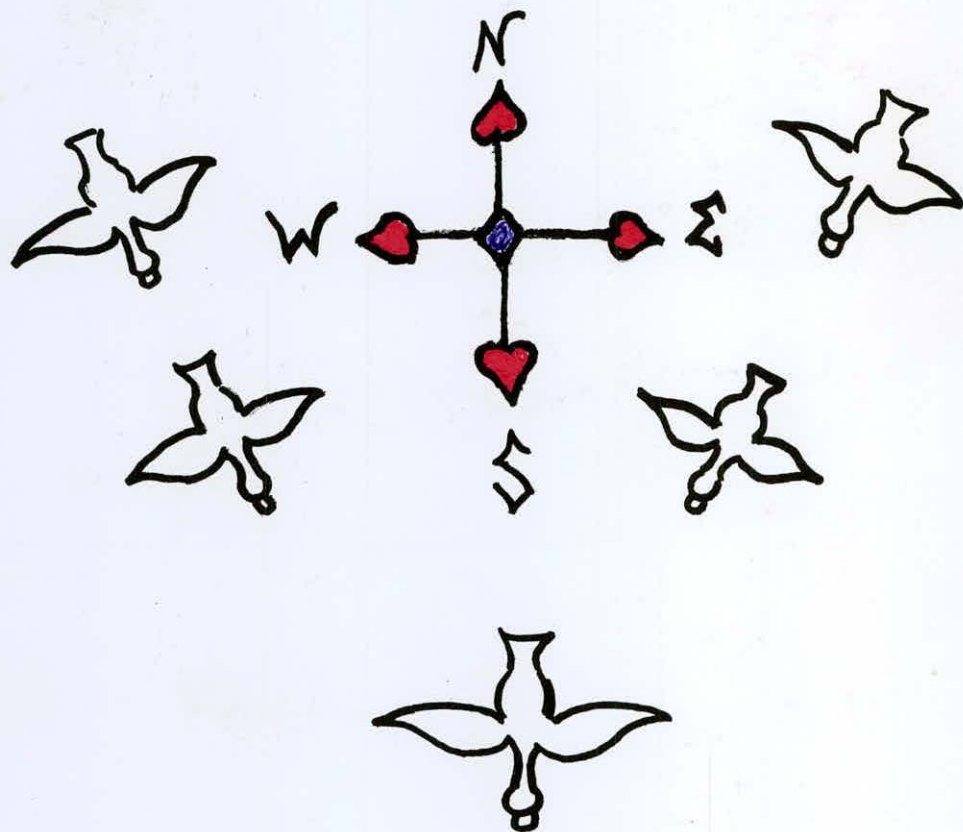


# Wild Geese Flying South



New Poems by Emmett Jarrett

**Wild Geese Flying South**

**New Poems**

**by**

**Emmett Jarrett**

## OTHER BOOKS BY EMMETT JARRETT

*The Days*

*4-Telling* (with Dick Lourie, Marge Piercy, Robert Hershon)

*Greek Feet*

*God's Body*

*Looking to the City* (with Anne P. Scheibner)

*For the Living of These Days*

*To Heal the Sin-Sick Soul*

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*for Nate and Sarah*

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## At Little Portion Friary

*Hew, fly,  
deep, lie,  
Mary-fish*

Hew the decaying log  
that lies on the forest floor  
damp, warm,  
eaten by termites, full of  
holes, white fungus  
growing on the underside.

Fly like that robin  
up into the tree,  
sudden, sharp movements  
alert for possibilities.  
And the figure  
from a 15<sup>th</sup> century Flemish  
breviary, his feet  
sticking out of a cloud,  
beneath, dumbfounded friends  
and his mother.

Yet deep in dreams you fly  
head inflated, pulled up  
like a grotesque  
balloon.

As a child you learn  
to be careful of pin-pricks.  
Everyone wants to pop  
a bubble, for its own  
good. Learn also about  
dirigibles with armor-plate:  
they fall.

