

# TEACH ME TONIGHT

(1948-1959)



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## Teach Me Tonight

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## