

ASCH RECORDS AH 9709

THE WOOD BURNS RED

AND OTHER POEMS BY ROBERTA GOLDSTEIN

Read by Roberta Goldstein

Produced by Scotti' D'Arcy



PS
3557
052
W66
1970
c.1

MUSIC LP

CONTENTS:

1 LP
1 biographical notes (5 p.)

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0506 5782

ASCH RECORDS AH 9709

SIDE I

- Band 1. Wall of Destiny
- Band 2. The Wood Burns Red
- Band 3. Tattered Dreams
- Band 4. Even Though You Lie With Laughter
- Band 5. Random Harvest
- Band 6. The Maid and The Flame
- Band 7. The Burning Canvas
- Band 8. Snow Sorcery
- Band 9. Gina
- Band 10. Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa
- Band 11. Samson & Delilah
- Band 12. When Time Stood Still
- Band 13. To You Who Says There Is No God
- Band 14. To My Patrician Mother
- Band 15. In Memoriam J.F. K. - Profile
Written in Blood

SIDE II

- Band 1. Silence and Tears
- Band 2. The Drums of Justice
- Band 3. The Green Woman
- Band 4. When Dragons Lie Slain
- Band 5. Scarlet Seas
- Band 6. Electra Mourns
- Band 7. Morning and Evening Stars
- Band 8. Am I My Brother's Keeper
- Band 9. Not in Vain
- Band 10. Lines To My Daughter
- Band 11. A Teen-Ager Asks Why
- Band 12. The August of My Love
- Band 13. I Will Pursue
- Band 14. When Oboes Play
- Band 15. Sealed In History

© 1970, Asch Records
701 Seventh Ave., N.Y.C., N.Y. 10006, USA
THE WOOD BURNS RED
AND OTHER POEMS BY ROBERTA GOLDSTEIN
Read by Roberta Goldstein Produced by Scotti D'Arcy

ASCH RECORDS AH 9709

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

COVER PHOTO: CARR STUDIOS

THE WOOD BURNS RED

AND OTHER POEMS BY ROBERTA GOLDSTEIN

Read by Roberta Goldstein Produced by Scotti' D'Arcy



Roberta (Butterfield) Goldstein, the daughter of a country physician father and a school teacher mother, was born in North Troy, Vermont. Her first poetry was published in newspapers in Vermont and Quebec while she was a teen-ager. She attended the University of Vermont, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1938 and received a Ph.B. degree cum laude in 1939. Thirty years later in 1969 she received an M.S. in Speech Pathology also from UVM. She is the mother of four children, and the wife of Frank Goldstein, restaurateur and actor. They are both members of the International Platform Association, and often give dramatic readings for various organizations. Frank and Roberta have also served as narrators for a radio program, "Your Literary Heritage".

Long active in business, writing, lecturing, and organizations. Roberta recently entered a new field, and since 1966 has worked as a speech therapist for the Burlington Schools. During the summers of her early college days, when she worked as NYA Recreational Director for her hometown, she established a healthy rapport with young people, and still maintains the same with today's youth.

Three books of her poetry have been published, "The Searching Season" (1961); "Fling Jeweled Pebbles" (1963); and "The Wood Burns Red" (1966). In 1964 "Selections from the Searching Season" was published by Centro Studi E Scambi Internazionali, Rome, Italy.

A Prize-winning poet, she has been awarded the honor of Poet Laureate for 1970-1971 by the United Amateur Press Association. In the fall of 1970 she will become prexy of the Poetry Society of Vermont. Among other affiliations, Roberta is a member of the Poetry Society of America, Avalon World Arts, Arizona State Poetry Soc., National League of American Pen Women (Manhattan Branch), and League of Vermont Writers.

In 1968 the Eastern New York Poetry Day Committee awarded her a Certificate of Merit. In 1969 she was honored by Manhattan Branch NLAPW. A dedicated member of the World Poetry Intercontinental, she received their Distinguished Service Citation (magna cum laude) in 1970.

Her name is listed in: "Who's Who in American Women"; "Who's Who in International Poetry"; "Dictionary of International Biography"; "Contemporary Authors"; and "Foremost Women in Communications". The Diamond Jubilee Committee of Alpha Xi Delta in 1968 placed her name among the top ten per cent of alumnae who have achieved success in their respective fields of endeavor.

