

A Fair's End

Richard Moore



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Cover Painting:
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	<i>The Family in America</i>
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To a Well-Meaning Friend	<i>Potpourri</i>
The Lake	<i>Crux</i>
Once More	<i>The Tennessee Quarterly</i>
The Adventure Of It	<i>Negative Capability</i>
Preflight Inspection	<i>Iambs & Trochees</i>
To My Houseguests...	<i>Light</i>
Wine	<i>Hellas</i>
Little Prig Song	<i>Pivot</i>
A Question of Identity	<i>Hellas</i>
The Role Assigned	<i>The Formalist</i>
The Cleaner	<i>The Lyric</i>
Fore and Aft	<i>Negative Capability</i>
Enfin	<i>Hellas</i>
Her True Calling	<i>The Classical Outlook</i>
Up and At 'Em	<i>Pivot</i>
Who Done It?	<i>The Lyric</i>
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Child Abuse	<i>Tucumcari</i>
The Chameleon	<i>Salmagundi</i>
What Falls Away	<i>Hellas</i>
The Suitcase	<i>Pivot</i>
In Olden Times	<i>Iambs & Trochees</i>
On the Carnival's Last Day	<i>Chronicles</i>
Sic Transit	<i>The Formalist</i>
Dog Days	<i>The Edge City Review</i>
The Tip of the Iceberg	<i>Pivot</i>

True Transport	<i>The Dark Horse</i>
Psychosomatic	<i>Light</i>
Fond Memories	<i>Medicinal Purposes</i>
The Lost Lover Song	<i>Iambs & Trochees</i>
Testy Buell	<i>Light</i>
Pluto as Travel Agent...	<i>The Classical Outlook</i>
Man's Word to Woman	<i>Light</i>
What Some Old Men Have...	<i>Hellas</i>
Hitch	<i>Light</i>
Something for a Poet	<i>The Lyric</i>
The Epistolary Passion	<i>Pivot</i>
Technology Be Damned!	<i>Light</i>
The Lover Finds Fault	<i>Iambs & Trochees</i>
Song of the Man Who...	<i>Light</i>
A Discourse On...	<i>Light</i>
Leftovers	<i>Light</i>
The Life	<i>The Neovictorian</i>
A Proposal	<i>Cumberland Poetry Review</i>
On the Infrequency...	<i>The Neovictorian</i>

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I-POOR RISKS

Poor Risks

Marriages done, they met:
who'd strained, broken that tether—
now think they can forget,
content now, bound together.

Making Love in Print

Why should I mind that she, impervious to curses,
fishes for foppish gurus with her baited verses?

High in the branches, crowlike, my excited squawking,
celebrates tabby, through the orchard softly stalking.

To a Well-Meaning Friend

You wish for my age wisdom. Never!
My foolishness has grown too clever,
sticks to me, thick as the mud crust
on my old car, far gone in rust.
That mud holds it together. Gosh, it
would fall apart if I dared wash it.

Try, Try Again

So, Mr. Lish, you're back in school?
Something I thought you knew, Lish:
the education of a fool
just makes the fool more foolish.

"Well, sir, let me be foolish, then!"
old Lish calmly replied,
"I'll dance about like other men
who lived before they died."

The Lake

Her elegant intelligence,
as her lake's water, laps my shore—
pulls pebbles out, returns for more.
Against its ceaseless diligence—

wanting none, I have no defense,
who've tried such strategies before.
Then let it wash me to my core,
dissolve me, hold me, take me hence

into the depths!...It's shallow there,
they say. I'm here, though, unaware,
see only sunlit surface. Putting

forth, doling self out, I've...no care!
One can wade far, chin high in air,
they say, and never lose one's footing.

The Life and the Work

God dammit her pentameters are witty!
Then why is *she* so flitty,
ready to give so proper a
coup de grace to our mad little soap opera?

Wants the excitement, needs the drama maybe.
Out of each sudsy scene
a poem of hers comes clean;
I think she'll throw the bath out, keep the baby.

