

Death of a Tiger Moth

Syd Harrex¹
Flinders University, Australia

A vagabond on a bicycle about
to disappear over that memorable
childhood hill, the chloroform moment
when your tonsils are ripped out,
the afternoon the tiger moth missed
the beach plunging in the sea, cockpit
his coffin. A stranger's catastrophe.
So life goes on, the resurrection crew
pulley the collapsed plane out of the sea's
seraphic time and space. The cops do
their job, identify the pilot, the rest
is officialdom. And yet I can't forget
what I saw – the engines sparking sounds,
the gliding into what be the beach's
landing strips and then instantly gone
the landing that was the crash, the crash, the...

¹ Dr. Syd Harrex is a foundation member of the Flinders University English staff, long-term founder Director of CRNLE, and widely published author of books and essays on postcolonial new literatures. He has published six volumes of poetry, the most recent being *Dougie's Ton and 99 Other Sonnets* (Adelaide, Lythrum Press, 2007). His poetry collection, *Atlantis and Other Islands*, was runner-up for the Commonwealth Poetry Prize and a British Book News Shortlist selection.

In Excess

Syd Harrex

Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess.
Oscar Wilde

Penultimate silver summer days on the cusp
of autumnal intimacies resist obsession
with brevity as do nature's triumvirate
of earth, sea and sky. Call me a pastoral
sentimentalist if you will but don't deny
these settings are coeval (no pun intended)
with carnal pleasures and cornucopian appetites.

Island Echoes

(Oahu, Hawaii)

Syd Harrex

Rain. There is about rain
the feathery touch (like maidenhair)
of memory potted in the evasive
soil-cells of the brain.

An essence of it, of blood-warm
rain, soaks the leaves
stuck fast like tiles;

drapes the shining boughs
and trunks of tropical trees already,
it seems, turning to carbon.

There is about rain,
like memory, like human love,
a pollenating power
as now in this sunshower, this
pulsing breeze, threads of it
are sewing a curtain
of slanting silk,

and cigar smoke at the window
utters a smell of damp
far-off days, drifting
blue-skeined days.

We need no more than such as these
ingredients of sense
to invoke biography, this
progress of the love-self
from moaning coitus to bone

burial, this aching with the past.

Robinson Jeffers' *Medea* at Hobart's *Theatre Royal*

(for Graeme Hetherington)

Syd Harrex

Too, too bloody late in this unison of lost
opportunities one more comes to hollow-haunt
me now... a symbiotic scene between Acts
at hallow-hushed house-full Interval
in the immortal silence of the Curtain Fall.

For, lights-on chandelier-wise, from the vertigo
Gods I spotted you – spirit-mate – securely suited
and seated in burgundy upholstery: just there!
Stalls Front Row. And comfortably inspired.
Hands clasped behind your neck, cathartic.

Your love of verse's dramatic architecture, Blake's
Holiness and cursing pain for compassion's sake
reminds me now, aficionado of the classics,
of Jeffers' requiem of the burthen of mysteries,
pale as psalms, somewhere lost to go to,

of your journey's accomplishments while reflecting
on that neglected bardic voice of American Poetry
(classical scholar extraordinaire) rode rogue
stallion metaphors across the Carmel landscape
of his manuscripts' pages, re-enacting mysteries

in a universe of tragic cathartic repetitions.
And thereby I fancy now in dream-time's belly
I recall conversations we certainly might have had
after witnessing the catharsis of Judith Anderson's
Jeffers' *Medea* in Laurence Olivier's favourite theatre.