

# Charles Foster

## Selected Poems



# Charles Foster

February 12, 1922 [Boston, Massachusetts] –

July 30, 1967 [Sonoma, California]

Foster was born in Newton (a suburb of Boston), Massachusetts. After a career in advertising, he started a new life in 1957 in Venice, California becoming part of the Venice Beats led by Stuart Perkoff. An alcoholic, he died of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of 45. Robert Mezey, the formalist poet, eulogized him with these words: “He saw deep into the machinery of the Social Lie, he saw our world betrayed into the hands of the moneymen, the time-servers and connivers, the ‘hi-armed fuzz’ who kill Christ over and over, and he was outraged. During his lifetime, he published in the Evergreen Review and other underground journals; his collections of poetry, including *Victoria Mundi: Selected Poems* (1973) were published posthumously.

*Victoria Mundi*. New York: The Smith, 1973

*Outrider for the Lady*. New York: The Smith, 1974

# Honk—Honk

Honk—Honk,

Geese Song

No Invention,

A Discovery

of Earrings?

Not necessarily

A Rejected suitor

A Mute testament

3 stepping stones

the song of the flute?

yes, si, bueno.

come as you are,

can you manage

PAJAMAS?

## magpie, 1964

in the temples and groves  
of those newly born  
out of old corpses

a magpie is sitting

she scolds & scorns  
her ironies are gentle  
but sharp/ as the sweat of goats;

i will eat the part,

magpie said,  
the part you left behind  
& you will look foolish, naked  
or simply invisible  
without that which  
is bears brother  
honey for the children  
a taste for wine  
of elderberries  
sprawling wild

across the neighbor's porch & on

into the sea.

ii

salvage what?

a complete file of Dick Tracy  
comic books, dated  
1936?

petrified forests, snow drums  
song & poem, drum & flautist

(some new years offering to lips  
old stones the grin of ivy

skull brimming with  
syrup of the dead—

what feast is this?

("the way you do it, is  
you do it and you don't do it  
who cares if a page is turned

—yet you do  
 certainly, your wish  
 to go on, the  
 school  
 is open  
 children are playing  
 on tar,  
 lines marking  
 out  
 basketball courts, ghosts  
 of  
 hopscotch  
 gapes & gaps  
 in those funney fences.  
 \*\*\*  
 the usher floats down the aisle  
 of winter waves  
 passing his velvet sack  
 his pestelence  
 into awaiting pews  
 under brite green &  
 yellow  
 umbrella, sand  
 & shadows,  
 voices that crack  
 twisting themselves  
 to  
 conform  
 to  
 madness  
 dull places  
 no exercise  
 in soul city.  
 except the stubborn and unmending dark  
 that wordless, companionante life  
 no thought, hardly any trees:  
 i reach out for your  
 hand

the big step

grasp it

you make

up to the pier:

is there any point

to their humor

except as shield

against the dead

out of the body,

the maggot in the beating heart?

april 1964

# URGENT ENTRY

ALL IS NOT LOST  
DEATH COMES & PASSES  
THE CHANGE IS AS REAL  
AS PUBERTY

OR DIVORCE

(our blind eyes

like gentle mice  
o noah  
split from our lords house  
make slow music  
at the death by water  
(by schmaltz vinegar envy  
the raw rice of scorn

but in peace she lives

and her men know her peace  
shaking with the deep laugh

beyond veil of terror, psycho gym;  
students of doom's curvature

GLASS RIVERS OF SUNDAY  
the secret prolonged dial

of terror

midnight vine

of poison

stabs out of tailored  
eyes in daylite;

into the cauldron

magic circle

(banshee & magpie

cometh the glow

her blood aura

transforming

old terror

in the strings  
bassoons  
& horns,  
ape kin  
ivory winged  
sports

and, turning a page  
to tense clock of violin  
the light falls,  
CHRIST!  
let the light fall  
where it may,  
if only  
to heal  
wounds forgotten  
those blaring doves  
commanding trumpets where

NADA RAINS BLEAK ASH  
CONDOM SILK SIEVE MIRTH  
VIRUS OF EVERYDAY  
O SECRET BLOOD LORDS  
OUR LADY'S BEST TAFFETA  
SUBWAY Ooze IN DAMP ELECTRIC GREENS  
(the nurse, the dancing greek,

ape in motley  
in a helter-skelter valley  
where the maypole,  
there the dancers  
make her first spring circle  
bare feet pounding &  
forming

—as even under the eye  
of all  
lust, law  
old bones

the great drive  
of IMAGE  
o savage rampaging river  
o blessed cock  
wild stems radiant  
eye of womb  
fountain of endless  
seizing & making

making new  
making out of in-turnings  
and blaring  
with the madness of  
ox in panic, those eyes  
she who takes flight  
the dive,  
frozen black  
eggshells in back

of eyes,

a rehearsal  
stance  
the actor, grim, in high joy  
purposive, treading  
on the light foot  
going forth  
by touch  
into it where the  
child screams  
where soft particles of night,

wounds, wounds, screeches  
web of nightshine

Desecrated

Torn  
by the  
terrible  
shreiks

of the ocean.  
your love  
tears, sirens  
your wails  
against this joy  
this stone unpity  
of—

## II

out of whirl  
old wail of zeus dead  
living with dead,  
one of a number  
the song of thunder  
may rain, speckling  
soft soil, moving  
earth ironies between  
the genuine sun  
    sundering of image  
    rainbow master  
    trout & cod, the sacred  
    body of  
        'the natural'  
when chain saws snarl in winter wood, in may snow

“is the world  
a place?”

S Z P

out of the construction to be seen  
in that alley between the  
    junkshop & the public library  
    running from the temple to the palace  
    between the way of gorgon and the way of miles  
    beset by an enormity, a ghost

anonymous  
not above wisdom or despair  
holding to the deep heart  
where the gathering laugh  
passes those gaps of fate, past  
consequence, modes, roles

sees out of  
a mysterious presence  
place of the actual pulse

where the raiment of flax is stored  
the dried & waiting beans of their  
bodies, soul matrices  
lay waiting for

distribution

among our people.

such are the lessons of loneliness  
thus the cat looks up wistfully at Zoo Giraffe.  
and a winged creature chills & excites a dormant sentry.  
these are the offerings of that mind

which leadeth itself.  
leadeth into itself  
eroding

with light.  
jumbles & codewords  
pastiche & triptych  
Horny fingers  
custard spilled & frozen in the park,  
the black dirt  
stained  
a violet bat  
illustrating evolution

(as tho obscene  
because inhuman  
his chandelles  
under moth-strewn streetlight  
he's sudde remembrances

twisting the outer dark,  
his shell;  
his sudden shy mewling

.1

it never ends,  
the form of a man,  
that shape in which  
by which  
he lives,  
this is his natural  
death sentence.

















































































































































































