



"THERE CAME A KNOCKIN ON MY HEAD"

POEMS BY — DAVID REVILLE



Ecosynthesis

BECKETT AND REVILLE KINGSTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

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FOREWORD

This collection dates from 1959, about half of which has been written in the past two years. Naturally enough, the style has changed considerably, especially from the time of my decision to abandon the traditional in favour of the modern.

I must acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Hewson of the Canadian Register and of Peter Beckett, my associate, in the compilation of this volume and, of course, Katrina standing by.

DAVID REVILLE
KINGSTON
1967



DAVID REVILLE studies history at Queen's and spent some years at the University of Toronto. *Trinity Literary Review*, *Gavel* and *Quarry* have published his poems and articles. He hopes to bring out a full-length historical evaluation *Not With A Bang* and he will be editing a literary magazine *Ecdysis*.

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LOVE 1965

The greatest gift Man e'er received
Was love pristine, eternal.
Strange
That man seeks wealth so madly
When love costs so little
And pays so well.
But then to some
The price is high
For selflessness is key
Love loves not self
Love is outward
Else it consumes
Becoming hatred
Heaven is here in our soul
To reach it we must love
And sacrifice our ego
To a greater power.
But, as quid pro quo
We receive a greater gift
Everlasting life.

THE OVER SOUL 1965

Brooding over my body is my soul
And over my soul the Over-Soul
Transcendental Power
Capitalized Soul
Born of God Immanent
Watchest and Recorderst
All actions, desires, thoughts
Not an inkling occurs without thy Knowledge
And sage Judgement.
Brood, brood over me and mine
Make me realize my blessings
Ere I cast them aside.
For some cheap bauble.
One cannot improvise with soul
There are rules:
Seek the truth
Know thyself
Love one another
Cherish thy free will

DAMNATION 1964

So long as there is hate
So long as there is war
Hypocrisy
Mendacity
Infidelity
Procrastination
Deviation
No nation
Can prevail
Save damnation.

HELL

Hell is here on earth
Within minds and hearts
We create with our own deeds
A private hell
With flames far hotter
Than God could devise

HOME TOWN 1964

So this is where I bloomed
There is the high school
Where I learnt some things
Now long forgot. And there
The wood where she and I once walked
How fast it goes!
See here! the fence on which I scrawled
"I love you. T." so many times
Ah! that's the stadium
And here's the bench on which I sat
It's quiet now but I can hear
The muffled roar e'en still
O little town you gave me birth
And I moved on and overlooked you
But I'm back now
And sip from memory's nectar cup.

TORONTO THE GOOD 1962

O Toronto
City of sculptured halls
And pest-ridden walls
Of ivory-towered universities
And wallowing ignorance
Of art and profanity
Culture and vulgarity
In whose ample bosom
Nestle Men of Every Tongue
Whose babble fills the air
And trolley and jackhammer
Contend with lark
For ascendancy.
Thriving den of commerce
And of thieves
Of healer and destroyer
Of truth and beauty
Hypocrisy and sin
University and Pembroke
Rosedale and Cabbage Town
Jew and Gentile
Prince and pauper
Of the good and evil
In all our hearts
Be an example
Of what we can do if we try
What we do do when we don't.

OLD AGE

I see them come and go
Quaking and shaking
With quivering limbs and hesitant step
With brimming, dimming eye
Feel along
Decrepit, enfeebled, by Time washed away.

AGE 1961

It could not have been long ago
I wore short pants and a hated cap
I went unwilling off to school
And gathered chestnuts
Shiny mahogany
Yet now there goes my son
And I sit here
Nostalgic, grey
Could it have been twenty years? No, not that
Wasn't it yesterday
When I kissed Mother good-bye on the stoop?
She is gone these ten years
And I, rocking, am old.

YOUTH 1961

Youth has silver wings
We look round and it has flown.
But a season
And we poor fools wish it on its way
Till past recall and but a memory
If we but knew what age has taught
Before the bud had ripened!
But no, we were impatient
To move on
To shoulder grim responsibility
Though then it seemed but powerful
Sweet irony, how you laugh on us
In youthful folly and in ag-ed.

