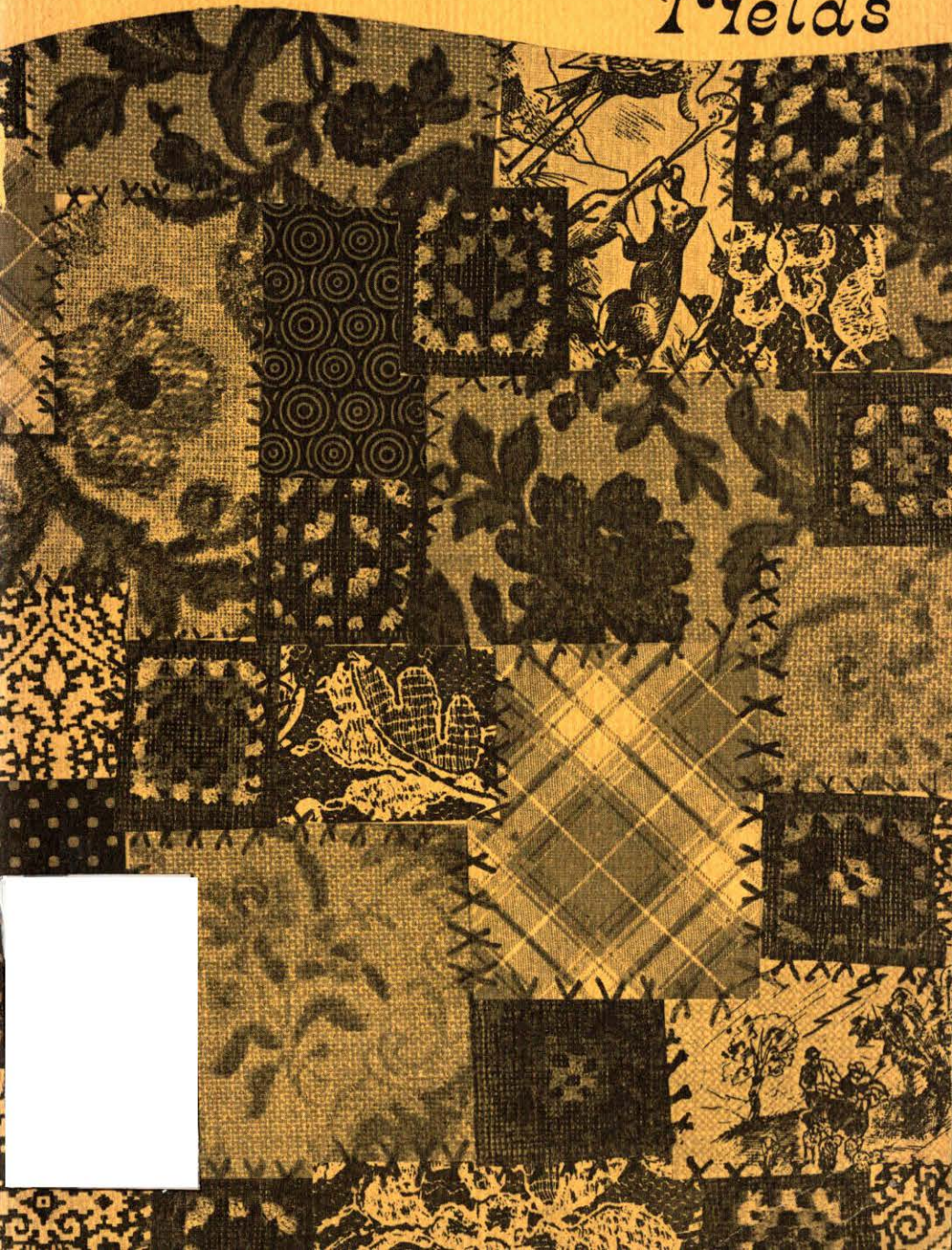


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Julia
Fields



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POEMS

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TESTAMONIALS

Among everybody's acquaintances
Is always that one reflective
Fool who wishes to be found
Dead in a state of enviable
cleanliness. Every solemn profound
Thought is superseded by the
Antiseptic.