A NEW DIMENSION OF POETRY

In the last five years since I have entered the field of speech therapy in the public and parochial schools, I have become aware of a new dimension of poetry. Boys and girls from kindergarten age through adolescence appreciate the colorful "stuff" of poetry once they experience it through the spoken word. First, I read the poem to the child or group, then we either look at pictures or imagine them. The children respond to the rhythm and the sound of poetry even before they are aware of its sense or nonsense. This type of auditory training appeals to children. When they are given the freedom of interpreting a poem without an adult insisting on "one traditional meaning", then children feel as if they are equals in the magical world of creation. As I listen to the child express his feelings verbally, I try to listen attentively as if his communication is the most important thing in my life, (and indeed, it is at that moment).

Later, the child (or burgeoning adult) has an opportunity to read the poem or to repeat it on tape, and then listen to the playback. After he has listened to his own voice, I ask him to comment on his performance. Children are usually quite keen on picking out their problems of rhythm, quality and expression, but they are also quite kind when asked to comment on another child's speech. Such opportunities for self-evaluation and assessment of each other stimulate each child to improve his own speech.

Poetry seems to provide a new experience in which the child has never failed; Therefore, he does not need to fear it, and he reacts to the therapist's encouragement and expectation of success with joy. His tension lessens considerably, and I notice that each child achieves a more favorable condition, physically, mentally, and emotionally for learning better communication skills. Speech problems are resistant to modification when undue tension is present in the child's physical and mental processes. Optimum tonus aids modification of speech, and other behavior. As communication skills improve, the child's self image is enhanced. He communicates more freely, and he smiles more frequently. Children seem to sense that "in each poem there lies locked, a miniature drama of the human heart." They love to stretch the muscles of their imagination as well as their physical muscles. Their channel of communication widens. They respond with love and laughter, and sometimes even with the salt of human compassion. A new dimension of poetry also provides a broader dimension for speech therapy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appreciation is extended to The Golden Quill Press for permission to read the poems which were published in "Fling Jeweled Pebbles" (1963) and in "The Wood Burns Red" (1966) under their copyright.

I also wish to thank the editors of; Imprints Quarterly, Cyclo*Flame, Driftwood, The Guild, The Mountain Troubadour, Poet (India), Cahiers de Poesies (Rome, Italy), Avalon Anthology, Ballet On The Wind, The South-West Times Record, The Rutland Herald, and The Jewish Spectator, in whose respective magazines or newspapers some of these poems first appeared. Gratitude is also expressed to Radio Stations WBUX, WBTN, WVMT AND WJOY AM-FM on whose programs some of these poems have been read.

THE WALL OF DESTINY

The copper gong of the mid-east sun
and the brass tongues of
sputtering guns splinter the
air of Jerusalem. A soldier,
oblivious of the dissonance,
rejoices like a lost son
restored to the sanctity of home.
Tears mingle with sweat on his
grimy, unshaven face as he leans
against the remnant of the temple
and chants his love song;
"Wall of memories, stained with
the tears of pilgrims and the blood
of my people; fortress of the human
heart that has prevailed through two
thousand years as a changeless
symbol of hope on the ever
changing map of a shrinking world,
I have kept my rendez-vous."

Bullets quiver like poison arrows
in the blue-black smoke as he gently
caresses the blazing stones like a
bridegroom on the first night
with his beloved.
Time freezes like an alabaster
statue, and death poises
on the precipice of history!
He prays and hears six million times
six million voices echo
from the valley of dry bones
and the ashes of fiery furnaces.
The twisted cross and the scimitar-
crescent dissolve like figments
of an alien nightmare.

The soldier sees with a poet's eyes
the fruit of reality
born from the wombs
of the daughters of Zion.
The exile has returned from the hot sands
of the desert where the bush burned
but refused to be consumed.
He pours cool water from Jacob's well
over the arid breast of stone,
and with the lips of a poet
he seals his love for the Holy One.

A stray bullet strikes his heart!
His blood flows freely
as he scrawls upon the wailing wall--
his final declaration
of immortality.

THE WOOD BURNS RED

The wood burns red
on the hearth
of the shrinking world.
Lovers halve the
golden apple
while the coals
twist a crimson
rose corsage.
The dervish leaps
and whirls
in the last mad
dance of the
dying year.