Lie on the beach in the sun  
warming yourself  
in its rays,  
turning brown, leathery  
like old Greeks  
whose faces wrinkle at forty.  
Like the fallen log  
that lies on the damp forest floor.

Mary-fish,  
mother of fishes,  
Piscean boy with rays  
around his head, amphibian  
of spirit. Out of dreams  
come words. The words  
point to themselves:

*Hew, fly,  
deep, lie,  
Mary-fish.*

## Six Poems for Carol

### I. Christmas 1979

Amazing!  
In the last year  
you have had so many X-rays  
that you glow in the dark.  
You are a walking Three Mile Island.  
When you touch this string of Christmas ornaments  
they light up.

But in the latest picture  
instead of all that death  
glowing in your bones and breasts  
there is calcium  
the stuff of teeth and bone  
building up like a baby's body  
constructing a skeleton to stand on.

We trim the tree and find  
this string of lights still works.  
Another year of use to celebrate  
the Christ child  
after a year of life where less  
was threatened. And we  
are alight. Here, now,  
in this year of  
grace.

## II. A Sort of a Psalm (1980)

1.

The English doctor told you  
a year and a half ago  
when it was only  
“inoperable breast cancer”  
that you felt depressed  
and cried every day  
because of the radiation.

Now the cancer has spread  
through your bloodstream  
and settled in bone –  
I’ve lost track  
of the number of lesions  
in your pelvis, hips, ribs –  
they use radiation  
as a palliative  
where the pain is worst.

Last week  
before you were “marked up”  
for cobalt treatments to your right hip  
you sat on the hard metal table  
crying and crying  
then thought of the English doctor  
and laughed.  
“It must be the radiation.”

*I am poured out like water  
all my bones are out of joint  
my heart within my breast is melting wax.*

2.

Your breasts swell and sag with edema  
but the tumor maintains itself  
in a deadly equilibrium.

Your vagina is dry as an old woman's,  
your bones are as brittle  
and as likely to break.

You walk like your grandmother used to,  
afraid of each step,  
and on the X-ray film

*I can count all my bones*

over and over.

3,

You cry all the time now.  
you wake me up crying  
in the middle of the night  
and when I waken you

from your sweaty morning sleep  
you cling tightly to my arm  
and cry some more.  
When you cry late in the evening  
sometimes I cry too.  
I try not to cry too often.  
It makes you sad to see me cry.

*Hear my prayer, O Lord,  
and give ear to my cry  
hold not your peace at my tears.*

4.

I cry in the morning  
at my desk  
quietly  
in order not to wake you.

*I cry to you, O Lord  
I plead with you, saying,  
what profit is there in her blood?  
will the dead praise you  
or declare your faithfulness?*

### III. Tuesday Morning (1980)

The chatter of visitors  
drifts up the stairs from Carol's room  
nervous friends and  
optimistic West Indian nurses build a fragile  
cocoon around her depression.

She looked in the mirror last night  
saw her steroid-swollen face  
and thinning hair  
her mouth was a hole full of pain  
tears poured out of her endless eyes.

It is a chill spring day  
from the corner of Congress and Clinton Streets  
the bells of Our Lady of Pilar  
toll slowly for someone's passing  
When?                      When?                      When?

#### IV. Letting Go

Letting go is hard.  
You feel you have something  
to lose, and you do.  
It's like the electric train  
with the tiny pellet that makes  
"real smoke," the one you  
never got for Christmas.  
The fact that you never got it  
is hard to let go.

It's like letting go of  
someone you love when she's dying,  
before she dies, so she  
can be free to die  
when there's nothing else to do.  
You want to let go, you want her  
to let go, but you want to  
hold on as well.

It's like holding back  
when you're making love,  
being afraid to let go and  
tremble from the inside out,  
shaken by something (not-you)  
inside you, laughing and  
crying at once. You dread  
what you seek.

You have so much to lose  
and there's no way to renegotiate  
the terms of this contract.  
There are no cost-of-living increases  
available, and the escape clauses  
of the heart are unenforceable.  
The conditions are absolute:  
"for better, for worse."  
You have to let go to live.