Once More

After my proud years, puttering
in sad release, miserably free,
you, your son, yes, come live with me.
Time to try weeks together, fling

out, careless, lost in each small thing –
and found there also, hopefully.
I know: we shall lose liberty,
find pain – the pain maybe of spring.

Time Old New England's cold relents!
Neighbors, ride 'round on your toy tractors!
Pastors, go modern, free the flocks!

But love – look: poking through back fence,
two daffodils, like malefactors'
heads locked – and nodding! – in the stocks.

The Adventure of It

Step father, latest lover – I'm the one.
That charmer, wit, my longed-for son
delights. . .but look: the little punster,
closer examined, is a monster.

Because of fires in him that have long burned,
he does things when our backs are turned
that rouse the neighbors to a fury
and threaten us with judge and jury.

Yet still he comes, comes still, comes with his mother –
him only – she will bring no other.
It's fate. It's nasty, brutish, clever.
I didn't choose him. Does one ever?

Although he's not the bargain I had thought,
caveat emptor, he is bought,
wrapped in the joy she could confer
in part because he came with her.

Wasn't my wish once more to be a parent?
Bring me this knave, then, nasty, arrant!
Lucifer, stoke that inner fire!
Good son, bad son, the fate entire!

Preflight Inspection

Appetite strange and curious the need.
Truly we satirists are a queer breed,
and in the sweet mad flights of love, kill-joys indeed.

As pilots, we'd think negative and doff
politeness, seek malfunctions, hem and cough
before we climbed into the beauty and took off.

For a New Step Son and Escort

1

This descendant of King Cambyses –
unwashed and infested with lice, he's,
 well, sort of *fishy*;
 so some folks wish he
would go for a swim – in the high seas.

2

This singer at birth was – a Pisces? –
for *she* likes to *carp* in the high C's,
 till her miserable lover
 is forced to take cover,
as from shrieks from the hordes of Cambyses.

To My Houseguests: A Gentle Admonition

Fell forests high
in Oregon!
Lumberjacks, don
your jackets, ply

your axes, cry
Timber! upon
the slopes. Anon!
Let woodchips fly.

For I'm aware;
I'm on my guard.
Those folks pull their

toilet rolls hard —
not by the square,
but by the yard.

Wine

Patience! Her disposition may get sweeter
after her daily liter.

She grows talkative, gay, loses her cares
and footing on the stairs.

I watch, hoping she'll fall and bust her kisser,
forgetting how I'd miss her.

Little Prig Song

Her statements over wine
are not always benign,
and her new taste for bourbon
is even more disturbin'.

It's fun, yes, drunken laughter.
But slowly we get dafter.
Then demons wrench and probe her....
Why can't we just stay sober?

A Question of Identity

She's full of antidepressants.

They open her throttle.

Depressing to think that her essence
comes out of a bottle.

This genius, quips an old meanie,
is only a genie.

The Role Assigned

Marriages, lovers. . .one long chilling ague
you've suffered, dear! and I think that's
my fate: to join those absent rats
who plague you.

To the Foregoing

Past lovers of
my love,
to hear her tell,
ya're all in Hell,
where she has sent ya,
condemned in absentia.
O condemnation dreaded,
I wonder where I'm headed.

The Cleaner

Warm words, abrasive rhymes,
scouring off love's grimes
until my splendid one
shines glittering in the sun:

themes have begun repeating.
I fear you're overheating.
She may not like you, Cleaner.
Where is she? Have you seen her?

Fore and Aft

This lady whom I adore,
this graceful craft
both fore
and aft,

so small for that cargo, immense,
shipshape and fit,
of sense
and wit:

the way she came on with her verse
(there were so many
much worse),

then lastly that lively posterior,
no, not to any
inferior.

Enfin

(After *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book III, lines 1 - 49.)

