

Dear David,

Finally, at last, it is done!

Need I tell you of the courage it takes to send this paper to you? I have cursed my stupidity a thousand times for each line which has finally been written. Behind each word lies a trail of "if only ....'s). Now I'm risking a friendship by sending this on to you. I only ask that you consider the source as you read, and try at the same time not to be too harsh in your judgement.

The original copy of this paper is now in the hands of the judges of the Atlantic Monthly College Contest, and to be truthful I care much less about their verdict than about yours.

To give you the opportunity of well-earned retribution, I'm enclosing a copy of the only thing I've written in months.

My apologies for the long silence of this poor, battered machine, but between papers coming due every two weeks, my job, (can you picture me as a book-keeper? At least it breaks the monotony of school) and, of course, Michael, I've barely found time to sleep.

Did I ever mention how much I enjoyed the luncheon I shared with your friend David? He's wonderful. I'd give 3 weeks sleep to get a look at his book.

And speaking of books -- how is yours -- not still postponed because of your disertation I hope. I know, the disertation comes first right now, but the book is equally important. No?

You have my sworn vow to be more conscientious about answering your letters from now on. My love to Nina.

*J. H. C.*

## INTRODUCTION

In order to discuss poetry, anyone's poetry, it must first be decided what poetry is, and what are the aims of poetry.

Poetry is the attempt to capture an experience in words, and through its capture to enhance the experience, so that the reader receives not the experience, not only the words, but an intimate fusion of the two.

The poem itself may never be defined. It simply is. It may be seen. It may be read. Best of all it may be "lived through". This is why the poet is the greatest of artists, for not only has he created a poem, but each time the poem is read, it, in turn, creates a response in the reader.

This may be accomplished, and no one but the poet himself knows exactly how it is done, only by allowing "each poem to grow according to the laws of its own nature"<sup>1</sup>

What we will now attempt to discover is how two poems grew.

The poems are those of David Adams. These two are, as yet, unpublished, and are used with the kind permission of the poet.

Sky and the water vibrate

I gauge the water beetle's flight

back and forth                      against and with  
the ripples and                      the current  
pattered                      circles                      meandering  
black and gray                      and                      deep green and blue  
                    mingle                      and                      merge together and gone  
separate here                      and                      then and now I forget  
                    my                      dreams  
I fell asleep  
                    chanting                      of                      you and your eyes  
and awoke                      with a faint fragrance  
a fragment                      of vision  
a                      sidewalk full of music  
                    a                      Rembrant tree  
and silence

I  
am  
a  
pile  
of

last

years's

dreams

by all but  
forgotten

sun and rain that pack and

mold and tread me down

into the sod and settled home

of worms' tunnels

and the flickering

centipede

Come

I remember

budding on a thousand twigs

breaking forth into the wind

waving rich banners

over the lush land.

I fell in glory

with a flash

I died I lay

forgotten

Love

draw strength

root

from my

in

and

forgotten

me

burst

dreams

into

banners

of

beauty

I know how  
you'll be wondering about  
this bare space, but it's  
just my poor typing - forgot to put  
in the parkin - its only the space  
between directions for reading was.

Poem I is, as are most poems, the re-creation of a deeply personal, moving experience. It builds, through the description of the scene, to the point of sleep where daydreams are forgotten. The second half finds the poet waking, to feel that somehow a lovelier dream is receding, like the slowly fading circles on the pool. There is beauty in the waking world also; "a sidewalk full of music, a Rembrant tree, and silence."

How has this poem "grown according to its own nature"? First we must ask what has happened. Adream? No, two dreams, interwoven as only dreams may be. The initial daydream of the loved one is completed by the dream of which we are not told. We are, however, told what is left in the wake of the second dream, "a faint fragrance", "a fragment of vision". Is this not a return to the meandering, patterned circles of the day-dream?

The poem has indeed grown. Grown into the circle which has always been man's symbol of perfection.

The dominant image is, of course, the beetle's circle, yet the sub-surface images are no less important to the total effect. Just as in a clear pool, all the barely visible objects on the surface are starkly outlined on the smooth sand below, the complementary images are important only in relation to their place within the circle.