V.     **Sunrise, Vineyard Haven (1982)**

Six a.m. The sun  
is nearly up.  
A solitary seagull floats  
on the waves  
beside the town landing.  
Deliverymen are dropping  
*The Sunday Times*  
at Leslie's unlit drug store.  
Three cooks  
are preparing croissants  
in the rear  
of the Patisserie on Main Street.  
A man is making coffee  
in his kitchen.  
The Angelus is rung  
by bell-buoys  
beyond the ferry slip.  
A few grey tourists  
glide down the street for the first  
departure of the day.  
Pray for us O holy Mother of God,  
may those who are about to leave us  
find rest.

VI. God (1983)

*Your statutes have been like songs to me  
wherever I have lived as a stranger.*

*(Psalm 119:54)*

I see now  
you have been here  
all along  
not just in Carol's dying  
my struggle for life  
but with me  
always  
in loneliness and fear  
my absence from ordinary  
love and living  
my stunted growth  
hunger for sex  
& admiration  
you have been here  
hungry too  
for sex, love, life,  
for me.

## Canada Geese at the Trappist Monastery in Conyers, Georgia

“Give me a spontaneous mind,” I shout  
and sit down to watch a flock of Canada geese  
feed at the water’s edge. One of the monks  
drives down in a pick-up to empty trash bins,  
then leaves without disturbing the quiet feeding  
of the geese. Out of the sky from the north  
in a V-formation comes another flock.  
They settle in the middle of the lake like a squadron  
of fighter planes. The males of the first flock  
honk a lot and splash water to tell the new geese  
who belongs to whom: “These females are ours!”  
After a while I get up from my bench and walk  
to the Monastery gift shop to buy some Trappist  
bread and local honey for *my* table and some books  
for *my* library when and if I decide to go home.

## Country Matters

Brenda's mother saw  
a wooly worm on the sidewalk  
outside the sacristy  
last Sunday morning.  
"It's going to be a hard winter,"  
she said, pointing to the  
wooly worm's heavy white coat  
in the late October sunlight.  
"I know," she said,  
"because I'm from the country."

## **Wednesday in Holy Week**

Comet Hyakutake  
makes a brilliant  
final pass over Atlanta  
during a total eclipse  
of the moon.

Blake's tree full of angels  
turns out to be  
the dark magnolia  
in my front yard.

Who would believe it?

## **Beginner's Mind**

### **1. How It's Done**

Out there in the fog,  
in here. Listen,  
the gulls call  
from the sky. The waves  
lap, lap on the shore.  
Any minute now  
the New York to Boston express  
will come shining  
through the fog,  
steel engine screaming  
along the tracks, unperturbed  
by being observed.

## 2. The Observer

1.

Four jagged rocks  
on the water's surface –  
a goose & three goslings –  
sail away to the north.

He was so busy  
watching the rocks  
that he didn't notice  
a thing.

2.

One, two, three  
flotillas of swans  
escorted by cygnets  
between the bridges  
of Lambert's Cove.

A solitary  
egret grooms himself  
rejoicing in the safety  
of the rocks.

### 3. Beginner's Mind

The mind empties itself, then begins:  
a single duck churns steadily  
across the Cove towards Quanaduck.  
A cormorant turns its sharp head  
right to left like a periscope,  
then dives to escape collision. Soon  
the water is still again. Like a mirror,  
it reflects the scudding clouds  
on the surface of the sky's  
blue screen. Beginner's sky.

## Nightlight

As the tortoise  
withdraws its limbs –  
first the right front  
foot, then the left,  
next the left rear  
foot, then the right –  
its unsupported shell  
rocking gently on the ground –  
looks all around  
beady eyes unclosing  
then goes inside

So the contemplative  
with open eyes embraces  
the desert she has always  
lived in  
turns on the light  
and sits inside  
the circle that it opens  
in the darkness.

