

Poems from Origin no. 19.

[s.l.]: Kyoto, Japan, 1970

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HIS CARPETS FLOWERED •

William Morris

I

— how we're carpet-making
by the river
a long dream to unroll
and somehow time to pole
a boat

I designed a carpet today —
dogtooth violets
and spoke to a full hall
now that the gall
of society's

corruption stains throughout
Dear Janey I am tossed
by many things
If the change would bring
better art

but if it would not?
O to be home to sail the flood
I'm possessed
and do possess
Employer

of labor, true —
to get done
the work of the hand...
I'd be now a rich man
had I yielded

on a few points of principle
Item sabots
and blouse —

I work in the dye-house
myself

Good sport dyeing
tapestry wool
I like the indigo vats
I'm drawing patterns so fast
Last night

in sleep I drew a sausage —
somehow I had to eat it first
Colorful shores — mouse ear...
horse-mint... The Strawberry Thief
our new chintz

II

Yeats saw the betterment of the workers
by religion — slow in any case
as the drying of the moon
He was not understood —
I rang the bell

for him to sit down
Yeats left the lecture circuit
yet he could say: no one
so well loved
as Morris

III

Entered new waters
Studied Icelandic:
At home last minute signs
to post:
Vetch

grows here — Please do not mow

We saw it — Iceland — the end
 of the world rising out of the sea —
 cliffs, caves like 13th century
 illuminations

of hell-mouths
 Rain squalls through moonlight
 Cold wet
 is so damned wet
 Iceland's

black sand
 Stone buntings'
 fly-up-dispersion
 Sea-pink and campion a Persian
 carpet

•

WAR

The trees full of snipers, the new kind
 of bird
 Men on the hunt for Russian furs
 for Ukranian sausage
 and Chinese girls

They floated past a crescent moon
 to Sicily —
 strings of diminished pearls
 In each pearl-parachute
 a tommy gun

The Russian — only a man from Georgia
 USSR
 could dance like that
 My baby son? — in some
 secret zone

PEACE

Dark road home
 from town —
 young neighbor as he walked
 wound up tiny Swiss works —
 a firefly music

Mickey Mouse leaned on a bubble
 removed a tear
 from the elephant's eye
 to a brush so he
 could scrubble

Our small boat's motor raced
 Great Blue
 the heron sailing as in China
 not caring
 to win

•

Blue and white
 china cups
 glacier-adjacent

lost
 in the foothills

•
 Waded, watched, warbled
 learned to write on slate
 with chalk from an ancient sea

If I could float my tentacles
 through the deep...
 pulsate an invisible glow

. . .

Faithful to the marsh
 of my childhood
 we camp on the dryest portion

In April's flood-freeze
 crystals hang low on the bush
 all day

Then green — we're en rapport
 with grass as once or twice
 with humans

•
 Sleep's dream
 the nerve-flash in the blood

The sense
 of what's seen

'I took cold
 on my nerves' — my mother

tall, tormented
 darkinfested

and my sometimes
 happy fatherphosphor

•

Consider the alliance —
ships and plants

The take-for-granted bloom
of our roadsides

Queen Anne's Lace
Black Eyed Susans
rode the sea

'Specimens graciously passed
between warring fleets'

And when an old boat rots ashore
itself once living plant
it sprouts

•

Wallace Stevens

What you say about the early
yellow springtime is also something
worth sticking to

Gail Kaul⁵⁷

437 Adams

Fort Atkinson

THOMAS JEFFERSON

1

My wife is ill!
And I sit
 waiting
for a quorum

2

Fast ride
his horse collapsed
Now *he* saddled walked

Borrowed a farmer's
unbroken colt
To Richmond

Richmond How stop —
Arnold's redcoats
there

3

Elk Hill destroyed —
Cornwallis
carried off 30 slaves

Jefferson:
Were it to give them freedom
he'd have done right

4

Latin and Greek
my tools
to understand
humanity

I rode horse
away from a monarch
to an enchanting
philosophy

5

The South of France

Roman temple
'simple and sublime'

Maria Cosway
harpist
on his mind

white column
and arch

6

To daughter Patsy: Read —
read Livy

No person full of work
was ever hysterical

Know music, history

dancing

(I calculate 14 to 1
in marriage

she will draw
a blockhead)

Science also
Patsy

7

Agreed with Adams:
send spermaceti oil to Portugal
for their church candles

(light enough to banish mysteries?:
three are one and one is three
and yet the one not three
and the three not one)

and send salt fish
U. S. salt fish preferred
above all other

8

Jefferson of Patrick Henry
backwoods fiddler statesman:

'He spoke as Homer wrote'
Henry eyed our minister at Paris —

the Bill of Rights hassle —

'he remembers. . .

in splendor and dissipation
he thinks yet of bills of rights'

9

True, French frills and lace
for Jefferson, sword and belt

but follow the Court to Fontainebleau
he could not —

house rent would have left him
nothing to eat

. . .

He bowed to everyone he met
and talked with arms folded

He could be trimmed
by a two-month migraine

and yet
stand up

10

Dear Polly:
I said No — no frost

in Virginia — the strawberries
were safe

I'd have heard — I'm in that kind

of correspondence

with a young daughter —
if they were not

Now I must retract
I shrink from it

11

Political honors
 'splendid torments'
'If one could establish
 an absolute power
of silence over oneself'

When I set out for Monticello
 (my grandchildren
 will they know me?)
How are my young
 chestnut trees —

12

Hamilton and the bankers
would make my country Carthage

I am abandoning the rich —
their dinner parties —

I shall eat my simlins
with the class of science

or not at all
Next year the last of labors

among conflicting parties

Then my family

we shall sow our cabbages
together

13

Delicious flower
of the acacia

or rather

Mimosa Nilotica
from Mr. Lomax

14

Polly Jefferson, 8, had crossed
to father and sister in Paris

by way of London — Abigail
embraced her — Adams said

'in all my life I never saw
more charming child'

Death of Polly, 25,
Monticello

15

My harpsichord
my alabaster vase
and bridle bit
bound for Alexandria

Virginia

The good sea weather
 of retirement
 The drift and suck
 and die-down of life
 but there is land

16

These were my passions:
 Monticello and the villa-temples
 I passed on to carpenters
 bricklayers what I knew

and to an Italian sculptor
 how to turn a volute
 on a pillar

You may approach the campus rotunda
 from lower to upper terrace
 Cicero had levels

17

John Adams' eyes
 dimming
 Tom Jefferson's rheumatism
 cantering

18

Ah soon must Monticello be lost
 to debts
 and Jefferson himself
 to death

19

Mind leaving, let body leave
 Let dome live, spherical dome
 and colonnade

Martha (Patsy) stay
 'The Committee of Safety
 must be warned'

Stay youth — Anne and Ellen
 all my books, the bantams
 and the seeds of the senega root

LORINE NIEDECKER

*To Gail and Bonnie
 from Lorine
 1970*

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