What lies ahead
a marriage bed
or a grave
for the dead?
I can not say
I only know
The wood burns red.

TATTERED DREAMS

Where have they fled
The magic and the dream?
Where have they led
All the dreams and the magic?
Were they only sprinkles
of stardust and
a plaintive violin
turning my heart
in the silvered night?
I heard the Pied Piper
fluting a melody
I could never resist,
and my red shoes twinkled
in the moon-light
until the road was
a ribbon stippled
with gold-dust
leading to the mountain
of my one desire.
There I met my knight
with the scarlet fillet
and his eyes
were strangely bright.
These were dancing days
and honeysuckle nights.
These were laurel days
and balsam scented nights.
Then the last kiss of my lover
like the last berry
on the mountain ash
tasted bittersweet.
Without a backward glance
he rode his coal black stallion
straight to the gates
of Avalon.
The Pied Piper has vanished
in the mountain that will
never move again for me,
and I languish in the
dappled twilight
holding the tattered ribbons
of my dreams.

RANDOM HARVEST

Words can be arrows
dipped in curare
piercing the heart
of the innocent.
Words can be pebbles
falling with a cadence
all their own.
Words can be constant
dripping of water
chipping away
at the stone.
Words can be black
as dried blood,
or cool purple
as fresh lilacs.
They can spring up
like for-get-me-nots,
or run rampant like
scarlet sumac.
Words can be weeds
choking the garden,
or they can be the
relentless tapping
of the S.O.S.
on the aching temples
of a world that has sinned.
On the last judgement day
words made deeds
will be the final notes
played on the Recorder.

EVEN THOUGH YOU LIE WITH LAUGHTER

Glass slippers danced throughout the years,
Then gladness melted into tears,
The slippered glass was set aside,
Even the palace servants cried.
The footmen turned to mice again,
The clock kept striking two plus ten,
The Prince threw down his diadem,
Cinderella snipped off every gem.

"Smiling and dancing are a bore,
I have danced till my feet are sore,
Change the end of our fairy tale,
No one can live without a wail."
The Prince nodded his crownless head,
"We've had enough of playing dead,
Come on, Princess, the hour grows late,
Let's open wide the palace gate."

The stubborn gate refused to move,
It held firm in its rusty groove,
The band began to play again
As mice turned back to serving men.
"Sorry you cannot rewrite the tale,
This fairy godmother does not fail";
She tapped her wand and there appeared
Countless scarecrows who cheered and cheered.

"Even though you lie with laughter,
You live happy ever after."

THE MAID AND THE FLAME

Languishing in the dank dark dungeon
Joan of Arc lay like a broken bow,
She strains to see the gold escutcheon
And her stallion white as snow.
In her ears clangs the clash of armour
And echoes of the lusty battle cry;
Horses and riders fall mid the clamour
But Joan raises her three lilies high.
The vision fades, the light goes out,
The candle gutters in her walled blank night.
She shivers as the English soldiers shout.
Bravely she summons her will to fight;-
Once more she leads the Dauphin to be crowned,
Spindle-legged Charles, at last a royal king!
Rheims Cathedral rings with joyful sound
As the Maid feels the touch of an angel's wing.
Her Voices told her this would come to pass,
"Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo"---
Joan could not see beyond the silvered glass,
Or know that her clock had stopped at zero.

King Charles soon bound her with an English chain,
The Church denounced her as a devil's witch,
She stood bereft of all she sought to gain,
The Maid rejected by the royal rich.
When the Inquisitor with tongue of fire
Confused the child and compounded her pain,
He tried to strip her soul of sweet desire
And told her that her Voices were in vain.
One dreadful moment her trembling lips spoke:
"I denounce my Voices and renounce my claim."
She signed her X and her chaste heart broke.
Then Joan swore by her Voices and chose the flame!

"To live without faith is to die each day,
But to die with faith is to live always."
As the faggots burned and the flames leaped higher,
She lifted her head murmuring, "Jesu, my Sire."
And the Voice replied in a dulcet tone:
"Welcome to heaven, Daughter Saint Joan."