## Instead of Meditating

*Has it been 30 years?  
It seems like 30 minutes.  
(Bob Lax)*

Bright letters on the russet  
spine of Gary Snyder's book  
*No Nature*

catch my eye

I find a poem about a trip  
he took in '82 with his son

another about climbing  
the Sierra Matterhorn again  
after 31 years

In less than  
3 months I'll be going  
to Greece again  
to show  
my son Nathaniel "this  
magic Greece of the mind"

& meet Bob Lax again  
over a breakfast of *loukoumi*  
& warm honey

after 30 years

## Last Visit

*for Margaret Rose*

Read in the *New York Times*  
this morning that Padre Pio,  
the Franciscan peasant  
whose bloody hands and feet  
embarrassed Vatican bureaucrats  
as much as Francis had,  
was beatified yesterday in Rome.  
Said my prayers and walked the dog.  
Picked up my paycheck and made a deposit.  
Ate lunch and drove to Conyers  
to visit the Trappist monastery.  
Bought three refrigerator magnets  
of Padre Pio in the bookshop:  
one for me, one for Margaret and Mark,  
and one to keep just in case.

Went into the cool  
abbey church for the last time to pray.  
Blue Mary with red Jesus in her belly  
looked out at me from high  
above the altar. The hand of God  
taps at her right shoulder, the bird  
tugs at the sleeve on her left.  
A shaft of sunlight is refracted into  
rainbow colors from the windows  
in the west clerestory, then spills

through the air into the empty choir.

The throbbing of a lawnmower  
in the cloister yard reminds me  
of the social nature of solitude.  
Spirit of this house of prayer,  
whimsical spirit, spirit of the air,  
come into our new home,  
create this silence in our life.

## Wild Geese Flying South

I saw wild geese  
flying in formation  
above the church  
after Matins last  
Thursday and thought  
“Wild geese flying south.”

Then I remembered I'm  
in the South now. Where  
do wild geese fly  
in winter when they're  
already in the South?  
Someone said:

“They fly  
around in circles.  
They just start up  
from where they are  
fly around  
and come down again.”

## Yesterday

The poor old beat-up rose  
isn't what it was in Dante's day.  
No sudden brightness in imagined gardens  
opens a door. Tattered and torn,  
a *papier-mache* blossom, its paint streaked  
like a sad old whore's mascara. No,  
the flower for me is magnolia.  
Its ivory petals, tinged with brown,  
glow in the interstices  
of dark trees. The heavy scent  
is the odor I imagined as a boy  
between the legs of girls. Oh,  
yesterday, yesterday –  
what are you up to now?

## The Diamond Sutra Doesn't Mention Feet

*for Matthew Gibson*

I saw eighteen pairs  
of feet walk slowly  
around the meditation hall –  
mostly old, the feet  
of people who have  
lived a long time  
without paying attention:  
callused male feet  
hiding aggression,  
the painted toes  
of female feet attracting  
men, blistered athletic  
feet, long feet,  
narrow ones, wrinkled,  
priests' feet, nuns' feet,  
the prophet Isaiah's  
"beautiful on the mountain"  
feet – I watched them  
walking naked  
in the circle. The suspicious  
feet of contemplatives  
watched me –  
they said: "Try to develop  
a mind that does not  
cling to anything."

## Pushing the Envelope

Under the door in the darkness slips an  
invitation to clandestine meetings in the hotel bar

cruising high above the Arizona desert  
at Mach 2 the pilot shoves his stick down hard

at the Academy Awards an Oscar goes  
to a film about two penises twisted between two ears

I rip open the scented missive  
and devour the message

reach up          turn off the light  
we've come to the end of the line

go to sleep in Kansas City now  
someone else will come & bar the door

## Nicodemus Day in New York

Emerging from the Holland Tunnel into rain on Hudson Street headed uptown to meet Bluma for lunch, I'm surprised to see Susan, wiry gray hair splayed across the sky as she waves her arms for a taxi. We stop and I run back to see if it's really her. She said, "I saw this man running toward me waving his arms and I thought he must be William Blake or some crazy Vietnam veteran coming to kill me. Then I saw Anne behind him on the street and I knew it was you."