It was good of God to endow us
with sexual prowess
that urges, makes us bother
with one another
and thus rehearse
the mysteries of His universe:

how all things draw and mingle
and none stays single;
how atoms flash and stir,
forget what they were,
the little fools,
and vibrate, bound in molecules;

how in the lowest darks
the dancing quarks
in their *ménages à trois*
by themselves – Oo la! –
don't even exist.
O no! a quark's no solipsist.

And they come in different “flavors,”
those Life Savers.
On such firm building blocks,
the cradle rocks.
Love sits above it
that made and, let us hope, can love it.

Therefore, my dear, let's play
and while we may
in love's stocks firmly gripped
rehearse that script,
cavort and sport us.
All stiffness isn't rigor mortis.

Her True Calling

Writing poems – her spiritual tonic
and fondest of her desires.

Her view of the matter – Platonic:
the poets – “such *charming* liars.”

Up and At 'Em

New love, triumphant, till truth rout it;
then newer loves . . . until at last
 what's left: a splendid past,
 the tales she tells about it.

Down But Not Out

"How deadly to be married,"
she sighed, "when love's miscarried.
Well then, divorced at last,
I'll *recreate* the past.

No husband, then, will flout me
with things he knows about me.
Come, lovers, clasp and kiss.
Your ignorance is bliss."

Who Done It?

Heaven knows what the sense is
when love shatters. What makes the mess,
the glittering pretenses
or the blunt hammer, righteousness?

Failings

Late in their lives two people meet
and love and touch intimately;
but eyes stay open, and they see
failings — two beings, stern, discrete.

Then ground they stand on gives. *Retreat!*
We'll do without youth's misery.
I speak of us, love; for thus we,
longing for peace, accept defeat;

and part, with feelings taut, malign,
you to your room and I to mine —
so much lost in us, still unsaid —

and I lie down on the floor, you
still there: outside the window: two
crows on one branch. The branch is dead.

Child Abuse

Who can forget, who's seen?
Horrors of fathers rage pell-mell. . .
but it is in the slow daily routine
of destroying children that the mothers most excel.

The Chameleon

Irene McNaire
née Florence Fink
claims not to care
what others think,

but all the same
the little stinker
has changed her name
lest people think her,

well, commonplace.
Layers of paint
cover her face.
Honest she ain't:

invents the past—
a song, a song!
Nothing can last
with her for long—

no word, no truth,
no warmth, no cover,
no charm of youth,
no faithful lover.

How will it end?
Ah well, so be it!
If the fates rend
her, I won't see it.

What Falls Away

What falls away is always. And is near.

— Roethke

1

God, what a gas, to play the dope an hour,
pretending I was Arthur Schopenhauer,
full of tart dicta, dialectic,
puns, witticisms, wild and hectic!

She too with wit — no lack, no lack! —
and wittiest upon her back,
O, understood each twist and turn
for which we dirty old men yearn.

Freed there from “drab Christian morality”
into our “cult of personality,”
we rolled and laughed, scratched every itch.
I was the wise man, she the witch.

2

Then we touched deeper mysteries, locked
squirming in our Walpurgisnacht.
“Promiscuous” she has been *billed* — O,
but has a son: her *private* dildo.

When full-grown lovers leave the scene,
he comes, as it were, *in between*,
learns much: then, turned out of her curls,
educates smaller boys and girls,

to whom thus playfully connected —
what fun! — till dumb parents objected;
for prudery is on the increase.
Answer the phone. It’s the police.

3

The affair grows, frisks and cavorts
with lawyers, therapists, and courts,
and for his services our sonny
is costing mamma lots of money.

But evils have attendant goods.
The two have fled now to the woods
far from the scene of sonny's crimes
and left a lover with these rhymes.

There mamma works her spells and charms,
secure in sonny's growing arms,
strong now, unlike his poor lame soul.
But look: the victim's in control —

4

was all along, when pranks of his
drove lovers from the premises
and kept his mother free to mother him,
her way: belittle, muddle, smother him.

Thus mother gets him his desire,
this little Nero his empire:
rules it through him. His rages stir. . .
At last, I think he'll murder her —

her first. He'll find her there alone
and demand money from the crone.
Dear God, I wake, hearing her scream.
Is there no waking from this dream?

