

Leroy MacLeod

Selected Poems



LeRoy Oliver MacLeod

October 20, 1893 [Anderson, Indiana] –

July 28, 1983 [Binghamton, New York]

MacLeod was born in Anderson, Indiana and spent his early life working on a farm. He earned his Bachelor's degree from DePauw University in 1915. He married Irene (Miller), also a graduate of DePauw, in Indiana the same year (they eventually divorced). He worked as a journalist at various locations in the West, eventually becoming a copywriter in a firm in California, eventually becoming a partner in the company. He started writing poetry in 1924. He also wrote novels centered upon the farming community in Indiana, including *Three Steeples*, *The Years of Peace* and *The Crowded Hill*.

Driven. London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927

Driven

Along the yellow road the brown hogs go
Between the thin woods stained with summer's death—
Waving the little banners of their breath
Above their round backs' undulating flow.

Their ears are blinders and their gaze too low
To see how like a lidless bloodshot eye
Pressed to the frosted pane of morning sky
A sly sun coldly watches where they go.

Their ears are blinders and they only see
The road is freedom, where their feet may go.
They nose the dust, the air, and do not know
The gate is shut and latched that set them free.

The road spreads on; the poles hum overhead.
The brown hogs snuff their way and do not know
The leaf-stained roadside brook that does not flow
Is no more cold than warm blood quieted.

But no such happy ignorance is given
To us who put our feet upon their tracks!
We know too well how there behind our backs
A gate is shut and we are also driven.

March Lamb

In the dark fold, night, a lamb keeps crying
With the weak lost wail of loneliness,
 Just a day old.

The edged air grips a young ewe lying
With her teeth set tight on feebleness
 Against the cold.

And beneath a rime shroud will soon be found
A ewe's courage fixed in a marble stress
 On the hard March ground.

In the gray fold, dawn, the lamb stops crying...
Would you suck stone, lamb? Would you try to feed
 On milk from a rock?

Is the cold warm, lamb?—Then better early dying
Than to grow for the shears, or bleat and bleed
 With the rest of the flock.

Winter Burial

Lift... and walk!... They will shut the door for us.
That must be his child crying.—
None she ever bore for us.
...She was light before for us;
Now a cold lover's weight on hers is lying.

Crunch... on snow!... Four of us can carry her,
And one can follow weeping.
Only one could marry her;
All of us will bury her...
And a cold lover's bed is hers for sleeping.

Lower... deep!... None of us may lie with her.
We wooed her lips with burning:
Four in turn would try with her;
One would live and die with her—
But her cold lover Death was more discerning.

Wild Hares at Night

Under a shady, shaken water
Sunbeams dance at noon,
In green veils over golden,
To rhythms with no tune.
Phantom the motion, and ended soon!—
But weird... weird is the dance in winter
Of hares beneath the moon!

Sired of a silence gray and frozen;
Wombed of an ambush waiting low,—
They dance on shrouds of silver:
Four quick turns, and go.
And all that is left the watcher,
Who creeps there as a foe,
Is the drumming heart they dance to—
The cold—the shade—the moon—and snow.

