

Poetry Series

**aMan Bloom**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2010

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

# aMan Bloom(5-20-1942)

WRITE PAINT PHOTOGRAPH CYCLE DANCE PAINT HIKE RECYCLE

# An Untitled Poem

I make a wrong turn  
She is there  
I take my jacket off  
He is there  
I haven't seen her in twenty years  
after only meeting her once  
I've never met him before  
except on the internet.

What cosmic phenomenon is unfolding;  
why am I at its crease?

Is it really nature that is sacred;  
is it really life that is holy?

Is there such a thing as a wrong turn  
-or a right one;  
may I take something off  
and still have it on?

Is nature sacred; is life holy?

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# Anger At Joy

Why am I angered by her sweet words?  
Is it that she must find external meaning in wonder?  
That she insists on religiously anthropomorphizing nature,  
its beauty and its creatures,  
making it, as she repeats, 'beyond us'?  
Removing us from nature through illicit connection –  
a fraud, a fiction, the creation of humans alone, who require meaning  
and a purpose attached to their meager needs,  
rather than acceptance  
and proper reverence,  
humility,  
knowing-not-knowing,  
lost for words ?

But why anger; why not pity  
or dismissal – or apathy?  
Perhaps I feel that she leads us away from nature  
rather than to her  
Away from holy sacred nature  
and toward a constructed mimicry  
a diminution, a way to control  
and order...

Is this my friend or enemy, I don't know,  
for certainly she is earnest and wants a world of peace and appreciation—  
But is that the earth on which I live;  
Is her joy mine?

Is it hubris or humus,  
and are they opposing?

Are they?

xxx

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# Be Little We

within this delicate filigree am I infinitesimal

within me is the knowing of eternity

I name time

I see space

make love, do good

if the earth were an apple, its solid mantle would be thin skin

afloat upon a juicy orb of molten flint

its biosphere faint as slime on slippery rock in a slow-moving stream

the field in which we loosely play

perhaps alone, the only ones who pose and probe and posit

arrogantly\*claiming\*position

wee voices in hollow vastness

within this delicate filigree

are we

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# Being Light

Let's talk about beings made of light, the light beings.

Though they have no use for what we value...

the metals and meats, the roads and fortunes, even love, hope and joy...

Nevertheless they find us charming, endearing, curiously humorous and somehow

seem to want to support us, simply because we are here and they can.

Strictly speaking, they've got nothing else to do, which we can't understand, living in a realm opposite theirs...

For example, if they were to live in the plane of us, they must eat the sun.

Now, in a way we eat the sun, too, though ray by ray...

If we were to live in the plane of them, our skin wouldn't hold our selves in, which likely is a lot as they.

Light beings seem never to die.

Neither might they have anything like life...

They don't need confidence, independence, connection or any sense of self.

Nothing complex, they are the first signs of life to come about in this universe, then protons, electrons and other modes of energy, slowed as time too becomes, making the soup of matter.

We, we are children of light...dimmed, dim-witted, damned, doomed...

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# Eating The Family Cow

As a group to our barn we go.  
Looking up as if she knows,  
we lead her to sweet pasture,  
wishing we could take of its nurture,  
rather than must needs pass it through her.

She nibbles the little that is left,  
withdraws to her empty pan  
where each of us takes a hand to her udder  
and, at the plashing, thrill with wonder.  
Hardly half a bucket is filled  
where once there were three.

Long ago, talk of what to do and how and who:  
Poor dad and young John take the nasty task on.  
The others will watch as befitting her status,  
our cow, our Clara or Molly, raised from a calf,  
member of our home, loyal servant, lowing mewing friend,  
understanding slave and sometimes guide,  
we must do what we must do or send us all away,  
a choice harder still to sway.

Many a time and oft have her liquid eyes  
gazed upon each one of this crew,  
that lolling great tongue sweeping  
from her sweet-breathed maw,  
as we rested our head on her warm flank  
and breathed the heady steam off her stream,  
watching the steady frothing and giving thanks.