Back in the van driving uptown to the Swedish UN Mission Susan warns us about the new breed of New York City taxi drivers. "They're like Russians, they drive like they drive in Moscow turning four lane streets into eight lanes, running their little cars into tight spots with no hesitation." "But they *are* Russians," I say, "almost all the New York cabbies now are Russians." I drive like crazy through the traffic, frightening my wife and children and Susan, my old friend from Columbia and the Sixties poetry scene – but not the Russian cab drivers jockeying for position, rushing forward into each new vaginal opening in the traffic, determined now to win the Cold War on the avenues of New York City in the rain.

## Pain and Suffering

*for Jeanie Wylie Kellermann  
& in memory of Carol Baum (1944-1982)*

Pain simply hurts, as when you cut your finger  
or break your leg, or cancer eats your bones  
so thin they break while walking down the stairs.  
Suffering is the noble thing, if you're up for it,  
what Gandhi says you must put up with  
if you want to conquer un-truth by truth  
and change the world with nonviolence.

Pain is the penalty for living so long  
that nobody remembers to call and see if you want  
to go shopping or walk around the mall.  
*Pain* is the French word for bread.  
You can taste pain. Nobody has any  
doubt about being in pain or not;  
some part of the body simply hurts.

Suffering has to do with passion.  
Not so much *la grande passion*, although  
it's closer to that than the passionate  
like to admit. But passion in the sense  
of something that buffets the mind's composure,  
the cold and powerful irrationality of

a hurricane that tears off the roof or lifts  
a whole house up from its foundation  
and sets it down somewhere else, if at all.

“The Passion according to Saint John”  
is sung in churches every year on Good Friday  
and at no other time. The melody,  
an ancient tune that aches with the suffering  
of Jesus, isn’t something you want to hear  
more often than once a year. Of course,  
if you’re Jesus, or someone else  
whose pain has turned to suffering,  
you sing it every day.

## **A Sermon preached to Seagulls in Gloucester, Massachusetts, October 24, 2002**

Like Saint Francis, who preached to the birds,  
I preached a sermon to the gulls  
on the Dog Bar Breakwater at Eastern Point Lighthouse:  
brown, gray, blue and white gulls,  
protectors of the coast.

“O gulls, guardians of these shores,  
you are the early-warning birds of America.  
How honored you are to be always on the lookout  
for Iraqi missiles loaded with weapons of mass destruction,  
ready to fall from the sky onto Boston.  
Fly up in the air, like fighter planes,  
Seek out Scud missiles arriving from faraway Baghdad.  
Alert our homeland defenses to incoming terrorist bombs.”

One after another the gulls flop off the breakwater,  
fly across the harbor. Unlike the larks  
Saint Francis preached to, they do not form a cross  
or dip their wings in gratitude to their Creator.  
They cross the bay to Gloucester town  
leaving the blue sky empty.

**February 23, 1991**

1.

another day of war another night of  
green lights flashing over Baghdad  
like video game "smart bombs"  
bursting above whitewashed housetops  
in acrid air while I watch –  
a mouse in swaying cobra eyes

another day of fasting  
throat dry empty of friends  
no satisfaction no end  
in sight another day of  
straining forward to what lies ahead  
pressing on toward the prize

2.

another time for victory  
as fire takes the shape  
of a room or the sail of a ship  
filled as the wind makes a sail  
around the old man's body

I can almost see the body  
in the middle of the flames  
not like burning flesh but bread  
baking I can smell the sweet  
and acrid odor of the incense

## The Rain Like Grace

The rain comes down like grace  
in torrents drenching the thirsty soul.  
Steam rises with morning prayers  
from the asphalt parking lot.  
The chatterbox rain talks itself out  
as the sun comes up over Broad Street  
and trucks deliver groceries to  
California Fruit and elegant provisions  
for Tony D's Italian restaurant.  
Men huddle in the light  
from the windows of Labor Ready,  
waiting to open its jaws.  
At the end of the day  
the men return from their work  
cash their paychecks  
and quench their thirst  
with quarts of Colt 45 malt liquor.  
"It's outrageous," Mike says.  
"Some of these guys got GI benefits,  
they could live in houses if they had the chance."