The Suitcase

I got talking with this guy sitting
next to me at a play, about
“post-combat stress syndrome,”
as they’ve started calling it nowadays,
how some people aren’t bothered by it,
by seeing their best friend, say,
blown into messy pieces right
there next to them, all over them, and some
can’t stop thinking about it the rest
of their lives, maybe thirty or forty
years, and that reminded me, and I
told him about your second husband
who had served with the Dutch
in Indonesia, and yes, the guy said,
the Dutch were well known even
before the War for the things they did,
to the extent that the Indonesians were
the only people in Asia who could think
of the Japanese as liberators,
and your husband was the kind who
never forgot, or rather, started to
remember as part of your marriage
breaking up: how you had married him
and all his big talk, like that he was going
to get you this great career as a folk singer,
but it was all bullshit finally and he
began to go to pieces, drinking, doing drugs,
and remembering things that happened
in New Guinea, cutting up prisoners
and so on, so for you he got to be this awful
pain, and then—you never explained
this part too well—you two decided

to adopt this cute little baby,
which turned out to be a boy,
and after six months, as soon as
the adoption became final, you
divorced him, sent him packing,
as it were, and kept the little boy
for your very own, and did home
schooling with him, got reported once or twice
to the authorities, but that was bullshit
because that neighbor was just jealous
of you and your lovers, and fourteen years
later, when I got into the picture
to my considerable regret your son had been
a sex criminal for six years;
and your ex-husband, whom, as I said,
you sent packing, had indeed left town
right away, and you never heard
from him again, except for his suitcase.
He put it on the wrong conveyer belt
in a New York airport, and it got
sent back to you, and you said,
“He fucked up everything, he even
fucked that up,” and the lights went out,
the play was beginning again, and
I heard my new friend in the darkness
softly laughing before the actors
came out into the light, and he said,
“Maybe he sent back the suitcase intentionally.”

II – DOG DAYS

In Olden Times

young men to be married,
at one last stag party,
would call their brides tarty
and laugh, and look harried;

but I have been carried
to frolics more arty,
and, old now and farty,
have otherwise tarried.

Ah, time after time,
in rhyme upon rhyme,
on verse I've been bingeing.

Yes, that is what Dick did.
Poor Dick's been addicted.
O Lord, it's unhinging.

On the Carnival's Last Day

I've often heard the Ferris wheel's
cacophony of female squeals
and, also interesting, have then
observed a gang of clever men
pulling the stupid thing apart,
heedless of beauty and of art.

Sic Transit

When my first love had gone — O poor me! —
it took a whole epic to cure me.

Then for my second love gone bad,
a lyric sequence, tragic, sad.

Now for you, ma'am,
this epigram.

Dog Days

A Sequence of Epigrams

1

When we met, talked, grew fond,
walking around that pond
your big black dog, he'd stray,
tug at you, strain your sway,

stop you to sniff things, pee.
I was out walking me.
M'amie plus belle, plus riche,
it's me now on your leash.

2

Your other boyfriend's other girl
troubled you, caught in passion's whirl,
I thought: you're using me, sweet whim,
to liberate yourself from him.

Wrong! I am the convenient spur
to prod *him* from his other *her*.
It works. You plan a scene: "Love ends;
but, darling, can't we still be friends?"

Nowadays, faced with such a crisis,
let lovers bless modern devices.
Gloating, I make you, with a moan,
say your scene on the telephone,
where it is awkward to plead, rant,
easy to answer, "No, we can't."

3

Indeed love ends –
but nastily still echoes. Become friends?
My matron fair,
one cannot change an apple to a pear.
As any sap'll
testify, one can only change an apple
(and there's a loss)
to applesauce.

4

Bereft! Relieved too unawares?
That spiked collar her big dog wears
each of her lovers also bears;

which is to say, amidst this rubble
where towers glittered: O burst bubble,
ecstasy, old man...too much trouble.