It's a triangular dirk that John has fashioned,  
Designed to pierce the great vein of her neck,  
not ever to close but instead to let flow,  
so first her life will spurt, then sputter;  
the great figure will kneel and drop,  
The mound of her cage, a mountain on the plains  
settled in its falling and its lifting,  
in her stall the blood runs earth to mud.

We stand and see spirit drain from her eyes,  
as to us death's veil blinds her.  
The tongue hangs still from her open mouth.  
Some tears from the girls, a sigh from their mum:  
What's got to be done is done,

and now to the work  
of knives  
and the kitchen.

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# Hammers Away

He'd never built a house before  
But I was new and couldn't tell  
watched him big trees fell and awaited my chores  
with bright delight. Stainless-steel shank  
covered in sky-blue rubber pocked with holes for sweat and grip  
and a head that would make a lady weep  
32-ounces of sweeping might sets a nine-penny flush in a single stroke  
once the bloke caught on, got the swing with grace and aplomb  
always by his side, swinging in my holster, ready to strike,  
to pound or chop, wrangle or pry, I am humble hammer,  
god of nails, icon of carpentry, champion of tools, lure of destiny  
and built him his first home, of redwood, fir and pine.

My history is elegant. I started out before nails as stone, or knot and branch of  
tree,  
then copper, so soft and full of sheen, though only fit for driving pegs,  
brass cracks, iron shatters, steel, ah, steel, she holds her form and yields only  
force.

We modern ones, hardened and shaped, honed, balanced,  
almost a fattened wedge on a solid chain, flying through unresisting air  
with the power of a sledge, of thunder, an avalanche of directed energy!  
The nail, the spike, the drift almost whimpering at my whistling approach...

One day, resting in the back of a recycled Mustang convertible  
bought at the cost of eight good hammers for the rot that took its spine away,  
top down, spiraling down Fickle Hill, hitting bumps at speed, the fool,  
I fell through a rusty hole big as a raccoon,  
and so became another's tool.

xxx

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# I Wish I Was 27 Instead Of 67

I wish I was 27 instead of 67.

Oh, sure, you say, who wouldn't?

Wait, I say, I wouldn't want to lose what I know, so

I'd want to take everything but my age and its fate with me.

That makes sense, you would agree... But wait,

I say, I am sitting in a café talking to myself!

Talking nonsense, too; nonsense that, according to you, makes sense!

But you know what it is I tell.

And anyway, who am I to want a second life, well,

Not a second life exactly, but an extension of this one,

And an extenuating extension at that, like wanting the stars,

And who am I to deserve such a gift, as if I have been

Such a stellar contributor to the health of the planet

Or credible champion in the fields of wisdom or art,

No declared guru, or purely auto-didactic mechanic fixing cars

(though once rebuilt my elder Volvo's picky transmission):

Not even on an evolving mission; no goal or particular desire...

I just, hmmm, I just like it here and don't must needs expire.

For proof, he (meaning me) , the feral older faux poet

Jumps and turns in the air in a spiral!

(JUMPS AND TURNS IN THE AIR)

If in my literally-exuberant form,

Unlike fellows and bedfellows, going, or gone,

My youthful attire mostly remains intact,

Perhaps only in desire if not plainly in fact...

"Egotistical heap of hubris," you brutally ululate.

"Yet, how may I become the me most fine

If denied the task's sufficient time?

Such act by humans are hardly ever done

Name the few that do on the fingers of one

hand." But, may I not want, too?

Perhaps another sip of brew...

(TAKES A SIP OF COFFEE)

Oh, that was forty-fiving...

So, on the fingers of the other hand, verifying,

Figure today might be grand for dying...

(ROLLS POEM INTO A BALL AND JUGGLES WITH TWO OTHERS)

But a better one for multiplying.

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# It's As If

It's as if we're wending our way in a cave  
slowly trying to get out or  
leading to a place of safety and of succor.

