

her own, perhaps to sleep in.
Perhaps she will rise, & face my window,
my hazel eyes, perhaps she will call
the police, & tell them I have

hazel eyes, or that she, herself,
has hazel eyes. We are in trouble.
Our fingers burn as we turn away
from the rough glass. We don't know why,

how, we have become *we*. Was it something
we ate? Was it a stream of obscenities
we vaguely imagined? A thundering piece
of rust in our hearts? Darting out

into the blue rain we sprain our hips,
we've sprained our lips, & it doesn't end
on such an up-note. No, I was old enough
to pick up the phone, dial the correct

number, make the right connection, &
you said, "The blood supply is low,"
& I said, "The blue tongue disease
is on the rise." Snails are licking

the moon's full body, all the parts
we will never see.



MARK STRAND

Night Piece

(AFTER DICKENS)

A fine bright moon and thousands of stars!
It is a still night, a very still night
and the stillness is everywhere.

Not only is it a still night
on deserted roads and hilltops
where the dim, quilted countryside seems to doze
as it fans out into clumps of trees dark and unbending
against the sky, with the gray dust of moonlight upon them,

not only is it a still night
in backyards overgrown with weeds, and in woods,
and by tracks where the rat sleeps under the garnet-crust rock,
and in the abandoned railroad station that reeks of mildew and
urine,
and on the river where the oil slick rides the current
sparkling among islands and scattered weirs,

not only is it a still night
wherever the river winds through marshes and mud flats fouled
by bottles, tires, and rusty cans, and where it narrows
through the sloping acres of higher ground covered with plots
cleared and graded for building,

not only is it a still night
wherever the river flows, where houses cluster in small towns,
but farther down where more and more bridges are reflected in
it,
where wharves, cranes, warehouses make it black and awful,
where it turns from those creaking shapes and mingles with the
sea,

and not only is it a still night
at sea and on the pale glass of the beach
where the watcher stands upright in the mystery and motion of
his life

and sees the silent ships move in from nowhere he has ever been,
crossing the path of light that he believes runs only to him,

but even in this stranger's wilderness of a city
it is a still night. Steeples and skyscrapers grow
more ethereal, rooftops crowded with towers and ducts
lose their ugliness under the shining of the urban moon;
street noises are fewer and are softened, and footsteps
on the sidewalks pass more quickly away.

In this place where the sound of traffic never ceases
and people move like a ghostly traffic from home to work and
home,

and the poor in their tenements speak to their gods
and the rich do not hear them, every sound is merged,
this moonlight night, into a distant humming, as if
the city, finally, were singing itself to sleep.

altering of river & moon,
2 universal things, show
altering of place, second movement
1) country to them to midtown
(2) reflective watcher to
ghostly traffic din of tenants
outward, inward, outward (that he believes runs only to him)

JON SWAN

Among Commuters

In the night in the train pulling out of the city,
standing in the swaying club car, drinking with others
whose faces are too familiar, whose names one does not want to
know,

looking out of the grubby, pocked, three-star window
at the finale of a sunset, the long clouds the color of rust,
at rubble and tenement, at billboards that advertise space,
at space, one feels, or may feel, that at long last
one is escaping what?

Click of wheel assures you that you are leaving, leaving,
that on earth as in heaven flight is still possible,
that the half-seen faces staring from windows into the summer
night,

enduring the noise of your elevated passing,
will slip from your mind even as they slip out of sight
like a drowning crowd in another forgettable movie,
that you can shed the daily skin of your existence
by being thus transported.

But the sun sinks and around you the faces flare,
ruddy as they celebrate once again the day's end,
the irresponsible interval between office and home,
between the pressure to produce and the pressure to relax,
to be attentive and loving: another man.
Through dark country now we move between our selves, as the
train moves,
reluctantly, as if it had too often
reached its destination.



MAY SWENSON

At the Museum of Modern Art

At the Museum of Modern Art you can sit in the lobby
on the foam-rubber couch; you can rest and smoke,
and view whatever the revolving doors express.
You don't have to go into the galleries at all.

In this arena the exhibits are free and have all
the surprises of art—besides something extra:
sensory restlessness, the play of alternation,
expectation in an incessant spray