The Rembrant tree brings to the scene the almost faded peace of the dim twilight, the humid, weighty tranquility of summer evenings.

The paradox of the "sidewalk full of music" and the "silence" of the final line is appropriate. One can almost see the tree in a silent park where the very air seems to vibrate with a music heard only with the eyes.

The reader is forced to stop and wonder, in this second section, if the poet has found his "fragment of vision" because he had fallen asleep while chanting of his beloved, or if the dream itself is responsible. The question is left to the reader, and each must answer it to his own satisfaction, for he is left with only the "silence" of the last line as the poet's answer.

When first encountering this poem who would not be tempted to wonder if the idea or the form came first?

In this reader's opinion, the poem, like Topsy "jist grewed". Without a formal decision, on the poet's part to "make a poem that looks like a circle", the poem made itself, sprang to life beneath the pen of the poet, who like Stephen Crane, probably found it strange "to write in this red muck/ Of things...." from his heart.

There is a delicately balanced chain-reaction to be found in this poem. The structure dictates the placement of the words; word placement suggests the pace of reading; the slow, dreamlike pace complements the image, and back we are drawn to the all-important circle, the soul of the poem.

While there is, in the second poem, no actual "happening", but only a remembrance of action (I remember budding...) and a request for future action (Come Love, root in me...) it is by no means a motionless poem. There is, within it, both the remembered fall and the hope of rebirth through love.

The poem may easily be divided into three parts; the first begins the use of the metaphor which will carry through the poem. The use of such an extended metaphor requires an extremely deft choice of words so that the reader will not feel an ICBM has been launched to dispatch a kite. Here, the words are perfect; they are heavy only where the sense of the poem actually requires heaviness, as in "sun and rain that pack and/ mold and tread me down/ into the sod and settled home ..."

When the movement into memory begins, the words match the connotations of spring, "budding", "breaking", "waving", "falsh". Then in a capsulization of autumn into seconds, he says, "I died. I lay/ forgotten."

Forgotten, though not an uncommon word, is frequently neglected by poets. There is a feeling of petulence in the roll of its syllables, in this case, it is the 'exact' word. But this is no common petulence, it is one redeemed by the colseely following plea: "Come Love, root in me,".

This last is, as all pleas must be, the voice of one nearing despair, who does not hope for a future in his own right.



In this poem, as in the first, we find the dominant image complemented by those beneath the surface. What are the effects of "settled home of worms' tunnells" and "the flickering centipede"? Not only do we perceive the richness of earth the pile has become, but the dark, warm (home), mysterious (flickering centipede), atmosphere of that earth. The "budding....breaking....waving..." of the second section carries the reader breathlessly through the spring and summer cycles, while, "fell in glory/ with a flash" calls up the poignant beauty of the autumn.

This mood of sorrow is relieved by the third section which holds the promise of a fruitful spring-to-be, possible only through the death of the speaker.

This theme of life-through-death is as close to the nature of man as his prayers in the dark, as the holocausts of the high priests, as his desire to leave children behind to carry his name.

But is the poet speaking here of an actual death or the no-less difficult death-of-self required by love, either divine or human?

There are as many levels of interpretation in a poem as there are readers, and very often, the author himself is unwilling, or possibly unable, to give the precise definition of any symbol. But has the reader the right to demand the meaning of the poem from the poet? Archibald MacLish would seem to deny that right with the words "A poem should not mean/ but be."<sup>2</sup>

Does this mean all poems must be taken as mere pleasurable moments of escape, with no occasion of intellectual enrichment for the reader? Not at all.

As was said before, each poem is an individual experience for the reader, why then, need the reader question the poet on "meaning"? The reader has no obligation, or right, save that of acceptance. The poem speaks of and for itself. The reader has but to listen.

On the surface, the form of this poem would seem to have grown from the matter of it. The path of the falling leaf, the pile itself, the first tendril of root descending from beneath the pile and protected by its warmth.

Yet, just as the poem has many levels of meaning, so has the form.

Still considering the matter of the poem, could not the scene be spring, with the delicate root sending out its first sprig which will one day be the staff to carry the expected "banner of beauty"?