But we're feeling the drift of something amiss,  
that we might be walking in the wrong cave.  
We've gone too far to turn back and anyway  
we know that's somehow unlikely...

It's as if too much of who we are or, rather, have become  
is married to this cave, the wrong one.

It's as if it's more cool in the cave, almost too cold for comfort,  
not as it was when we began our journey,  
but then we were younger, and different,  
and hadn't yet adjusted to what was to come...

It's as if it's more warm in the cave, almost too hot for comfort,  
not as we've been told to expect by the elders,  
by those who hoard the fortunes, garner the gems,  
grant us a governance and spur us on...

We can't go back.  
We've forgot the ways.  
We've accumulated baggage that we don't really need  
yet cannot do without...  
It's as if a toxic baggage that slowly sickens us.

We feel at a dis-ease in this wrong cave...  
And wonder if there ever was a right one?

Should we  
Be in  
Any cave  
At all? ,  
We ask.

Some say we must burst out crashing its walls -

flee its never-ending path!  
Others suggest that's folly:  
to change our way would end in suffering,  
if not in suffocation.

Some remind us, we are now suffering, suffocating now,  
that disease and un-health amend this ease and some wealth  
- of detritus and dross, impedimenta and dementia,  
of baggage and garbage and blight and might...

It's as if the cave we are in is a dead-end leading to nowhere!  
Perhaps we should panic, or turn violent...

The baggage is so bulky it leaves no room for turning,  
forcing us as if in flood to smash again and again  
against the black wall of destiny...

It's as if we are walking in a cave,  
once entered in innocent curiosity,  
naïve and hungry, lovely and fierce,  
simply seeking succor and safety, and comfort and security,  
prosperity, power, luxury...and love...

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# Making Clay...While The Sun Shines

I want a pond, she said, right over here.  
'No water there...', was thought: recycling pump!  
'No big rocks for its edges...': get ye to the quarry!  
'No hole for it to live in...': there's your shovel!

We set its boundaries, wavy and organic,  
talked of tables for the pots to sit upon  
planted pointed shovels into angry soil  
which lazily revealed its clayey layer

Blue and sticky with hatred for shovels  
Smooth and silky, mixture of batter and butt,  
needing to be pried off the shovel's blade  
adding to the aches from just digging it

Dig Pry Dig Pry Dig Sigh Dig Pry...

No small pond had been envisioned:  
outcroppings of boulders, hundreds of plants,  
built-up ridges for viewing the waterfall,  
(the waterfall? !), an island in the middle...

While digging the pond the days dragged on,  
only slowly its outline emerged on the ground  
and piles of excavated clay, put in barrels  
of water for later re-use to help build the shelves

End of each day, washing clay off our hands,  
that erotic slush, the silky, gritty slip,  
smelling earthy but unlike earth, ripe,  
pungent, but if a color, puce, mauve, orange cream  
demanding to be molded, to be rolled, pulled, formed

Meanwhile the pond herself was resisting to be born,  
lolling on the ground like a wanton vixen,  
seducing our shovels, leading them slyly -  
the deeper the hole the harder to hold, pulling the plug

The clay in the barrels beckoned: come, do me, you know you want to,

play with me, says the clay, make of me what I will shall to be,  
Impatient-other jealously wonders how the hole still so shallow is...

We played with the cat at lunch, throwing him into the air, a flying cat,  
at apogee, looking down at his catcher with the sweetest trust,  
a clay-gray cat named Chang, liked walking the pond's intended perimeter  
perhaps thinking fish? Frogs? Bitter lizards?

Maybe we should hire a backhoe, she suggested, inciting diesel power,  
an artificial pond might not need hours of artful shoveling,  
or is shovelry dead? , I said.  
Half-day later, said pond been dug, its extra earth hauled away.

of blue clay I made a bull.

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# May I Write A Poem

May I write a poem  
that has nothing to do with death  
or love or the death of love  
or the love of death?