THE DRUNK 1963

The bed spun crazily and the floor swirled up
My eyes saw horrid malformations, mutations, mutilations
My tongue was alive with lice
And my stomach with vermin
Cadaverous rats gnawed my vitals
And fell hatred consumed my soul
Voraciously.

THE GLUTTON 1963

He gobbled, devoured until sated
Then vomited and gulped more
Always filling a gnawing void
Of longing.

THE FIEND 1963

Fix me first baby she cried
But baby was not for me
But for the Big M
And the urgency in her voice too
Her eye flashed
With hate, no love within
Curshed by the spur of longing, compulsion
Clutched her soul, stifling it
Flesh crawled with horror and craving
Huge, insatiable, terrible
Gut-squeezing longing, unquenched, unquenchable
Desire, one thing only and that M
My flesh crawled too.

GOD 1959

A concept to conjure with.
Where did He originate? In the fear of primeval man?
At once a myth and a fact. Could not the sun sear
A living thing and leave it wilting?
Could not the sun's caprice leave in the fields
The grain all rotting? Man did not know and to forestall disaster
Moses, Isaiah, Zoroaster
Evolved concepts of the deity
And ethics, morals and piety
Came close behind. Anthropomorphic
God was and his name soporific.
Yet he was not really approachable
On human terms. Conduct reproachable
To us may receive approbation
And signal valour opprobriation
We cannot conceive of a being
Outside our purview. Agreeing
That we cannot, we still continue
And God with human virtues imbue
With total ignorance
To their irrelevance.

THE ILIAD 1960

O man, who wast born of woman
Suckled by woman and cursed by woman
Launched ships to recapture woman
Smote your kinsmen on behalf of woman
And your overweening pride and fatal flaws.
Doomed to wage an eternal struggle over her beauty
Thousands will bite the dust and the dark shade of night
Will crash down over your eyes and you will feel
Your manhood slipping from you and you will cry out
In anguish and despair and you will beat your breast
And tear your hair. You will go mad with rage
Fool! Is it worth all this?
Alas. The womb instilled in us a yearning to return
To its secure haven and suck once more at those warm
Life-giving breasts. You cannot break the link
Would an you could.

THE WANDERER 1960

Did we always walk this vale of tears, hearts and eyes brimful?
A dull ache throbbing in our breast. Yea, since Adam slunk
From the Garden in disgrace with frail Eve by his side
Hanging her head. She wast in travail and we are ever so
And our first wail a protest gainst being torn from the womb
And thrust into a hostile world chock full of horrendous shapes
And shrieks. Forever we wander knowing not what we seek
Yet seeking ever still and no where we that comfort
Which we crave. Ah! to find peace, contentment and ah! rest.

THE ODDYSSEY 1960

I sing of the wrath of the Great Thunderer who casting a baleful eye on the fertile earth saw the pitiful deeds of mortal sin. Since he crept in cowering fear from Stygian cave he has perpetrated all manner of foulness. Woe unto you, man that you heedst not me. You shall writhe in everlasting torment. Great plagues will fall upon your house and deprive you of your youth. Burning thirst will dessicate you and you will know only fevered passion without release. The path you walk will be thorny and you will cry out in anguish but no one will hear. You will despair but no one will heed. You will destroy yourself in fire and brimstone but no one will mourn.

ERASMUS 1963

Of Rotterdam was Desiderius
Whose lineage was somewhat curious
And this made him very furious
Though history's rendering was spurious.

ELIOT 1964

Eliot dragged a maddened wife through life.
Land! what a waste.

LEWIS 1964

Lewis was an unmarried Oxford don
Which perhaps explains it.

LUTHER 1964

Luther was constipated
Rome his conscience grated
Then Wittenburg and hopefully
A different sort of movement.

BLUFF PRINCE HAL 1963

From Fidei Defensor to Papal Censor is a large shift for a conservatift
But Henry managed to do it and also never to rue it
Which was unfortunate for the Roman legate.

CRANMER 1963

Cranmer didn't want the hat
But he declined to spat
With the King who commanded
Proselytize and do it soon
Anne was pregnant and the marriage vows
Unsaid. So they were one
But couldn't manage to have a son
Later Mary suggested he recant
Which he did but offered up another slant
At the stake. Burn this hand first
That signed the recantation curst.

