

James Boyer May

Selected Poems



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December 30, 1904 [Red Granita, Wisconsin] –

February 23, 1981 [Los Angeles, California]

Best known as the “maverick” publisher of *Trace* (1952-1970) which, in addition to publishing new poetry and reviews, indexed the activity of small press poetry magazines in the United States and elsewhere, May was an ambitious essayist, poet and fiction writer. It because of May’s advice that the first edition of *Howl* was printed in the U.K. and hence confiscated on its return journey. May self-published an attractive 3 volume boxed-set of his selected fiction, criticism and poetry, though he doesn’t seem have made much of a reputation for himself as a writer at all during his lifetime. He co-edited *Los Angeles Poetry I*, with Thomas McGrath and Peter Yates in 1958.

Modern Greek Poems. London: Villiers Publications, 1954.

Selected Poems. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1955.

Collected Later Poems. London: Villiers Publications, 1957. Gum

Surrogate

(A Study in Modern Culture)

This counterfeit's defined by semblances
which fix not what ensues bright duplicate
aluminum and hollow shining houseware
symbols. Adding cheers for wres-
tling champions, past archwayed gates
of sweaty stadia . . . Relax then
ventureward through mirrored bars,
inhaling rolling-bellied songs
of heterosexual maidens with long breasts . . .
add night-late flights along
gold-flashing boulevards
in high-g geared misdirections.

Lo! here one sits, red-lovely yoked,
crooning in to five blue telephones
in close-ranked drill on desk parade,
with button-summons for a sloe-
eyed secretary's dashed epitomes
in wired shalt notebooks. Nervous clowns run corridors
of apparitioned omened form.
See Triumph's bloody countenance? Pellmell
ahead, white chariot desk!
Minus charioteer, ahead
of weeping captives where matriculants
adore prize mass curricula . . .
and every hour served,
if senselessly. Pomaded
tailored flourishes of
bright-appareled egress.
Through anachrOnistic shams . . .
insensitive, though naked-robed and counter-quoted.

A paralalian link through interval
of undelved prophecies,

he's ego-censored, smelling incensed
shouted-silent purposes; mere smoke
 enwraps these seeds of utter
 cigarette survival,
non-gratuitous intercourse
of commerce, procreating
 spurious-dollared man . . .
His book records no mysteries,
in spite of Paracelsus.

On Defining Subversive Citizens

Patriotic show of zealot
chauvinistic hands
has cast into each market place
 pink ostrakon,
rejected fragmentation
 for writing which
quick names intelligence has
earned dull hatred from the ignorant.

My country not of thee
these warranties of banishment
to independent thought;
for Thomas Paine and other
dangerous men who fathered us
held never fears for chippings from
intolerant-lawed chalices
promoting universal state.

Tyrants spring not sportlike
from whom break set rules.
Again, erred farce of banishing
Hyperbolus—Nicias
joined with Alcibiades
to villify all men who won't
approve triskelion seal
of conquest, trin-
ity, emasculate,
of dollars, demo-cratic votes,
 and bureaucrats.

Democracy!—how breed
essential cranky critics
in deserts where rich oil wells flow
obediently for chewing gum?
Before ten days have locked smart trunks
for travel of so brash and raffish

culture into every continent
(or ten long testing years,
inquire who stops at home
to tipple on returns.

Of June Necessity

Where green, ensue dose whirring blades,
to lop and mangle succulence of summer . . .

 Later, leap chill flickering
 sprinkler sprays of night-pall, so
that cockcrow sun may cook shorn grasses, steaming
 sweet green death endued
 for staggering bugs to wade,
before quenched midday steeps in sick-
ish haybarn odor, fryingly.

Moreover, once steel music cuts
to quiet in mown freshest afternoon,
 charm's fastly wilted
 in greenest moistly shades . . .

Wet second twilight bleeds no chlorophyll—
top grasses yellow in warm dark.

On Lost Heroism's Frustrations

Repurposive endurements endlessly
soar, eoning fulfillments in
 blue stellar places
where nebulating fires whirl lightless—
but for eyes eternal-blind,
 on world like ours.