That eschews the crudity of the moment  
and neither denies, honors or vilifies the past  
and sees the future as mere fantasy?

That seeks neither security nor freedom,  
doesn't declaim or proclaim,  
isn't whimpering or corny or crass,  
doesn't admire your wit or your ass?

A poem that isn't about trees or babies or baseball,  
that doesn't provide any answers or ask any questions,  
seeks no meaning, presupposes no purpose,  
takes no politics and doesn't lift anything beyond its means?

A poem such as this,  
as just described and limited,  
would it not simply mirror nature,  
contain only pure beauty –

not a golden sunrise, but the sun rising,  
not the kiss of a rose, but the rising kiss,  
the ember, not the flame,  
the point, the point, a point,  
a word called 'point'  
a sound being heard sounding like 'point'?

one finger, pointing...  
a point on yesterday's page  
the point of a set of lines

standing on a point looking out at the calm sea  
a sun rises and kisses your rosy face,  
a poem like that.

xxx

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low shuffling signals the passage on my street of cows  
up from the village green this evening, a field for football that they keep trim  
though players must plod through pies of their leaving  
jumped over rather than upon by the nimble and the fleet  
  
recalling weekend volleyball back in an Oregon outback  
net stretched between a tree and a pole, cow pies marking the boundaries  
and randomly mining the playing ground with their squooshy presents  
slalomed while loping to catch and pound a floating ball over my head  
  
early morning mist rising from last night's frost, I milked our cow  
resting my head in her damp silky flank, smelling sweet steamy frothing  
me writing dialogue for plays in my head, later set to paper  
after filling bottles, sterilizing buckets, setting a bowl to sour under the stove  
  
remembering rural compounds in Turkey, piled in front with bricks of dung,  
to serve the household as fuel, cooking food, keeping warm in winter,  
arranged in rick-racked cubes, complicated spirals, pyramids, walls  
to ward off weather, I don't know, or simple tradition blindly regarded  
  
here in small town South Africa, township cows slowly saunter  
fresh from pasture, home to second milking or slaughter or sleep

tomorrow their moans and rumbles remind me of the beginning of other days

Mooo, I say from my window. nnnnnnnn.....

xxx

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# On Beeing

Thinking of never-again being,  
Never seeing a tree  
Or hive of bees in a tree  
Being eaten, bee by bee, by a  
Bee-eater flying through the tree  
Like a jet fighter picking off pigeons  
one by one, and the prospect of honey.

Thinking of seeing a living being  
In the mirror of my house  
Or a horse eating syllables.  
A poem that is meant for her eyes only  
Winning an award for literacy  
Like a meander on a frosty morning  
When one's breath morphs into ice.

Thinking of being a living thought  
A beam of light lifted from naught  
Streaming under spaces meant for stars  
Released from moments of rain  
Being beaten beam by beam  
Like a waterfall sheeting from a stream  
Drop by dropp floating like a bee.

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## Rosey Prose

Some poems to explore, he sort of liked them and wanted 50 more,  
Suggested I follow the narrative path when I came back.  
Next year of my novel he said even Joyce wrote plots.

A year's gone since his passing, yet I remain alive still writing:  
The poems are still as sharp as prose; the prose still dulls the point of story.  
It seems I have not listened, though breathe humble thanks to his memory,  
hearing his subtle smile in response, in repose

I do respect those who count syllables, redoubt couplets and prune appletizers,  
Puzzlers whose games contain the cryptic and calisthenically obtuse:  
"To solve, rearrange each word while removing a letter from its opposing  
negative."

Built of simpler stock, my house of wood, a set of boxes, entrance front and  
back;  
Geyser off till hot water needed; nothing is ever cooked; my roses sport thorns.

Might my late mentor now sweetly agree,  
A rose rhymed by any other name would smell as prose?

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# Watching Pigeons Flying

WATCHING PIGEONS FLYING.  
A LEAF FALLS FROM A TREE.  
DROPS OF RAIN STAIN THE PAVEMENT.  
THE SUN IS HIDDEN BY A CLOUD.