SUPERMAN 1965

Superman the Pop Art God
Faster than a speeding bullet
More powerful than a locomotive
Leaps tall buildings in a single bound
Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter of the Daily Planet
A Christ figure with Lois Lane for Mary
No end of evil forces for him to vanquish
Though Krypton, his private devil, often turns the tables.
O Superman!

THE UNIVERSE 1966

So vast
Man hast
Difficulty in comprehending it
And must content a bit
Of his querulous soul
With conjecture or whole
Fantasies.

MAN 1966

A weakling with feet of clay
His life span of a single day
Man yet struts and boasts
And plays the fool to hosts
Of other self-deluding idiots.

SEX

Sex is a hex
Put on man by a witch
With perfect comprehension
OF irony.

AT LAST 1965

My God you've led me a merry chase
For two years I've talked off my face
To dump you in the hay
Just when I had you on the way
A bee would sting
Or another thing
Would break the mood
By the rood
I'd sooner turn celibate.
But now I celebrate
You're mine at last
Bachelorhood's past.

Some fifty men Of mixed origin Require no abacus for I.Q.
Read not nor think Only sit With misted eye. (1966)

I dwell midst
Misshapen bodies
Minds unhinged
And souls sleeping
True, I resemble not
Even the least malformed
Resembling none, yet
I have soul-mates here
As everywhere; my mind
Looks like their bodies.

1966

I inhabit an asylum
N ight falling
S ees me pacing
A nd wondering why
N o knowledge comes to
I n these bare halls, us madmen
T hem and
Y ou.

1966

Unrepentant, finding no reason therefor
Believing on right, truth, simplicity, naivete
Le sauvage noble est le droit
And if you differ so also have you right
But seek not to thwart me: we both shall die.

1966

The man who blinds his soul
Sees not God
The man who blinds his mind
Sees not Truth
The man who blinds his heart
Sees not Love.
Toujours la meme chose.

1966

I weep, yet fear to know wherefore
I sense the drear, the rotten or
The gloss of life, the hate the strife
Yet about it do not one bit
Because I know the shine the glow
Must only bring abuse, disuse
And words that sting: it is no use.

CODA 1962

Think more
The three of us
Forget
The me of us

EPITAPH 1965

God gave me choice
I chose badly and lived.
But I chose a second time
Chose well and loved.

1966

He said not to worry and so did she
And they both forgot or overlooked
To ask me whether or no I would and I have
I am tired. I am tired in Bone and Soul and my shoulder
does ache and that takes my poor mind off less pedestrian
complaints. The day shall arrive and I shall arrive and we
shall arrive at an unsatisfactory conclusion or beginning.
Daily volte face is undoubtedly better gymnastics than thought.
Yet were I consistent even in inconsistency the trauma were kinder
O Stephanie you are too much too little for the likes of me
And the ever-present confuses my shortened sight
Tim is too fleeting to catalyze. The whiteness of my soul is not
purity. I dove in out of the tub filled emptied with of discovery
A mere 9 weeks ante incroyable the if looms iffier yet strangely
perhaps I relax beneath the sword the advent calms tho one knows
one never draws closer. These traumae are no futurity, passivity
Lent is a universality and as Kosher as Jaffa oranges. I should enjoy one.

One state blacker than godless death
Beyond despair and biathanatos
Apathy, uncaring as hour after hour passes
Without works or dreams, pain or pleasure, love or hope

10/8/67

So I smoked another cigarette
Thought of what it was I had and so carelessly cast aside
Of the agitated frenzy in the doing, the awesome ache
Of limbs wrenched off, of the nothingness, the slow withdrawal
to numbness. And from a minute germ of life, budding, blossoming
ballooning spilling over with fine fulness until again
I live
A musing wondring cigarette glowing warmly in the dark
Flicked to the floor explodes, expires
A hail of golden lancers.

10/8/67

The restaurant is full yet strangely lacking hum and buzz.
Eyes hollow and yearning and closing and pleading
Furtive flutters of hands under tables and linking mouths to ears.
Faces pinched and drawn and scarred and fearful and painted
Sexes blatant and ambiguous and dreadfully mutated.
The sad parade rest of nocturnal denizens.

10/8/67

Night on the ward a refuge
The drone of many sleepers; in repose their faces
Lack the wildness of the day. Yet reminder of where we are
Now a hideous shriek, a pacer in the hall, mutterings and hammerings
And gaunt sockets staring.