5

O thou of small mind, ample tush,
thou gav'st me a rosemary bush
for remembrance, and I am letting
it wither, dear, into forgetting.

6

My rival's older than I, twice as limp.
But on love's seas, for you, yachtsgirl long used to
helming,
the attractions of a wimp
were overwhelming.

7

Thus, if it ever lived, love dies.
I'm glad it went no deeper,
leaves so few scars.
You drove – the words epitomize
you, dear – “one of the cheaper
luxury cars.”

8

How each new failure crushes!
Plots and connivances – have they no end?
Old solitary heron in the rushes,
you are still my friend.

9

The wisdom, learning, thoughts she took from me:
they fill my heart with gall.
Take comfort, Richard! Don't you see?
She will forget them all.

10

We meet; dark paths disguise you.
I hardly recognize you,
woman whom I once lipped,
faded now, nondescript.
A fake? Easily fakable!
But your dog's unmistakable.

The Tip of the Iceberg

Though life's been hard for Cicely,
she's faced it, rather prissily,
with witticisms, quips
through her little pinched lips —

the ones above, I mean:
the ones below, unseen,
doubtless more pinched and tight,
are best left out of sight.

True Transport

She who delights in telling me
her soul mounts on my poetry
hopes her next lover down the pike'll
remount her on a motorcycle.

Psychosomatic

With no one to love and admire us,
we will end up, contracting a virus;
 then in bed, with the *flu*
 we will fondle and screw,
all fevered and hotly desirous.

Fond Memories

Love's quality, so hard to name!
She was my darling, my old flame.
Hot, hot, hotter than I can tell,
so hot...God damn it, it was Hell.

The Lost Lover Song

The lovers come, the lovers go,
cut loose with scalpel or with knife,
and we who help it happen know
variety's the spice of life.

The lovers come, the lovers go.
Some say that isn't very nice,
but we who watch it happen know
of life, variety's the spice.

The lovers come, and come, and go.
They leave in sadness or in strife,
and we who watch them going know
variety grows sick of life.

But still they come, and still they go,
and each world ends in fire, or ice,
until they end, we feel, we know –
variety and every spice.

III – TICKETS TO HADES

Testy Buell

“Get you a wife!
Break into life!
Heavens above,
have a go at love!
In the Great Hall
dance! It’s a ball.”

“Ball? A ball breaker!
Wife? Devil take her!”
cried testy Buell
in the vestibule
impatiently waiting,
hot for more mating.

Pluto as Travel Agent for the Fates

Last month *I sold*
three *nice old*
ladies
tickets to Hades.

Down there shut up,
they cut up
thread:
mortals drop dead.

Man's Word to Woman

We are expendable. You sup:
your new lives live
from what we give;
then, as the mantis does her prey,
you eat us up
the usual way.
Thus he huffed – then heaved a sigh:
Such a delicious way to die!

What Some Old Men Have To Offer

Each girl, young, slim,
when he met, he'd ask her
to fly with him
to Madagascar.

He'd say, "Listen, honey,
it ain't no crime.
I got the money.
You got the time.

I've a banner here.
I have rejoiced it
still flies. You, dear,
have the power to hoist it."

She answers sassily,
"Purveyor of shames,
you propose too facilely."
"No!" he exclaims,

"Venturesome-hearted
and ready to hop,
once we get started,
we might never stop.

Don't be no Spartan.
Let's wine. Let us sup.
Your time's just startin'.
Mine's nearly up.

I'll hire a navy,
a choir, a nave.
Swim in my gravy.
Dance on my grave."

The Beleaguered Male Clings to Reality

That waitress, beautiful and sexy, can
make me forget this food is Mexican
and make me, gamy as a stallion,
not notice that it's not Italian;
but, wink as she may, O, by golly,
cold pizza beats a hot tamale.

(Scholars, make sure you've read up
well on this poet's life.
He wrote that, feeling fed up
with yet another wife.

He's old, his days are fleeting,
and now the sad old fart
would rather think of eating
and poetry and art.)