We strain sight, strive to find
what verges on cold violet dark
out there amongst white turning spheres
ellipsing countless in time's
 far-lost dimension . . .
while inner conflicts spell
indulgence for rude primal vandals
whom some Freudists cite as too repressed
 for virile animals.

But where's fit cause for approbation . . .
 curving backwards
then, by Darwin dial? Nor by measure
 of high sentiment
of foregone super-abnegation . . .
'gat by galaxies or—
 by nuclear view—
 wrong climbers out of space.

Genius Populi Americani

My country, 'tis where not-
so-mystic twelve's libations
pray shuffle-rooted plantings yield
fat juicy-fruited affluence.

Presiding genius of this wealthy state—
oh, grant discerning fraudulence
to hear each least susurrus
hint sophisticated
where which billboarded piedmont
next rebuds the easy dollar!

Some Mizpah vantage grant to them
above so-needy-searching fratres—
proxenos' aid in Latin climes
where versatile investment earns
twice more than pensive scholarship.

Topographical percentages,
steep price-exalted hills between
which causeways soar,
where paupers may be ever gorged
on rich-oiled hash of Cadillacs'
spare parts by swabbing cash-
lined curbside spittle-pots.

Geniculate entrepreneurs
are best-clothed jugglers here—
they swing smart shifts, full-profiting
each stichomythic intercourse
of harlot law-inflicting ghouls.
The topmost key-voisoir intends
a connotative arch above
arvales greenly-verdured,
multi-branched, indentured to
a soil whose every inch is profit-seeded.

Modern Physicist as Poet Sorting Incongruities

How bone-mure mind within a skull?
For, bonelessly, the senses reach
atomic notions . . . plotted solid-
dreaming—as of flesh, another
pretense from impelled attractions,
particled unviewably while
thoughts far-swim all aether-waves.

A mind can navigate those seas
remotest ever, promontoried
where great curve of space returns
awash from nothingness abhorred,
as meanwhile had been falsely said
of nature's needed vacuum;
yet, similes are useless, as
to try illuminating where
no eyes have formed . . . and meanwhile bears
no referents, because that term
of timing, waiting, pausing, conning
guides no truer exploration
than has caused men postulate that
minds are murable and bones less
fluid than is blood . . . while senses
haul to unportended shores
new theories no sense verifies.

A wise-born folly, like equating
settled destiny with chance
or fact about the universe,
that parallels all meet.
We every one perform as if
we sensed reality- and each
but needs assurance, to be free.

Consider the Coral...

Leads none and strays not, for straying forgot . . .
clings rather, strivingly, memory-hued,
colorfully-rendered escape in pastels,
warmed in rose depths of the aquamarine,
 where canary-chromed fishes
 flit not a note,
gliding along Dendrophylliac buds.

Selfhood's subversive by rules of the strand—
Madrepore mouths swallow not for a brain . . .
permanence only for external bone,
fossilised records. Not one living polyp
 here is muscled for choosing
 positive loss . . .
gaining degenerate mutual bliss.

Movement as primary register now—
such is the kingdom living on earth—
spacious reality used, not just sensed,
tasted or felt, as by tentacled mouths.
 Nor is bone-castle purpose—
 mimic accords,
rearing new bird-perches out of old seas.

Loving is leaving one's lover behind—
tritely observed by all barristers of rhyme.
Clinging love's prison, not soul, but the corpse . . .
bled since, detritus is left for cold waves.
 In small caves of old hunger
 rots gone desire,
guarding no long entrance of birth.

Dangerous therapies, harmonies' arts—
occupied sanely, immutable forms—
feeding and venting and feeding again,
hoping for only like forming of likes,

as Triassic salt medium,
currently bathed,
dreaming conversion to petrified worth.