THE BURNING CANVAS
(in memory of the Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc)

The poppy flames leap high
across a jagged canvas
of surrealism--
the sleepers dream a nightmare
on an oriental screen,--
the Buddhist monk's saffron robe
curls crisply in the wind.
Through Karma and through sacred
fire the shaven head shrivels
into ashes for the urn;
and the weird canvas wired for sound
beats like a metronome
on a cerise piano.

Will the sleepers awaken to toll
the temple bells for prayer?
Will the restless spirit of
Thich Quang Duc, purified
in poppy flames, finally
achieve the sixth dimension
of Nirvana or will he hang
forever in suspension--
while brothers light their saffron
robes, and the burning canvas
smothers the sleepers?

GINA

Gina knew he loved her even
when she saw the passion
Jim lavished on his mistresses;
he never looked at her like that--
flush slowly mounting to his titian temples,
his eyes agleam with gypsy fires,
his strong hands, (even the memory
of their gentleness made her tremble),
shaking with anticipation.
Yet mistresses could not offer Jim
The crystal water that Gina
poured into his cup.
He chose a headier draught,
serpent green absinthe--
lifting him to the tall peaks
before plunging him to the abyss.

These were the times when he sought
sanctuary at Gina's white breast.
She loved this tortured man
with a body like Apollo
and a soul enthralled by
Les belles dames sans merci--
Slippery cards, galloping horses,
dancing dice, and the promiscuous
wheel that whirled from one
lover to another. Gina waited
with Penelope patience
for the siren-song to cease.
She prayed (ashamed at first) for
deafness to dull his ears.
Her prayers unanswered she chose
to share him with his concubines,
and wedded Jim one day when
the dice rolled a lucky pair.

TO MY PATRICIAN MOTHER
(Anne H. Butterfield)

I will not praise you in the laurel way
Nor hymn you in an artificial ode,
Nor paint you with the hue of Whistler grey;
You ask no medal for a rock-ribbed code
That keeps you strong beneath the hammer blows.
Your shining glow unmatched by tinsel foil
Is still undimmed by ice and blinding snows,
You are a true aristocrat of toil.

No Roman matron walked more straight than you
As children set the jewels in your crown.
A teacher who does not reject the new
Nor greet the changing space age with a frown,
Your hands have lavished love upon the flame
That burns within this sonnet to your name.

SNOW SORcery

An endless mat of white velvet
Is brocaded by the moonlight
As the sorceress with the magic
Icicle touches the sleeping virgin,
Who arises dripping with snowdrops,
To await breathlessly the arrival
Of the Immaculate Prince, riding
On his milk white unicorn
With an affinity for silence.

IN MEMORIAM
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
1917-1963

PROFILE WRITTEN IN BLOOD

The empty saddle and muffled drums,
The caisson slowly moving on,---
With measured paces the cortege comes
To mourn the nation's martyred son.

With venom green with serpent hate
The assassin's bullet stilled his smile;
Outlined in courage, sealed in fate,
This sacrifice --- his last profile!

His features like New England stone
Were seasoned by the salty spray,
Injustice he did not condone,
And often he would pause to pray.

The bright blood of the Chief has spilled,
The nation's heart is torn with grief,
The dream he hoped to see fulfilled
Shall shape American's belief!

TO YOU WHO SAYS THERE IS NO GOD

To whom are you talking
You old fraud?
Why do you rail at God?
Nothing can hurt a myth,
Not even a scythe
Can cut a swathe
In non-existent wheat.
You smell the carrion
Of strangled witches,
Who laughed when they stuck
Their voodoo pins
Into phantom sins.
You had no love but life,
And spilled your seed
In sterile galaxies;
Yet now you hurl curses
At an image beyond
Your hungry reach.
Time swings a frozen sickle,
Death is lost somewhere
In the sixth dimension;
Rail on old fraud,
You said that you were
Your own god, and now
the unfeeling stars
reply with silence.

MEA CULPA, MEA CULPA

Four little girls in their Sunday best
Sang as they danced through the city streets
Straight to the Church of the Heavenly Rest,--
Deaf to the flap of the winding sheets.

"Rocked in the bosom of Abraham,--
Hallelujah! Let my people go!"--
Washed in the blood of the jet black lamb,
The Klansman sneers in his hood of snow.

Ghoul from the hill of the flaming cross,
God's own image you desecrate,
Bigots exult at freedom's loss
In the blast of your bomb-filled hate.