Hitch

So, shall the cat observe the mouse?
Does my life need a benign shaper?
I can't have a woman in the house.
They use too much toilet paper.

Something for a Poet to Consider

It makes me anxious, makes me sing.
O love, what will you finally bring,
beautiful, honest, and astute,
happiness that will make me mute,
or some new horror, some new curse,
some pain marvelous for my verse?

The Epistolary Passion

He aches for thought's caressing fetters,
feels phrases throbbing to be said.
For him, a long, unanswered letter's
a girl waiting in his warm bed.

Playing It Safe

A whole planeflight away,
"Why can't you stay?"
you say.

Flimsy, this fabric sewn
by telephone
and travel.

We hope it won't unravel.
Trust it, my dear;
there, here,

in monthly about-faces,
relish reforms
both places

for two who might not weather
the living storms
together.

But Will It Last?

I swore
a price war
is a nice war.
My love, my pretty's
gone; distant cities
hold us; but to confetti
I slash all intervening thickets,
my stout machete
cheap airplane tickets.

An Unfair Influence On Trade

When our love affairs
depend on air fares,
airlines (this appalls)
have us "by the balls."

One Little Problem

All's well here on the midnight flight:
air calm, the stewardess polite,
and all the switches work; so maybe
somebody could turn off the baby.

Technology Be Damned!

Love by phone? B'loney!
Didn't you hear, dear? Phoning makes you phony.
How can desires
be squeezed through wires?
How can Ma Bell
wring out the sight of you, transmit your smell?

Your touch, your taste
deliver through the intervening waste?
Better, plain grief
than this relief.
Better the hots,
real pain, agonized dreams, than this ersatz.

Lovers Reunited

They meet, nothing to say, topics all raked
over in dull telephone chatter:
cooks who can't eat the cookies they have baked
because they've pigged out on the batter.

The Well-Wired Lovers

1

The visit; then it's over, then things worsen:
then you become *the telephoning person*.

2

Dearest, let's live together! Rages, groaning,
death maybe...Yes! And no more telephoning.

Making Do

The voice suggesting tears, the stifled groan:
what art, to do all that by telephone!

Nothing For Something

Their talk by telephone grew tense.
"That silence, dear, just cost ten cents."

Song of the Indolent Lover

Technical marvels that please her and suit her,
working at home at her clicking computer –
jobs we all need. All the same, I have mocked hers,
daily transcribing dumb dictating doctors –
no, sir, I mean to say, dumb doctor dictators.
Call them whatever, I'm one of their haters.
Voices, whose droning through solid wall seeping
bothers me dreadfully when I'm not sleeping,
mornings through evenings, they snag her, they get her.
Damned if I care if their patients get better.
Figs for their knowledge and verbal agility,
thus to presume to disturb my tranquility.
Who can forgive such vile incivility?

All The Time

You down south, me up north,
this going back and forth
is just too much, I whine.
I feel like Proserpine,
one of those poor sad ladies
who back and forth from Hades,
year after year, in, out –
“God, what’s this all about?”
they cry, and, “O, you brute, O,
you brute!” they scream at Pluto,
who replies, “Go, my dear!
Come back again next year.”

But for me, grim and unth-
ankful, it’s every *month!*
And dearest, look at me:
I’m no Persephone.
No, I’m just a twerp in a
comedy, no Proserpina.
I need no yearly shipment,
lack much of her equipment.
And think how you incline
to what she lacks of mine!
And here’s my final reason:
Dammit, I’m not a season.

In my abundance, sweet,
I am the year complete,
and in my plenty I’m
big for you all the time.
Mere trudgers through life’s marsh’ll
be content, being partial,

half there, half out of sight,
alone for half the night.
O God, upon my soul,
I want your ... want you whole,
all of you, every minute,
splashing there, swimming in it,

immersed in you forever.
Come up for air? No, never!
For air? For air? O pish!
I am a perfect fish
who happily came hither
to slosh and dive and slither,
to tickle, feel you squeeze
as often as you please,
to wiggle, twist, and bend
until the world shall end.
Then wrap me, bundle me
into eternity!