My great Aunt Sally often
said, "If I go, I'm going
neat."
And she would brush her hair
a hundred feeble strokes
Chewing on her Dixie Peach snuff stick
That caused oozes of spittle
To trickle from her brown-toned lips.
Staring over her granny glasses
She would ask for the Bible
And then go on and on about
Nicodemus and sometimes Jeremiah.
I washed her gingham aprons, always
In blue or green and yellow clocks,
never dirty, but always carrying
The pale odor of age, sassafras
And white liniment. She liked aprons,
Although she never worked. I guessed
It was identification with Aunt Jemima.
Her own cool cheeks had shrunk—

When she died, they found rolled dollars
In her pillow tick. All new, All clean.
They found new-folded Homespun. A new

pair of Union drawers.
Some union chemises, new hankies
With new coins tied in corners,
And a new, clean voo-doo doll.

Old man Hawks, the funeral director in town
had it spread that Aunt Sally was the cleanest
Lady he ever had found dead
Even her fingernails (not usual in women) were clean.
Her toes were elegant in pedicure.
How she would have smiled
Had she heard or seen.
What pert, puritanical satisfaction
There would have been
What godlike smugness there displayed.

I didn't go to the burial ground.
That day the sun was bright
A clear harsh Alabama sky
Had shamed among the morning star.
They said Aunt Sally would leave
In Homespun, white, cool, and clean.
It was an occasion for joy
To know how dearly some people
Follow the dictates of the dead.

By noon my wash
Was dazzling on the line.
The sheets, Aunt Sally might
Have said were clean as the
Few clouds gathered over the trees—
All impossible to bleach
I rinsed twice. She never approved
The sloven's tombstone grey.

The clothes were dancing
Themselves dry out on the line
In the germicidal air.
I sat and combed my hair,
Did my nails, took a long
Bath and read the book of Jeremiah.
These honariums over, I
Packed her belongings in Bayberry.
It had all been fitting enough memorial—
In genteel taste, graciously done
Without thought for reward.

Entirely submerged in the gloriously
Antiseptic, I went over to Wilson Pond.
The grass was cool to sit upon,
The water warm to the feet.
I cooled mine in the dirt
Of the embankment, polish and all.
It felt beautiful to be among
The living. There was a grandeur
In the universe—an eloquence bespoken there.

PLAY POWER

The black boys scrambling
With cards cry "thump!"
Both arms rest on the edge
Of the table
From noon on
The campus will ring
With that resonant bump.
People quote people.
Books are library property.
One checks them out when
one has to. That is all.
Whatever is buried there
From the buried life
Can remain. We want life.
We want color and movement.
We want newness. Brightness.

The state patrolmen alias
Militia drill in the park
Their guns gleaming from their hips
The eyes cool and cure.
Riot patrol.
The whole city is
moving beneath clumsy feet.
Quietly as the panther
moves or other beasts of prey.
Riot patrol.
The atmosphere is grey
For other reasons
Than the change of seasons.

Black boys
In the rooms
Laugh long laughter.
Black girls
Gaze
Through the glow of
Haze.

Summer be's not far behind.

THE SIERRA JUNIPER

it was explained, lived to be a thousand year
old wonder. It stood straight with no bending
or twisting of its vertebrae, no grotesque
grasping or posing, no scowling of the limb,
no scraping or bowing, no sorrowing
The sierra juniper caught rain in cups of
leaves, it sheltered birds and insects
for centuries in rows without complaint,
it dropped seedlings to the ground and drew
canopies over beasts and man and lesser plants
who themselves had no affinity for Sun.

Among the xylum, phoelum and photosynthesis
must lay a force unseen
a grandeur higher more profound than
the sky-bound lovely green
of the eternal Sierra Juniper.

Possessed by these cool skyscraper rows of

Things, we move among the fruit of cybernetic
Labor. We are shepherded by bells which toll
Our bill of sales and chide us back into the
Fold with music and ¼ off signs.

In the marketplace my love
and I together
In the marketplace
In foul and fair weather.

Eaten by these cool skyscraper rows.
We in turn mow down the earth
Which our needs and avarice.
In all seasons forgetting sun
And baptismal drops of rain
We wear the days. We lose
We laugh and cry, search and gain

In the marketplace my love
And I together
In the market place
In foul and fair weather.

Possessed by things, the people,
The land, the essence have no meaning
The market place is the haven of lovers.
The aged, the young never smile
They are alike in greed, wear the style
Of those possessed, obsessed by things.

