eyes;
A lovely cliff, more rose than the girls
Below me truly drying on the sea-claimed sand.
But two fishermen asleep and adrift
In a prodding boat come tide-swept to the scene;
Shattered spreads the glass; O lieless mirror
Quietly fishing beauty, now broken by intruding man,
You have nature's close ally
In the coming fog, look how it swallows the whole
Intrusion. It is always this way
At the last of things, nature turning the helm.
Day has walked me to a poem,
One that is too winged for film of mind.

Mourners In The Sun

Sun-gowned stands the shore, the flower ch'fi leans
forward, fixed in the eye of the sea;
But dulling the bright coast road, like a dark cloud
Scudding the white of day, the slow beat of a black
burial procession, the time-worn dark clothes
Of the dead, death in a circle where the people
Ride and walk and bow in black. And this is the reason
I have vowed to escape the future's descending pall,
Either by fib, or swift seclusion.

In Laguna Canyon

Safe from the raucous talk of traffic there is nature's
lovely music, 0 listeners lost, such a constant
Summer of music. Beautiful over the canyon,
The white feet of day softly dancing nightward, the while
I take up yesterday's scribbled words,
Unstirred by rightful meaning. There is wind whirling
From the sea, the leaves in their flight from Autumn,
rhythmically scraping over the pavement,
Are music, the day pivots through the choric trees;
And I forget the intended poem about Caesar's
last crescendo. I think if this were comprehended
By the crowd, it would down the sword in every
Resemblance of Rome. My words were stirred by bitterness.

Tanka

Evidently the blossom tree
Has a rendezvous.
A pink ribbon
Lying at dawn beneath a willow
Is evidence enough.

Poem B

The lively sea is calm now
Since the olive moon
Has come home;
But in the sealed night
These two lovers
Will resume something.

Two Hokkus

I

A poem is' a bell,
The soul the clapper tolling
Immortality.

2

Pretty little girls
Wheel like a ball of colors
Unraveling fast.

Song

H URRT ' Winter settles fast,
Like a descending bird;
But now Summer shines awhllc,
And softness under the singing tree,
And the fence of evening;
So, hurry to your pleasure,
And for a time
You shall escape
The winged plunderer.

A Sea Meeting

The friendship of the sea is' swift.
Her flying wave,
Like some fish of flight
Up from her great depth
Bringing her message of greetm'g.
Then comes silver spray,
Her soft kisses.

Love Poem

Last night my lonely sleep
Met with a rose, full blown,
Gift from a dream.
We were
Deep in the sealed darkness
And we took our sweet love
Down by the soft sand shore
Where moonlight made itself
An olive sea under
A singing boat.
We sailed
All evening long; emotion,
A poem of passion searing
The petals of our paradise.
O morning of a dream,
Vanished into the sun,
O Time-far, more distant
Than memorie's falcon.

Fox Hunt

Six hundred clubbers crowd
And stamp round the frightened fox,
Kind is an earth hole,
Compared to the fires of hunters,
And their winged torches
Winging for death. It is normal
To break out of starvation.
Go feed the beast well
And end the hungry jungle.
Six hundred clubbers gloat
Over the beaten and cowering fox,
Heritage comes premature, a child
Clubs for the coup de gr ce.
Here is no fresh slant;
Rome revelled in a mad-oneness,
Its amphitheatre locked
Round the lion-tortures of man.

Time Over All

Time over all, atop the elements,
Astride the world's wonders,
In all our public madness,
In all our blunders.

Time over all, tiptoeing the puppet
Strings to Mars, down
Hellward for the devil's drink,
Winter-whirling in our crown.
Ever listener of words
By no true meaning stirred,
Time over all, kin to the wind,
Watchdog for the dead.

Great Sun

Great Sun, insistent, glides down the shady trees
to sunken earth where, slowly, life is drugng
to drowsiness, inhaling yellow perfume.
Unobstructed, great Sun probes the canyon's
obscurity, ascending gloom to nothingness.
Vainly the canyon echoes to the wind,
the wind is somewhere exciting the sea;
and old Tom of the glib tongue is silent;
Pancho abandons his constant place
and puts to panting in a useless shade.
Great Sun whirls into night, night into dawn,
while in a covered nook, a flower
has been a Cinderella, has danced in gold.

To A Pistol

Death {7EWEL, worn ring—like round death's black digit,
Conceived and nurtured by man,
Protection for a conniver's progress, or public madness,
Another wasted ornament for humanity;
Your existence almost Buddha-like, God over
Crawl'm'g cities crushing grass and trees,
Mountainward risings of silent seas of stone.
Few instances when you were right,
For time has proven that in the main you were wrong;
Higher the river, the blood you spilled.
The ages will not let you die, this moment
Invention fashions your tomorrow;
If mankind were fingerless, imitation would serve;
Even the maimed have made you shine.

Trees Are Exploited Too

Dwarfed by the grand redwoods of Yosemite, I present
A very startling contrast, a human
Measured beside a wood-giant. But trees are
Not so far different; both lives run
Mankind-ruled. Trees are exploited too; here is
A profit from summer revenue, clearly
A cause for tending cloud-acquainted things that
An unlucky century will find extinct.
Trees are exploited too, the ax brings the saw,
Brings the doom. Though a tree's wind-crown
Is made of immortality, unbroke by man, and its
Star-crown safe upon an ebon base
Far from tomorrow's rocket; here is a likeness,
Though one shows a harder patience than
The other, a greater silence breaking the storm;
Both suffer the witless oneness of the crowd.
From here, dwarfed by the grand redwoods of Yosemite,
I would term us equal under doom.

Superseded

Such praise for an excellent seascape
You'd think' the art superseded the subject;
The Pacific's mine of lovely colors
Worked deep and refined on canvas. A good
Artis't can catch a lum"ted likeness,
Even near the elusive pinnacle; the masters
Saw the star-spark, but couldn't
Show it clearly plam', had to be contented
fixer-21'»
With mixm'gs of imagination.
Fast the talon-minds invisible wings.
But beautiful nature flys faster.

Tranquillity

The little boat will dance with the sea, and make
song with the waves once more;
Clay-hk'e, the dove will clasp the bough
Above the rose; outward, sea-miles away, upon the torn
islands, man will strain new stone towards
The clouds; another shattered past will be buried
By mountains of modern sand. Promenading by a peace
time Pacific, many will laud their children's
Triumph; only the flimsy parts will be spoken,
The whole which could break the sword, will go unsaid,
every word well turned by a glib tongue,
Varied upon mankind's flexible scale,
His cunning measure. I have seen all of the solution
in the sea's tranquillity breaking upon the shore.

Poem C

I have the summer in my poem,
There is a rose deep in my eyes,
The wilderness lies far away,
And the earth is a sweet surprise.
But in the summer and the rose,
In the scented wings of bloom,
The ravenous ways of time
Appeasing unsated doom.
Down in my apple lives death,
The flowers wither in the glade,
The moon is honey in my fingers,
And all the sweets of beauty fade.
I have no summer in my poem,
There is no rose deep in my eyes,
The wilderness bewilders me,
And the earth is loud with sighs.