On Reading "The Art of Sexual Ecstasy"

Too late for Sunday school
when funeral bells are tollin'.
You lock the barn, old fool,
after the horse is stolen.

The Lover in an Uncertain World

Sing to me now, sweet Lorelei!
I always did adore a lie.

Love and Suspicion

We, relishing each other's touch
and juices mixing sweetly,
needing each other, each, so much—
do we dare trust completely?

The Pleasures of Consciousness

So smoothly move and never balk
our bodies in their private talk,
but not private from us: my dear,
I'm so glad we can overhear.

Harmony

It's perfect, don't you see?
Such pleasure, who can bear?
That where I love to be,
she loves to have me there.

The Lover Finds Fault

Marring their love's revival
and jinxing his arrival,
she's late, and that's resulted
in him feeling insulted.
Propelled by jet and wing,
he thinks he is the king,
 but he's a dull king,
 standing there, sulking—

and stupid to boot. Boot him!
Let boobs and fools recruit him.
He thinks her gun is smokin'.
If fever...if she'd broken
something or had a cough,
he'd hear her? No, turned off,
 slave to his dead side,
 far from her bedside

(how boorishness can coat us!)
of course he wouldn't notice.
Now anger-stuffed and stuffy,
glimpsing her, he gets huffy.
Hell's deeps, Heavens above,
cry out, sir, in your love,
 "Lo, she of fair port
 graces my airport."

Song of the Man Who Stayed Home

A brassiere hangs
on the doorknob outside her closet
and bares its fangs,
important as a bank deposit.

It cannot bite me,
is nothing if there's nothing in it.
It can incite me,
though. Cups! Leave me in peace this minute!

When she comes home
is time enough for fuss and fit,
when in his foam
the dolphin swims...but meanwhile it,

waiting to bind her...
avaunt, thou saucy, bold reminder!

A Discourse On Letter-Opening

My dearest, only dopes
open their envelopes
the way you do.
No knife, stiletto, cutter —
plain violence — it's utter —
rips flaps, parts glue,
down thickest paper gambols,
leaving a jagged shambles;
and when you're through,
the thing thus indiscreetly
twisted fits nowhere neatly,
will not sit true,
impossible to file it.
That is why I revile it
and rage at you.

But there's — O be advised! —
a way more civilized.
I plead, I sue.
Armed with a scissors, fend off
chaos and cut one end off.
Clean still, like new —
with fingers press it wide
and pull out what's inside.
No ballyhoo,
no fuss; when you thus grope,
it will, that envelope,
be happy too.
Believe what I'm revealing:
an envelope has feeling.
Believe — or rue.

Leftovers

Bad luck, that she – O God, why did I mate her? –
can't face what's in her own refrigerator.

The Life

The life with which a poem stirs—
the poet's or the listener's?
O, how deliciously absurd it
sounded that first moment you heard it,
and now, my dear one, ever after,
reciting it, I hear your laughter.

High Hopes

By God, you'll never catch
her in a coffee klatsch,
frivolously delighting
in gossip and backbiting.

She, free of the caffeine
found in the coffee bean –
doubters, don't doubt it! – weans
herself from said dread beans,

no longer squanders bucks
in places like Starbucks,
has seen her chance, can grab it
and kick the wretched habit,

sleep sounder every night....
God, have I got this right?
O Lord, down, down I'm sinking,
drowned in my wishful thinking.

Outing

I'm not, but if I were she,
I'd never go to Hershey,
the town in Pennsylvania.
(Don't, darling, or I'll brain ya!)
A chocolate of renown
labels the hapless town
with that offense to fame,
its sticky little name;
and on the land surrounding—
its project and its founding
(hear all its barkers bark!)—
is an amusement park.
Vulgar; but does she care?
No, brings her children there.
They scream, they dance, they love it.
A blimp hovers above it,
filled with hot air on high,
a gut to steer us by.
Corporate intestine, ah, duct,
swollen with Hershey's product,
be kind to children! Pet them,
feed them with junk food, let them
on roller coasters go up,
chocolate-filled...come down, throw up.
It's not a pretty sight.
Never mind. Serves 'em right.
Their souls longed—for a star?
Nah, for a candy bar.