Four little girls in their Sunday best,--
Hushed are their songs like the soul of the West

SAMSON AND DELILAH

The morning is a man's select domain--
He leaps from sleep into rebirth,
Girding his loins like Samson
Ready to give battle to the Phillistines;
He scalds his tongue with witches' brew
And crunches a slice of blackened toast,
Then rides his lurching subway steed
Straight to the neon-lighted lines.
He fights for his daily bread even
As he curses the modern gods of Baal.
Protector of his appointed realm
Right nobly he acquits himself
In the inner sanctum of the enemy.
The day wears a heavy head when
the battle-scarred warrior departs
the fray and wearily rides again
to his sanctuary in the suburbs.
How does Delilah greet her hero?
Does she ask him how many giants he slew
today with the jawbone of an ass?
Does she feed him exotic fruits
and slake his thirst with a jug of wine?
Does she rub him with oil and fragrant spice
and soothe him with the subtle accents of sex?
The modern Delilah disdains such silken sorcery;--
She will betray Samson's virility
with the cutlass of her
acrimonious tongue.

WHEN TIME STOOD STILL

("The town clock of Hiroshima has been found and
melted into one piece. It has been placed in the
memorial museum in Hiroshima.")

The town clock of Hiroshima was a usual sort of clock
with happy hands that pointed the time
to see the flaming dawn,
the hour to leave for work,
when to pray, and when to eat,
the doctor's appointment,
the children's return from school,
the music lesson and the hour for play,
the time to wait in the garden for the moonrise,
the moment when the first lotus would unfold,
time to make love, and then to sleep;
its hands made the usual rounds each day,
and thousands in the teeming city
counted the town clock a loyal friend.
And then the day of unspeakable madness
when the clock was ripped from its tower,--
the hands set in rigor mortis,
to mark forever the time when Abel's blood,
sealed in the scorched earth, still uttered
a muffled cry unto the Lord!

SILENCE AND TEARS

Sound no bells for ghostly glory,
Write no tomes of the Civil War,
Silence the blazing guns that rip
The stillness of the cemetery.
Erase the pages of history
Stained red with fratricide,
One mother's tears moisten the dried
Blood of both her sons.

THE DRUMS OF JUSTICE

In Memory of Rev. Martin Luther King
who made the supreme sacrifice for
the American Dream

"How can we learn not to hate the man who shot
our father?" the children asked.
Their mother looked at the brimming eyes
and answered: "We must kneel and pray together."
Slowly her words began, gently flowing
like the touch of April rain. "Help us remember
that loving not hating formed the pattern
of Martin's life, and death cannot unravel
the raiment of his dream. The task remains---
to weave a cloth to cover all God's children.
We believe that an arithmetic of hate
subtracts and divides man from man, and man
from God, yet a root of love augments
and multiplies the thread that binds
his soul to the Divine.
More voices join to sing our hymn of faith,
'We shall overcome some day!' Lord, let
freedom come swiftly without the bare blade,
without thieves that dishonor our creed,
without the flame that burns the dream to ash.
Let the salt of sorrow flow unmixed with blood,
Let the crystal decanter of hope refill our cups.
Help the lines of our people move forward
in the shadow of Martin, 'drum major of justice',
servant of the Lord, and advocate for peace.
Let righteousness swell from the roll of his drums,
as mountains dance and the earth leaps
beneath ten million marching feet.
Like Israelites at the battle of Jericho,
May the crescendo of our voices rock
the massive walls of the city,--
Then those ghetto walls will come tumbling down,
and the black man will wear a thornless crown!

Rock in jubilation every child of God,
Roll, roll, bitter waters, roll from my soul!
We shall go up to the mountain top with Martin
and sing hosannas to the Lord!
We shall redemm the dream
with the fibers of His Spirit!
In His love we shall conquer hate,
and place our hand in the white hand
of our brothers. Glory, Glory Hallelujah!
I know the day of jubilee will come,
we follow the beat of Martin's drum.
Amen, Amen.

THE GREEN WOMAN
(A modern Painting)

You called her a raceless woman,
And brushed her face
With vernal green,
And stroked her eyes with violet.

You painted a nameless woman,
And veiled her hair
With indigo,
And tinged her lips with lavender.

Inscrutable every woman,
A sphinx-like riddle,
In whose eyes smoulder
Strange dreams of the eternal!