## **Three's Company**

I was surprised to see Marge Piercy in a dream this morning. I hadn't seen her since Carol's funeral and didn't expect to find her in a crowded stream of consciousness. The other woman in the dream was Anne's old friend the Very Reverend Dean of Somewhere-Else-Entirely. Jesus! it was a confusing dream: everyone going fast past one another on an escalator that stretched from the edge of the bed where Otis, the 4-year old Beagle reclined without a worry in the world.

## Force of Gravity

In the Second Avenue Deli  
my friend Dick Lourie writes  
syllabic verse. I remember telling him

what it was in Denise's class  
at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in 1963.  
We lived on the Lower East Side

and met for coffee and talk about poetry.  
We were both hot for sex, married  
to other women, gravely ambitious

for the last infirmity of noble mind.  
Dick played steel guitar and I sang  
Southern white revival songs at parties.

We loved Blake and Bob Dylan and politics,  
we worked each other's weddings. Later  
I went to seminary and England, Dick

moved first to Ithaca, then Somerville.  
Like wandering planets, we strayed  
but never ceased to be connected

by some force of gravity. Last week  
Dick performed poetry and blues  
in New York City, reading his own

lyrics (still in syllabics) blowing  
his saxophone, an endless sad train  
whistle in the night. I came

to listen. The Second Avenue Deli  
is still there but the waiters  
are young women and polite to us.

## **Déjà vu**

**In Memoriam: Clark Taylor**

It was always your orange hair people noticed.  
When we first met, I was your high school English teacher  
Startled by your freckled face, open and eager,

the spitting image of your mother. I remember you  
in Catskill coming to tell me you'd had sex  
the night before with Nico in the guest room. Later, in London,

a dark afternoon in Westminster Abbey  
amid the shuffling of tourists learning about architecture,  
you noticed all those people lying around in tombs.

"Hey! this place is full of dead people!"  
I saw you last in Minneapolis in a coffee shop  
you went to after AA meetings. You were

thinking of getting married. "You'll be  
a good father," I said. A year later I went  
to your funeral in Manhattan. Then yesterday

I saw someone sitting on the brick wall  
at the entrance to Labor Ready in New London.  
White tee-shirt, chinos, orange hair

in a ponytail, bent over lighting a cigarette,  
freckled face open, eager, the spitting image.

## High Tide

In Memoriam: Denise Levertov (1923-1997)

Gray day: raindrops  
spatter on the ocean's surface,  
on the rocks, splash  
on the floor of the porch, the table,  
then beat against the window.

Rereading her poems,  
I think of the friend  
I didn't see for many years  
before she died:  
how she must have ached  
after her marriage,  
how hard it must have been  
to live alone.

Perhaps that hard ache  
(heart ache) had something  
to do with the sharpness  
of her judgments of others:  
faithfully unfaithful  
was not possible for her.  
She became a Catholic at the end:  
no more married priests.

Still, in a late poem  
her mother and father,  
he in his clerical overcoat,

are climbing the steps  
(I imagine the stairway  
on Greenwich Street, the whole  
neighborhood's gone now)  
come for a final visit.

Perhaps it is winter  
in Heaven, a gray day  
water on the streets, like  
Manhattan, like the water here  
where I am, thinking  
of her at high tide,  
maybe at last the ache  
is subsiding.

## **New York Skyline: Upper West Side 1964-2004**

*for Bluma Swerdlof*

From her window  
on the nineteenth floor  
of 86<sup>th</sup> and West End Avenue  
I see in the distance  
the George Washington Bridge  
and in the foreground  
Upper West Side rooftops.  
We're making a "brief stop"  
after a visit to the City  
to see the woman who knows  
more history of the bloody century  
than anyone I know but  
Babette Deutsch who was in Moscow  
to hear Lenin announce  
the first Five Year Plan.  
Bluma came from Russia  
In the 1920's, married an artist  
who made a living in real estate  
and left her two children  
and an art collection. She is  
my one remaining friend  
who remembers revolutionary hope.  
We arrive with Sarah  
whose 14 year-old grimace is  
fierce as any revolutionary's.