In the market place my Love
And I together
In the market place
In foul and fair weather.

GOOD DOLLAR ALMIGHTY

Raining on Peacewalkers—
What can we really do?
America has bought out
God and Nature too.

MR. JONAS

Mr. Jonas
dresses in black
but has a car
to match the brilliant white of his eyes.
He is quite neat
and folds his coat into a pleat
before he takes a chair
with the grandest of care.
Mr. Jonas is known for dignity
and wears it on occasions
which require ties
and hats of both.

BIRMINGHAM

Here is the *Big Foot Country*—
And are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?
You with the furls
Of pink dusts of ore
Undulating against
A sky of molten blue.
The Big Foot Country.
The country of the
Rust hued shoes.
Of boats with orange
Heels and sharpened toes
Walking the alleys,
Fields, mines and factories,
Through the Sandy Bottoms
Of the strong world of
Steel and iron, the ore world.
Are you indeed
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?
Here they play
Their music hard.
Its beat throbs
Through the cool
Soul of the gentle
Torpida city, through
The sweet heat
Whose violence in the
Calm nights spends itself
In the exhaustive,
In the Eternal dance

In the movement
In the action
In the essence
In the living
In the pervasive will
To live
In the laughter
In the pain
In the thirst
In the hunger
In the beauty
In the joyousness
Of the people
The Big Foot Country
The colloquial
World of the people;
Numbers runner
Dead to law
Darts the low trees
Dreaming, collecting
The milkman's fees
Into white cadillacs
And ties from Blach's
The Big Foot Country.

Iron God of the city
Gleams from the
Dark sky
Over woodbined mountains
Over terraced
Scopes of villages,
Scopes of the people
Beyond the iron eye.
The Big Foot Country.
Are you indeed Pittsburgh
Or Chicago
'Of the South'?

Steel mill champagne city
Blair of Tuxedo Junction
Echoing as a memory
Bomb Hill resounding
In the violent world
Steel mill champagne city
Beating of the cymbals
Soar of the symphony
Blood on 16th Street
In the steel mill
Champagne city
Here is the Big Foot Country.
The fertile
Colloquial world
Of the people.
And are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?

You with the essence
Of your own
And the soul
And the self
Of your own?
You with the
Essential mark, brand
And style of the populace
You with the writ
Of the people
You with the richness
And the Earth-wealth
Being of the people.
And how then are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?

HARRY ROSENBLOOM I GIVE YOU BACK YOUR CHAUFFEUR AND YOUR GREY LIMOUSINE

Harry Rosenbloom, I give you back
Your Chauffeur and your grey
limousine.

It has been most different
Knowing you—
And had I diffidence and time
To match my curiosity,
I would prepare to
Meet you face to face.

You taught me much.

Now I know that my former
Dumb professor of sociology
Obscurer of Pertinent Facts,
Should have been tried, for treason
Against me and humanity

But, you won't meet him either,
Harry Rosenbloom, although
He too is one you owe
A lot. You do owe him a lot.

He told me crime does not pay—
All straight-faced—
But then he always had us
Take this pledge during examinations—
I have neither
Given nor received
Help on this test. Signed:

And he would sit behind a book
And peep at us.
I always cheated openly
And dared the moralist
to bare his soul
By reprimanding me.

Still he kept saying "Crime does not pay"
And gave me a hard earned "B"

You owe that standard
Keeping old criminal something.
And while you are at it,
You can thank my father too
For he's yet standing
In the pulpit of Zion Baptist Church
Spreading the travails
And the famed trials
Of the Children Hebrew
Of which you are one
And which I too have learned
To believe as proven true

A predator believes so many things
A predator is no economic atheist

Still, Harry Rosenbloom I give
You back your chauffeur
And your grey limousine.

THE MYSTIQUE OF GOMORRAH

Where is that glorious city hidden

where is Pompeii?
Where all the good fruits were forbidden
ah, Nineveh.

They say Los Angeles is dying
They daily eulogise New York.
where is Pompeii?

Where is San Francisco? Dallas?
Hiroshima has been, has gone; again has come.
ah, Sodom.

In Washington by loose decrees
They exile statesmen and plant trees
ah, Nineveh.

Where is Florence by the sea?
Where is Pompeii? Mysterious Gomorrah?

They say in grief Atlanta stood alone.
A pyre aflame was once eternal Rome.
Where is Pompeii?