WHEN DRAGONS LIE SLAIN

The winds brush pine against the pane,
And dragons of the day lie slain
Beneath our magic carpet bed,
While shadows weave with silken thread
A rare brocaded tapestry.
The winds beat pine in tympani
As nightingales spill liquid gold,
That lovers hoard against the cold,
That lovers spend when night grows old.

NOT IN VAIN

They tore down my doll house
and I grew up.
Tending babies, washing diapers
seemed slightly different
from playing house.
The stars blinked,
the seasons wheeled;
as they drank from the marriage cup
our boys and girls grew up.
The house remained
strangely quiet,
(only the plumbing spoke),
until one night of
April delight
when there was champagne
and candlelight,
when you, my more than
sometime lover,
made me feel
like Cleopatra,
And finally I knew
my woman's years
could never be
in vain.

MORNING AND EVENING STARS

Man becomes Emperor at daybreak
When morning brings his cold shower,
the odor of shaving soap
and virile lotion,
the scent of tawny tobacco
and bubbling black coffee.
Man sings a love song to the
matinal virgin of light
as he hastens to swing the snarling
tiger of his universe
by the tail.
Morning is when a woman is torn
from the poppied comfort
of her connubial couch to face
the pail of unwashed diapers,
the brackish dishwater and the
interminable cries of her young.
She is forever barred from
the glittering palace
where her Emperor holds sway.
Only the lingering perfume
of crushed gardenias
reminds her that night
will restore her sceptre
and her diamond diadem.

ELECTRA MOURNS
(somewhere in New England)

The red-lipped maples still stand tall
Above the earth that cups his dust,
The sun casts shadows on the wall
Where greening woodbine strains to thrust
Its hungry leaves to feed on light;
This monument of cold grey stone
Gives forth no rays to heal her sight,
She kneels at his sealed door alone.

There never was a daughter's grief
That healing time could not decrease,
Though sorrow should be candle brief
Her agony has no surcease,
As green life leaps in every vine,
Her blood spills spring upon his shrine.

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

How could I know his blood ran red
The very same as mine?
His color seemed a strange dark hue;--
I heard a tongue of alien sound
And did not know he spoke of love;
How could I know his eyes would show
The self-same pain as mine revealed,--
I saw a foreign slanted shape
And a sly serpent bit my veins.

I could not know until I plunged
A sword into his living flesh,--
And then I saw the guilt was mine,
As from my ribs the blood gushed red--
There was no difference anymore,
We drifted toward a sunlit shore,
Our mingled blood one scarlet stain.

SCARLET SEAS

There is a scarlet sea that churns
And pounds against the soul of man,
The fire of fabled Troy still burns
Above the seed of Priam's clan.

The king commands the winds to blow,
Then prays the gods that he may win,--
Impatient for the blood to flow
He slays the child and feeds the sin.

The ships sail home without the prize,
Yet Priam's daughter bears the sting,
Cassandra sees the red moon rise
And smells the blood of a murdered king.

Cassandra cries her prophecy
That shivers in the starless night,
But kings who savour victory
Envision scarlet seas of might.

Although a scarlet sea still churns
And beats against the soul of man,
There is a tide that ever turns
The fortunes of the human clan.

LINES TO MY DAUGHTER

You are the priestess of a temple world
Where sacred fires still burn in altered space,
A woman's hands must cup the kindled flame,
A woman's womb must bear a warless race.

Upon the ruins of a ravished earth
Will rise a cosmic-centered universe
To exorcise malignant bigotry
And break the sorcery of tribal curse.

If you accept the challenge of the stars,--
Consent to be a cosmonaut's proud bride,
The consummation of your nuptial vows
With flesh and spirit will be sanctified.

Your satin glove must guide atomic steeds
Through fire-laden paths that lead to peace,
In spinning galaxies your quest may find
The Torch of Truth eclipse the Golden Fleece.

Destroy the crimson sword, restore the Word,
Throughout the temple world men shall acclaim:
"The spirit burns more brightly than the flesh,"
Your children's children shall sustain the flame!

A TEEN-AGER ASKS WHY

"Man lives by faith and not by bread alone."
The steel grey eyes of the preacher smiled
as he closed the Holy Book. "Remember this,
Issac did not flinch or moan when Abraham
once bound him fast upon the altar stone."