Thus it happens I am looking  
out her window at the Upper  
West Side rooftops of which  
in 1964 the artist Dave Van Hoorn  
made a silkscreen illustration  
for the cover of *things* magazine.  
Dave drew the skyline's  
dark buildings, weighty stone  
residences of the rich  
that were converted to apartments  
for immigrants about the time  
Bluma arrived in New York.  
The tiny T-shaped chimneys  
on rooftops seemed to hold  
the secret of revolution,  
thin wisps of smoke wafting  
the pain of past betrayal  
into the sky. On the cover  
of the magazine they promised  
a language I ached to speak.  
The chimneys are still there.  
They punctuate the skyline,  
loom darkly into a distant,  
still not imagined future.

## Waking and Watching

1.

Winter 1966, Iraklion.

I catch the bus in Morosini Square and ride past  
ruined cities up the mountain to Archanes.  
The heavy diesel engine grinds its gears.  
From the window of the bus I seem to see  
young women and men dancing with bulls  
in the cobbled streets of the palace at Knossos.  
I teach the farmers' daughters of Archanes to conjugate  
the verb *to be*, then entertain them with stories  
of Sir Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide climbing Mount Everest.

After class the girls scatter  
cheeping like chicks in pursuit of the mother hen.  
I saunter down the main street of Archanes,  
insouciant *xenos daskolos* in search of a chair by the fire  
in a *kafeneion*. It starts to snow.  
Through the smoky windowpane of the café  
I watch the fine white powder settle on oranges  
growing in pots in front of houses in the village.  
I scribble long-lined poems in my notebook, breathless  
because nothing I have every seen has been so beautiful. —

2.

Winter 1972, Brooklyn.

I leave early in the morning after Carol  
has gone to work and drive up the Taconic  
to Catskill. My task is to install  
a device on the telephone that will produce  
a busy signal if the temperature drops below 30 degrees.  
When we phone from Brooklyn and get the busy signal  
we'll have time to drive up  
and start a fire before the pipes freeze.  
Such is the ingenuity of the newly rich.

But you have other plans.

As I listen to music in my mind  
speeding up the Taconic State Parkway:  
*We interrupt this program to bring you the word  
from Jesus, who is recruiting a new class  
of Episcopal priests among out of work poets  
married to Jewish girls in New York.*

"Jesus!" I swear as the car swerves and almost  
runs off the road. "Are you here?" Out of breath, I park  
by the side of the road and hear you ask: *Why not?*

3.

Summer 1977, Mount Athos.

Roger and I have come to visit the Holy Mountain. We leave Carol with an old friend from Crete in scrawny Ouranoupolis, "the heavenly city," to entertain themselves. Roger is here to collect an icon painted for him by the monks from Arkansas who are teaching him *Athonite attitude* so he can survive his wife's betrayal. I'm here to find out what it means to be a priest the year Elvis died in a world where *holy* is a metaphor at best.

We sit, self-satisfied, on tree stumps and watch an old man labor up the hill with a load of firewood on his back. He gives us *raki*, Turkish delight, and a glass of water, his hospitality. "Do you know what this place is?" he asks. "This is not a touristic place. Here you can see God." He looks at me. "You will see God but only when you become completely transparent." We laugh as he moves off toward his *skete*, carrying God on his back with the firewood.

4.

Winter 2001, New London.

I take a deep breath and wish for the day to come soon  
when, like a pane of glass polished clear in the sunlight,  
you will see through me. The snow in Archanes,  
the voice on the Taconic, the monk on Mount Athos –  
none of them matter at all until the divorce from myself  
is complete. Then Carol (dead nearly 20 years)  
and Roger and I and the girls in Archanes (old now)  
and the bull-dancers of Knossos will be dancing together on the cobblestones  
of some holy city or other, inhaling the God in the air. You watch!

## Art of Poetry

What are the parts? Where do they come from?  
what is the origin of this mysterious species?