The phoenix sits and sits and aflits
Its wings and rising, sings
Pompeii, Sodom, and Nineveh

With voice majestic, calmly clear

And bears no heart of yesteryear.

Hiroshima is gone. Hiroshima is gone.

That city lingering in the path of fire.

EXECUTION

That winter when they spoke of him
And how he was wild and dangerous
And deserved to be gassed,

I kept thinking of his white flesh
Turning blue and silvery black
And red to a dull last gray,

And of that last moment of soul blasting
Regret which the almighty himself
Could not forgive enough.

And of his breath coming in flames
And rolling through purple lungs
Til memory of green times disappeared.

It was too much to sleep on,
And though I was young
My heart grew old.

And night after night I thought
'He's paying. He shouldn't have. That man's
going to swing. He's not innocent!'
But even then I called it murder.
Twelve mouth-murders, composed
And prestiged, sitting and swearing.

And agreeing, it was an event.
Simply an event. The poison in
His hungry lungs, simply an event.

'I sat on that jury. No, I can't . . .
Let me see, I believe it was 55 or 58
Anyway, I sat on the jury.

No, I didn't make the papers. But it
Was a big story. It had to be. . .
He was a terror. He had to be gassed. You know.'

And the grass growing all over,
And the death of the members
of the jury and the fat dead

Hurrying judge, I tell you
Though I was young
My heart grew old.

Our blood, like summer streams has flown
From shore to shore of this vast continent
And surely we have spent
our lean years among vipers.
Judge us and say if we are strong
have made a miracle of joy and gladness
have turned to grand accord our sadness
And succor us for we have spent
Our lean years among vipers.

BLACK STUDENTS

In groves of green trees
The world is pastoral and
Through green fields of innocence
You walk in quiet bucolic splendor
Thinking life will make some salutation
To a pink or gold card bearing the alphabet
Through A B C D F or S and I.
You await the fall
And the A-Ball

You learn to sip your tea—
The little brownie turned, absurd, just so
And how to appreciate wedgewood
And Chippendale, thinking Benin is a kind of gin
Hoping to see the great nations of Europe
And photograph the stately ruins there.
Africa is an ambassador with nappy hair.

A magazine rack erupts in your room
And bugles with the offerings from Look, Life,
Time, Newsweek and the Readers Indigestion.
One lone case of white Encyclopedia Britannica stands
Untouched, But there is no picture of Christ hanging
with messianic, tortured blues eyes
Muttering "I's lynched, I dies"

One therefore assumes a sort of progress has been made
Though the brains are intact
Fresh as the thoughts of the newly born
With no puzzlement, no anger, wrath or scorn
The soul anesthetized
Frozen and undone
The body a roving, singing automaton.

FOUR BEATITUDES FOR SPRING

Blessed is the heart
Which can contain
The bountiful meanings
Of air and rain.
Blessed is the eye
Which perceives
The seasonal turnings
Of the leaves.
Blessed the tongue
Which tastes the cool dew
And blessed are the ears
Which hear the dove's song through.

MACK PARKER

It seemed that after your death,
After the hounds had drunk
That cup of cannibal blood,
There could not be there would not be
More dying. We thought that death we knew
So long so well had died, itself had paid
The mortal fine. We thought that violence
Had ended. None among us expected the
Hounds of death to howl wild still at
All hours. We thought that grace had come—
And with the quiet of death bells
We thought we could believe.
We with our borrowed, sleeping gods,
We of the ravished, angry Lands.

I, WOMAN

I am soft woman

I who open

As the dark wine grape

I who close, curl

As the shell of pearl

Into the tender shape.

LEE

Lee at Appomattox grew

Bewildered at the game

From which he drew

His putrid and inglorious

Fame

In his rags and rage

His eyes burning

His stance

Ruggedly mortal

Under the omniscient sun

His high shoulders proud borne

His manner all exhorting

Like some mad mocked

And shattered sage

A fiery anger churns him through

As though he were at play

And Fate, embroiled,

Spirited his toys away.

In the southern night

Cool fireflies tilt and dim

Death gives its rendez-vous

History stalks, possesses, engulfs him.