Going still deeper, into the love theme, could not the first lines represent the exhilaration of new love, the gradual settling into the fulfillment of that love, and the final lines, the fruits of that love, the rooting into reality,

Here, the validity of the form has been found consonant with three different interpretations, while only one example need be brought forward to destroy that validity, it seems unlikely that such an example will offer itself.

Even within the narrow evidence provided by these two poems, David Adams would seem to be judged as a poet to reckon with. Although it is only time which decides the great, and even good poets of any given period, each reader likes to think his favorite will receive favorable notice. David Adams is this reader's candidate for future greatness.

2/13/66

Gas-rainbowed water.

water-streaks

with no sun.

Church towers

and

telephone poles

Impale

a scudding

wisp of rain.

Wires flay

mud-stained skies

encouraged by a crowd of rain.

Brown snow-swollen

Creeks in

false spring

The wet-earth

crocus-hint

stench of April

Rotting, dead of

prematurity

on February mourning.

October 11,  
616 Beech St.  
Scranton. Pa.

Dear David,

I also must apologize for not having written sooner, but I'm afraid that I can't include such terrific compensation.

This has been one hell of a summer, if you'll pardon the vulgarity.

Between the two colleges here in Scranton, I managed 15 credits -- 6 graduate, 9 under. I also went on a strict diet, steak, eggs, milk, and vitamin pills. Both courses and diet were successful. I dropped 15 pounds, and picked up 2 A's and 3 B's. ( one of each in the graduate courses)

In August, I had planned to just rest. Early in the month Michael and I argued about something trivial and didn't speak for a few days. I thought going away for a week-end by myself might put things back into perspective, so I took off for the Pocono's -- about an hour's drive from here --.

Friday night I went to bed at nine, took two sleeping pills and never moved until 2 o'clock on Saturday. I had a cup of coffee, went swimming, and decided to splurge on a really big meal.

I hadn't driven a mile from the motel when a truck turned into my lane too quickly for me to avoid it. Result? 1 demolished car, 1 scratch ( not even serious enough for stitches, ) 5 black and blue marks and 1 nervous breakdown, (mild).

After the doctor had treated my scratch and given me a tetanus shot, I went back to the disaster area and made arrangements to have the car towed back to the city. Then I went back to the motel.

I had intended to take a couple of sleeping pills, get a good night's sleep and go back to the city the next day.

The next thing I knew I was in a hospital having my stomach pumped.

Somehow -- he won't tell me -- Michael had heard of the accident and had come looking for me. He found me, sound asleep with all the lights on, the empty bottle in the john. He jumped to a few correct conclusions and took me to the hospital.

I spent one week there -- no visitors, no mail, no calls, only Michael was allowed to see or speak to me, and for that entire week he spent 10 hours a day with me.

I have a terrific doctor, but for three weeks he insisted I do no reading, writing, or anything involving concentration. He told me to work with my hands even if all I could do was finger-paint or basket-weave. Thank heaven I wasn't quite that desperate.

I sewed - 3 dresses, 2 skirts and 1 suit. I'm still amazed at myself! I had never done anything more complicated than hems or buttons before this.

I'm on tranquilizers, or course, and will be for about five more months, but at least he's letting me go back to school.

The most horrible thing about it, is that I had no more reason -- or intention -- to kill myself then, than I do right at this very minute. An unconscious death-wish is a horrible shadow to carry with you.

I finish my undergraduate work -- all but a 2 semester seminar -- in January, than I can begin serious work on my MA. Thank God.

I cannot possibly tell you how thrilled (I hate that word its so phoney) I was with your page poems! David they are beyond adjectives, as was my reaction to them. They would be worth ten years of waiting.

Do you think your Knopf editor would be open to a nice fat bribe? --I figure it's the least I can do -- I know it will be published, I know it with my all powerful woman's intuition, it's just a matter of time. It's the waiting that kills you though I suppose.

I don't envy you your work on the dissertation, but I do envy your obvious success and happiness.

Tell Nina I said hello -- and that I look foreward very much to meeting her someday, she must be a wonderful person if you chose her.

Deepest regards and love,



P.S.

I've included some of my "poetry" if it can be called that ( I'm not so sure any more.) Accept my apologies right now for its only too obvious lack of polish. I'm sending them with real humility to the author of the page poems I've been studying.