The lines, long and dark as the waters of the East River,  
come from the Brooklyn side, slapping the shore at nightfall.

The fiery figures, blown up like dust in the path:  
imagine them seen through the London engraver's eye!

The details – water drops, the hospital, farm implements,  
asphodel – are kept in the doctor's office in Rutherford, New Jersey.

They are the rhythms of common speech, the wide-eyed  
ability to see what is there that no one else sees,

and the details, always the details –  
what Scotus called the “quiddity” of things.

What is their origin? Do they come from the flesh,  
fierce with desire, of the Christ of the burnt men?

## Meeting Dick Lourie Again for the First Time

It's always the first time when I meet Dick Lourie again, in part because my memory is unreliable. I didn't remember, for instance, that Dick and Abby were married in a rented summer camp in Rockport, even though I, along with Rabbi Roy Rogers (who made a specialty of unorthodox Jewish weddings) officiated at their ceremony and I signed the marriage license. I had completely forgotten that swanky Rockport, Mass., was the scene of their careful courtship.

After lunch in Gloucester last week and a conversation about Transubstantiation, and hylomorphism in French intellectual history, so typical of our long and thoughtful friendship, we took a walk on the Atlantic Path along the rocky shore of Cape Ann. Once again Dick corrected my memory: "We've been friends since 1964," he said, "not 1963."

## When I Die

I want to go to Greece when I die  
instead of Heaven. I want to sit  
around a table with the old men

drinking *raki* and eating *mezedakia*  
in the shade of a grape arbor over tables  
looking down on a city like Salonika.

When the time comes for me to leave,  
let my blood flow down to the Styx,  
my body return to the dust,

spirit be a breeze to sway wind chimes.  
I will sit in a chair looking out  
at the Aegean, doze through the afternoon heat.

I will sink into sleep as the lanterns  
in the street light lovers on their way  
to bed. I will be there when they waken,

like a fly on the broken pieces  
of melon left overnight on the table,  
like flies on the eyes of the watchful dead.

## **Fireflies in Winter: Imagine Peace**

*for Liz McAlister & the Jonah House Community*

Think of a baby, sucking at his mother's breast,  
her eyes, half-closed, brimful with satisfaction,  
or the urgent yearning of a boy to discover,  
touching the body of a girl, an answer.

Imagine a man at work in the heat of day:  
he digs the ground where the vine is planted, prunes  
the bare brown arms that reach into the arbor.  
See him stretched out under his fig tree, tasting its fruit.

Think of a woman walking through her garden  
who stoops to pinch the suckers from tomatoes,  
pick blueberries, gather an apron full of peas.

Imagine an old man and woman, in front  
of the fire on a winter night. They look out  
at the cemetery: the moon shimmers  
on the ancient snow. Headstones peep out  
from the white carpet like houses on a village street  
lit from behind by fireflies.

## **Blackberry Winter**

Late April cold snap  
forces extra sap through  
brittle veins of blackberry branches.  
After these days, summer heat  
blisters the bright air. And oh!  
how sweet to the taste  
are blackberries in August.

## **After Chuang Tzu**

Writing a book is like  
cutting up an ox. When the thin blade  
of the cleaver finds the small space  
in the joint, it goes by itself.  
The ox falls into pieces on the ground.  
When it's tough, it's tough.

**EMMETT JARRETT** is an Anglican Franciscan priest who lives and works at St. Francis House in New London, Connecticut. He was a co-founder of *Hanging Loose* magazine and press and published four poetry chapbooks in the 1960's and 1970's, including *Greek Feet* and *God's Body*. His poems have appeared in *New Directions 21*, *Chicago Review*, *The Nation*, *HangingLoose* and other magazines.

“Emmett Jarrett stands out . . . for his maturity, depth, and range. There's a strong foundation of craftsmanship and intelligence to support his inspiration, and his work has both wit and weight.”

*Denise Levertov*

“Emmett Jarrett's *Design for the City* contains some of the simplest and loveliest imagery we've seen for some time.”

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