NIGHTS

Nights they crouched upon the streets like cougars
Their voices roaring as the storming winds
In the light they flashed beryllium, and always there
Was the fire, the heat rearing skyward from the sidewalks
Turning the coolness of the river into scorch and steam.
Always there was the music burning the ears, drowning the
Heart. There within the jaws of hell there was the grant
Mockery of the essence of song. And their grief and
Emptiness compelled shouting as the living shout
But they were as the dead, walked, thought and spoke
as the dead and dreamed as the dead. Their noise was
Merely silence raging. And Prometheus was born—
The king Phoenix of the seasons of light.

LILY BLACK BLONDE FROM WIG HAVEN AMONG THE URINALS

Grotesque in your abominable
Beauty,
You give the lie to synthetics
And with your sponge and pail,
Play the role
Of doing what you're told.

Great eyes see nothing
Behold no labyrinth, no maze
Great ears hear nothing—
Only hands that do
And feet which serve to carry through
The blinding haze.
No mirror, no action
Can teach or define
The needed, nurturing force
To fill the vacuum being
Or link the umbilical line
To what you will not know as seeing.

The age of reason,
Much scholarized for rationality,
Flourished while elegant
Slave ships splashed away at sea.

You move among the urinals
With the chlorinated mop
Til the time presses a button
Marked "lunch", "rest", "stop".
Tuesdays at two till six, you are
Fueled, found good
For more and polished
Like antique maple wood.

The drama wears you
It was all here long before
Your entrance; therefore the stage,
Nor the part will
Be to you a cause for rage
Or else a stroke of master mocking skill.

PORTRAIT OF PACIFICATION

On the dirt designed corner a drunk writes the poem
Of the world with his feet swinging in gray clay
And his eyes passionate with purple winter wines.
He has given up the sky and things abstract.
He lives in the current world of empty belly, empty
Pocket and empty words. When a smile the color of gall
Burshes his hollow cheeks, he will be remembering
Someone benevolent who told him Man does not live
By bread alone. He will sit cast in the sacredness
Of that sermon, his feet swinging
In grey clay. And all around him will be fury.

I HEARD A YOUNG MAN SAYING

I heard a young man saying
In the green afternoon,
In the sun-swept afternoon,
In the bees drone afternoon,
In the peaceful, splendid afternoon,

‘War’

There’s talk of war
Another decade. Another war.
One grown-up generation toward war.
Somehow, I planned on living.
What was the matter with me?
War. There’s talk of war.

I, a woman, listened by the door,
By the broken-hinged door,
‘I somehow planned on living.’

Something plans these things.
The echo of the innocent words
Squirmed after me down the stairs,
Something plans these things

MADNESS ONE MONDAY EVENING

Late that mad Monday evening
I made mermaids come from the sea
As the black sky sat
Upon the waves
And night came
Creeping up to me

(I tell you I made mermaids
Come from the sea)

The green waves lulled and rolled
As I sat by the locust tree
And the bright glare of the neon world
Sent gas-words bursting free—
And gaudily it grew to me
As I sat up upon the shore
And made mermaids come from the sea.

THE SENTIMENT OF THE PEOPLE

American history begins before Salem
Although it is on that soil we first
Glimpse the course of blood and struggle
Etched later so deeply on the nation's brow.
It is there we first record cannibalism—
The burning of white flesh to exorcise from
the soul the reek of an abstraction term sin.

It is written that in those days, sectors of
The populace hunted down their fellows
Like thirsty war dogs, calling them witches
And wizards in the name of the Trinity and
Under the auspices of the Commonwealth.
That too was part of the sentiment of
The people: it was the intellectuals who
Here and there re-wrote these histories into
The profundities they became, into the Bostons
of warm tea afternoons and the operatics
into the Lexingtons and the Concords, and into
The Cradle of Democracies. The corpses of witches
Rest beneath the sod as do lovers of liberty.
Civilization takes its own time and though we
Name our actions names, they are not always fitting.

Boston's Liberty had a noose hanging properly from
The highest limb. And they have held bloody massacres
In all their genteel streets: yet there are those
Who, in our Black Hour will stress to us the savagery
Of our fight from their legacies of oppression.
That too is merely the sentiment of the people.

The shot heard round the world has many gunners
Placed round the world. Death has become exotic
And we listen to the news of it, watch it as we dine.
The war-mongers, recalling bloody Salem, hang
Witches and saints alike. We live the legacy if
We live at all and it is not glorious