## BEAVER'S TAIL

And now, my darling,  
Man whom I must love;  
Another walks with me  
Beneath the sasafras and maple  
Of the beloved woods.

He holds my hands  
As I hold my breath  
Against the wisper of green  
Around me. It is cruel now,  
The forest.

Where we loved.  
It's memory seems longer than mine  
I would forget it's autumn voice  
So like your own,  
Colorful, with varied tones

Of love, always of love  
You spoke to me. We did not wonder  
At it's start.  
I dontt understand  
Why it ended.

You must have someone new  
Now, to share with the spring.  
Does she sing to you, in a voice cracked  
And trembling? Forgetting the words and tune?  
Will you think of me this June?

Will you come here  
I wonder? Will the oaks  
Brush their fingers through your hair  
To remind you?  
Will the cardinal's song

Bring back verses that we read?  
And will the slap  
Of a beaver's tail  
Break your remembering  
As it did mine?

## Parting

It is not that I loved you less  
To say good-bye so easily  
For so long.  
Only that I love you more.

I know.

The beloved's face may go  
but love does not.  
It is heightened  
As distance heightens a painting  
And brings unexpected perspective & beauty.

## ONE STAR

And will that star you gave me  
Die with me  
Does that same poor fate await  
The apple tree?

Let them live, my only hold  
Upon eternity.  
Each new spring there will be  
Starlight on apple blossoms.

There, beneath the apple tree  
Unconscious of fate  
And God, and destiny  
Are lovers, They, like we

Know only that one star is theirs  
The one above the apple tree.



Burgeoning its way up  
from the ravine,  
Crawling through the foliage,  
Holding itself from the edge  
With rake-clawed hands,  
Not fighting back --  
Struggling only to hang on,  
As brutally, you kick its face  
With steel-toed boots;  
Poking into its hide with sticks.  
Reach for its eyes, put them out.  
Don't look at them.  
Run.  
Burn your wake with fire.  
Hide your body in oblivion  
Let it sink into the quicksand of unconsciousness.  
If you must,  
Kill your self.  
Anything is better than to let it reach you.  
Kill yourself.  
    Truth will not follow you to hell.

#### L'Affaire

Death spoke to me  
In some strange language  
Which was captured in balloons  
above his head.

I could not read  
Or hear.

And intuition crept  
Between the layers of my skin.

I thought sleep might bannish him.  
I slept -- to seek oblivion.

And found him kissing deaf my ears,  
Stroking my closed eyes.

His kiss was peaceful, passionate and deep,  
Promising intimacies impossible to man.

Death is a strange and gentle lover.

I met Patti Cadden (then using her recent married name Blake) in June 1964 on my way from New Haven to Seattle to deliver the little Triumph sports car I was driving. The last night before arriving at Seattle, I stopped at a little hotel in the mountains of Eastern Oregon, and met Patti at the bar. We had one wonderful night together and went our separate ways, but kept in touch with letters that fall and the following spring before I got married to Nina.

She sent me a paper she wrote for Marywood College in Pennsylvania where she went back to school in which she described my page poems and added some poems of her own.

After that I lost touch with her and many years later reconstructed what happened to her.

At some point in the next ten years she married Donald Joseph Suda, a government attorney in Washington.

Here she is at that time with Donald:



In 1976 they had a daughter, Burke Suda.

In 1983, Patti died tragically, although I don't know the details.

Burke's life was turbulent. At some point she married or lived with Michael Speet (<https://memorials.jonesfuneralhomes.com/Speet-Michael/2800520/obituary.php>) who eventually died young with his heroin addiction.

With Michael she had a son whom they named after Patti, Cadden Speet. At last indication Cadden was living in Houston, Texas.

Prior to Cadden, Burke had another son, Scott Suda. Since his name is Suda, the father is not known. At last indication, Scott had moved to Australia (<https://www.facebook.com/scott.a.suda>)

As of 2023, Burke had worked for many years as a dog groomer ([Facebook.com/groomer.suda/](https://www.facebook.com/groomer.suda/))

Here are two photos of Burke, one with her father, and one from her facebook page. She looks very much like her mother.