In the rear pew a teen-age boy pondered
the meaning within the story.
His brow furrowed in quizzical thought
as he sought to recapture history
with the camera of his inner eye,--
a kaleidoscopic wheel turned in the limbo
between heaven and hell.

There stood Abraham, knife in hand,
suspended for one soundless moment!
The sun paused in its orbit
as from the thicket a grey ram ran,--
a living miracle to receive the blade!
Abraham loosened the bonds of his son
and tears mingled with rivelets
of blood from the ram of redemption.

The teen-age boy asked himself this question:
"Is this fantasy or faith?
Somewhere does a God exist without hunger
for the taste of human flesh?"

The boy trembled as he beheld the drama
of men moving through moon-mad centuries
to the limits of outer space.
Time churned in the lens of the camera
and dirt whirled to the rhythm
of tramping feet. The blood of human sacrifice
drenched the breast of earth.

Mothers and fathers kissed their sons
and praised their names as they went forth
to bind their bodies upon the altars
where fires once burned
to Astarte, Moloch and Baal.

The boy ran from his pew and leaped to the pulpit.
The lightning of his breath
shattered the windows of stained glass;
the cathedral choir hushed the Gloria
and the congregation smothered its "Amen".
"Why?" he demanded, "Why do my brothers die?"
(A golden nimbus floated above his head)
"Has Satan slaughtered all the rams of heaven?
Or has man at last moulded his God
in the image of human clay?"

THE AUGUST OF MY LOVE

Brawny smithy at the forge--
You, the August of my love,
Strike the anvil of my heart
With your giant hammer.
Fashion the iron of my years
With your ringing blows,
Make malleable my metal
Until I am welded in the white heat
Of your burning coals.
Forged by the sinew of your bronzed arms
I will not fear the Erl king--
What pain can ice inflict
On flesh that has mated fire?

SEALED IN HISTORY
Dedicated to the memory of
Senator Robert F. Kennedy
1925-1968

Death magnifies the face of a hero
when the life of the man
looms larger than myth.
The hand of an assassin shattered
his earthly image--
bullets plowed a furrow in the field
before its seed could ripen into harvest
for those who hunger
for the bread of compassion
and the fruit of equality.
Death came like an alien thief
in the midnight of his victory,
and seized the jewel
from Freedom's crown!

His blueprint for a brave new world
became his last will and testament,
sealed with the wax of history.
Yesterday's April promise
slowly smouldered into ashes.
Yet those who followed in his steps
still pledge allegiance to the search.
Men seek to build new cities
with bricks of justice, and the mortar
of hope and courage. The architect
has left a legacy of vision,
a heritage of truth.
The apocalyptic nightmare melts
in the crucible of love.
The grave cannot obliterate
the power of his words. They still echo:
"Some men see things as they are and say why.
I dream things that never were
and say why not."

Death magnifies the face of a hero
when the spirit of a martyr
defies the awesome shadows
with the silver shield
of invincible faith!

WHEN OBOES PLAY

I see your shadow in the lilac mist
And hear a rustle in the springing grass,
I wait to feel your hand upon my wrist
While melodies of woodwinds hush the brass.

The sundial moves my compass-circled day,
I drain the cup of angostura hours,
Only tonight I heard the oboes play,--
They stopped the tilting of my lonely towers.

And now I come to plead with you once more,
The water from your well flowed fresh and sweet,--
My tin cup strikes against your marble door,--
Will you lie still with April at your feet?

I WILL PURSUE

I have pursued You in vaulted cathedrals,
And in mossy violet glens,--
On mountain tops at midnight
When Your batons have electrified the sky.
You have eluded me on dark nights
When I have lain silent -- straining
To touch Your Mystic Oneness
And to know that I am utterly Yours.
I have forsaken You when the music
From the penny arcade lured me to lust
After tinselled harlots, and to burn incense
To brittle idols with tongues of glass.
In my desolation I felt Your love letters
Caress me in the rush of wind and rain.
I have sought You in the ruins of the temple
In the hush of dappled twilight;
Your elusive naked Word has enthralled me,--
Fragments of intimations murmur in my ears,--
As dawn sapphires the dark pavilion,
Breathless, I await our appointed rendez-vous,
I will pursue You with my life!