10/8/67

Lurch says the train
And everybody
Except Grannie Goodwitch
Is lurching anyway
So they don't
They pin striped shirt
Throws a bun
And the fat diamond
 a fit
 unnoticed
The red jacket frets
 alone
 Ham omelette unsung for
EAT 'EM RAW
HOLD THAT TIGER
and all that
inanity
more crucial
than wars
hunger and such
really

1/12/67 on the Grey Cup Train to Ottawa

a tired man
who say
turn on tune in drop out
and I think
jes fine
but then I hear about
the speed
the acid
the stp
and I think
why

14/12/67

he look over
see himself grinnin
see his face being ate
by worm
see the tree talkin
see the grass growin
see the arm droppin off
can't talk
go to 999
get fixed up
maybe see himself grinnin again
soon
seems a little stupid

15/12/67

flower children
lovin in
wandrin
wondrin
groovin
not particularly novel
still a good scene

16/12/67

people all around doing their thing
which is okay and don't bother me
cept when they think I should do theirs
or they start interruptin mine
I got this hope that they know what they're doin
but I wonder
and about me too

17/12/67

so it looks like a good year
maybe the best yet
and I am doing
for a change
and I am enjoying
mostly
but I figure it's got to change
no way for the gig to last
and I am into the hassle
and the uptight bit
a crummy way to say it
but they understand

13/12/67

I say I am the writer now
and the B.A. doesn't matter
but it does do
and there isn't much do in my last five years
which seems like a long time
and is
so I drag out the B.A.
hopefully
and say I do
and maybe not get poisoned in the process
and end up the writer anyhow
2/12/67

There's apile of angry rectangles at the door
A red face peering in
The white box yawns
The cockroach is leaving
But it doesn't bother me
too much
Except when I've rolled up
All I can find
And then
the inconvenience
not the injustice
really turns me off
22/12/67

my friend tells me that
he and I
are going to make me solvent
which would be nice
I suppose
and I was there for a long time
but I'm kinda used to scrambling
and I think I like it better
than being fat

22/12/67

I sing of tolerance
And try to live
Down centre ice
but when I see and hear
Old Square John
I curl up and die.

22/12/67

Walking the two miles to work
he composed a dozen poems
revised them and dropped them
one by one
on the snow
looking back he smiled crookedly
the only imprint his hobnailed boots
and that erased by wind

28/12/67

Feet numbing
Skin flaking
He stood
Cursing as the cars flew empty by
A thousand mouthed bastards
Won't bring back his right to drive

28/12/67

There come aknockin on my head
Crawl out from behind my mind
Peek out my eye
See a face talkin at my head
Turn on my ear
Face say what you thinkin bout
Turn on my voice
Voice say workin
Face say don't you ever think bout me
Eye shut
Ear shut
Run back in behind my mind.

26/10/67

THE HAMMER RE-CAST 1962

It must have been a life ago.
A keen uncomplicated brain
Full shrouded by a riot mane
Spat beneath the clamour
"I have seen the new gods come
And the old gods go
To-day I worship the hammer!"
It was not new, the word he said
It sprang from beings eons dead
Who, clutching at a chunk of ore
Crunched and tore a beast to gore
They did not guess they could not know
But gathered that their arms would grow
And when rude brains began to tick
They lashed thereto a knotted stick
This late Mohammed never sweat
From Mecca to Medina get
Nor stretched upon two rough hewn planks
Oozed and groaned for Man with thanks
But in a jungle glass and steel
Beat out for all what others feel
The reach ballooned and swamped the grasp
Nations fattened, belched and passed.
Then a giant all exploded
Whilst others festered and eroded.
The giant was a carnivore
It gobbled foreign art and lore
Bulging muscles all re-tested,
Gaping mouths all digested
Weakling powers all were bested
And the new God He never rested.
He drinks in oily tea and tape.
Beware, Man, he's bent on rape
He'll rend you bleeding, bruised and torn
Of honour, freedom, conscience shorn
And when you're done with all your toil
One day a week anoint with oil
His buzzing head
And you will stink
Abandoning your right to think.
Are we so dead?
Or shall we rally, face the foe
Return again to Nature's glow
Throughout our earthly nation
Retake our self-determination.

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