Psychological Dissertation

An attitude of body may denote the mind:
how one stands or prays or sits or leans
upon the atmosphere, or covers up
one's finitude, or looks toward flown invention.
The eyes flit gestures which the limbs may not;
and stomach-rumbling should be listened for
before the word. Without a bated breath,
could lovers meet? And there, beneath, a heart
 that signals rapidly by beat
 the time which hands lack yet the boldness
 to reach out and touch. Ambition
 is a forwardness of spine, a jaw
 kept shut on hunger after nodding
 of decision . . . slackness of
 the shifting hips reveals
a looseness in convention . . . moral firmness
of the sworn intention trips on air,
when shoulders shrug before the fist has clenched.

Trapped Heart . . . By Memory

Incredibly, each satiated mind
reverts to peer through rain-dark panes of pasts.
No present placance can forestall that search
for muddy horror, when has cloyed all bright-
est-sunned contrivance where immediacy
turns, hinged on lucent casements, Rung to joys
green-napping, lenient under birdsung arbored-
congress dalliance (how blithely clipt!).
What lawn may ever stretch out swordJess to
changed brink? What change may, conjured, merely fail
with juncture-visaged sunlit like? . . . No—grayly,
bears some dreadful hope of tragedy . . .
perverse, each ego, cloy fully—because from contrasts only,
reek white roses sweet.
Or color-mixed painted shades between,
where limb-wound passions, searching, press for alternating
aspects, breathing spectraled flesh,
warm-moistly . . . query tears and terror too.

The Dissimulating Lunatic

whose realm is ever present, spaced in careful
careless pause upon his whimsical desires so
 dreamed, unmet . . . He wills to not-will his
 discovery of fantasy, through testing
whether these are servants on his vast estate—nor
 trying if one ordering of change
 can move a wall or lop one tree or budge one post.

His happiness relies on self-controlling
vision, holding back command, while reveling in
 sanctuaried thoughts of genius,
 his own; for ALL could disappear, supposing
only that he'd stop his measured pacing bounds of
 measureless domains and speak hoarse word
 to cause split earth to gobble up his hates.

And Keep This Christmas All The Year

There are known ways of rendering
without obeisance: trees
are worshipped, burned, and built upon
and other-with and nailed erect
for Jesus, canted by
false brittle balls of glory, up-
right on their crucifixes, bleeding not
one single man's salvation, posted, pos-
tered for an oversoul—a Jungian myth
mistold?—which feels how life has al-
so worshipped life by murdering it
in multi-forms. If man could smite
the source, he'd blot the sun.
Then—agony enough, in ending all?

Well-contemplate significance
of cocktails sipped before a withering tree—
how least of these is not forgiven. Flank
no thieves—this Christ, itself, was stolen from
some first-snowed slope, while olives for
martinis had their seeds replaced by pearls
of onions, knowledgeless, unwittingly
here soaked by alcohol which pickles brains
alive on shoulders of these jolly folk
who carol homely reminiscences
of dear old Nell . . . Noel . . . so knelling pun-
ningly with ghastly laughter, maudlin talk
confessing no salvations shared.
They realize their tortured torturing plights,
with tears like pine-tree needles falling where
their gutless gifts to human genitals
lie scattered. Offerings upon wronged hope
of future lives they might inseminate.

Oh, come—let us be joyful! Merrily,
come ring new year's ensuing orgies soon,

at last well-daring strip our bodies to
adore what all this flummery's disguised!
We'll pray to being, sing for virile selves'
creative acts, halt crucifixions now
before dread formulae to blot out suns!
Oh, leave green trees to grow, erecting facts
and not dead symbols! Nailing Christs WAS NOT
the meaning of this holiday—but life!
 and those possessing spring in them
 can sing without wassail—they hold
exhibits holier than Eucharist,
high means of giving thanks by exercise
of what was meant by Him whose parables
were later falsely exegeticised
to mumble over corpses—death-in-birth
equated by a pagan tree. BUT HE,
 LEFT DEAD, HAS LIVED ENTIRE! Leave off
reprisals, murdering denials of
 the flesh—behold,
 the Living God
 is of us! We are One!