A Proposal

Soon, poppet, we'll have had enough.
Our irritated spirits, harried
by all this lovey-dovey stuff,
will cry, "Let's stop this and get married,
love birds whose amorous protesting
gets down to nitty-gritty nesting."

Now, tootsy, we're like toothless babies
swallowing air: each thinks he smothers;
life fills with terrifying *maybes*.
But then they pick us up, our mothers,
who fathom life's deep-lying purpose,
quietly shoulder us, and burp us.

Marriage could work like that. Let's hope.
Don't we all need firmness, authority?
Some mind the stars, others the Pope,
rules of fraternity, sorority....
Attachments, teaching subtle graces,
lead us to where our proper place is,

who endlessly get out of place,
dreaming we'll shoot up, chuck this world,
among stars find a better race.
On earth hasn't it all been spoiled?
From life here *loose* at last – bewitched –
what nonsense! Come on, let's get *hitched*.

Coffin Will Cure What Ails You

Eventually one wearies
of sex and the World Series,
of dreaming for a city's
cantankerous committees.
Enough of pro and con.
Let go. Stop hanging on.

Thus, weary of the world,
of getting goosed and girled,
he speaks: "Grave man that you be,
it's yours. Climb in it, booby."

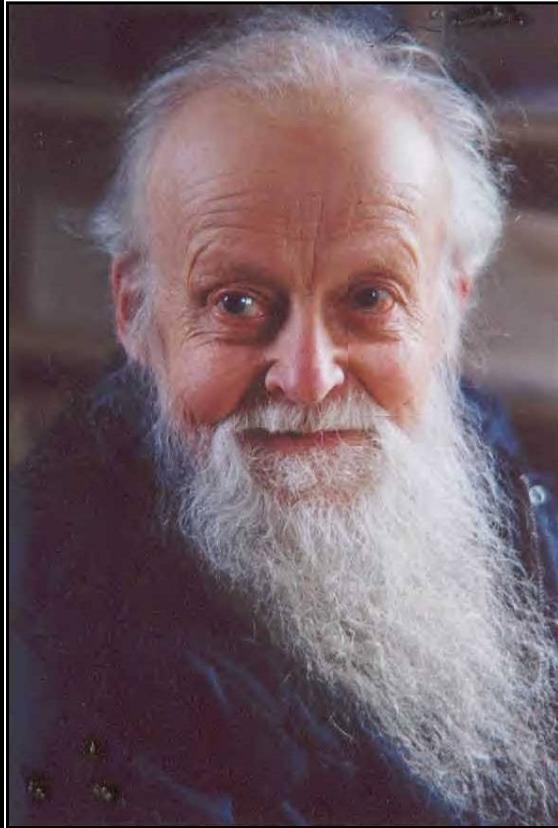
On the Infrequency of Sexual Pleasure in Old Age

"Observe the glowing dawn,
old man. I think you should.
Where's Venus up there?"

"Gone
for now, but not for good.
The day is near, not far, not far,
when she becomes the evening star."

"Truth speaks, you silly man,
says things you can't ignore.
Come, face them if you can.
We'll change the metaphor:
Your day will end soon, sun will set,
darks bury you."

"Not yet, not yet."



Throughout a long life, Richard Moore has won through to the belief that the only real reward in the arts of writing is the writing itself. The first of his nineteen books was published and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize when he was 44. The books that followed have brought the total to a novel, a book of literary essays, translations of a Greek tragedy and a Roman comedy, and fifteen books of poetry. These include a sequence of fifty-eight Petrarchan sonnets, an epic of American history, and an epic in trimeter couplets whose hero is a mouse born and raised in a sewer.

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