BLUEBIRD SETTLES ON FENCEPOST.  
RED ANTS FIND A PILE OF SEED.  
SMUDGES OF EARTH COLOR MY KNEES.  
LACY FROST GROWS CRYSTAL FLOWERS.

FOG LIFTS AND LOOKS LIKE LILAC.  
A BEE DROPS ITS LOAD OF GOLDEN POLLEN.  
SPIDER SUCKS LIFE FROM FLY.  
CLEAN SHIRTS FLUTTER ON THE LINE.

A MAN LOSES HIS HAT IN THE WIND.  
PET DOG'S EYES PLEAD PLEASE.  
SOUNDS OF WHISPERS ON THE BREEZE.  
A TELEPHONE RINGS ON THE WINDOWSILL.  
AND  
SIRENS SHATTER THE DUSK TO PIECES!

SALT AND PEPPER SIT UPON THE TABLE.  
BLACK COFFEE IS AWAITING CREAM.  
THE TABLE HAS FOUR LEGS.  
THE COFFEE IS CARIBBEAN.

THERE ARE FLUFFY PILLOWS ON THE BED.  
A SHOVEL IS STUCK IN EARTH IN THE GARDEN.  
I PUT AN EMPTY CUP UPON THE TABLE.  
A PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE LIES ON ITS SIDE.

PIGEONS ARE TAKING OVER THE BELFRY.  
TERMITES BRING WATER FROM BELOW.  
A DRYING FLOWER IS DROPPING ITS PETALS.  
BICYCLISTS AVOID POTHOLES.

A METEOR DRAWS A SHINING LINE TONIGHT

THE VOLCANO IS QUIESCENT.  
ONE BY ONE, BUMBLEBEES COME.  
A MOUSE DOESN'T SEE THE CAT.  
AND  
SIRENS SHATTER THE DAWN TO SMITHERS!

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## What's A Meta For?

"Like giving an after-dinner mint to a dead man's heartache, "  
a line came drifting in and settled in my mind,  
after falling asleep to Camus.

Then the rain came and some noises in the night in my room,  
and the still darkness kept me awake,  
so the line, "like giving an after-dinner mint to a dead man's heartache, "  
came floating in on the silence and I woke up enough to write it down.

Later I wondered what it meant or might mean and thought of how best to use it,  
since I knew it was a poetic gift and could be made to mean something,  
then I realized that it was like giving an after-dinner mint to a dead man's  
heartache,

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# You Can Do Anything That You Want

You can do anything you want.  
You can wear brown socks with black shoes.  
You can match plaid with stripes, or wear chartreuse,  
Lay salty lox on chocolate cake; fry, not bake...

You can close your eyes and dream you're in Madagascar  
On the curl of a crescent strip with village girls speaking French  
Wanting to sell shell necklaces, but you resist,  
Because you can want not to want, so they ask for your shirt.  
You can watch the clouds morph to velvet flame and turquoise chips,  
You can refurbish the mythical men who drowned on ships  
Skeletoned in the harbour.

You can do anything that you want.  
You can buy a ticket and take a plane to Cappadocia, and  
Not even the Crusaders could do that with God on their side,  
Or the zealots who literally de-faced the craven paintings of saints.  
They had to hike days and nights, while you only have to try sleeping  
On a vinyl lounge in Dubai International on your way to Ankara,  
Dreaming of eating a big taffy apple in New York City,  
on Times Square wearing a tartan kilt with striped brown socks  
And later you stare blankly at ground zero.

You can do anything you want.  
Imagine seeing High School Musical on Broadway and being 16 again.  
During interval, you can go on a quick vision quest  
And meet Zeus and Kali at a braai in Burma,  
Attended by the generals tail-gating in their Silver Phaetons,  
Who laugh at your jokes. You can do anything.

You want.  
You want the world to be a better place, rather than a bitter place,  
And the taste of the lox and chocolate cake becomes cloying.

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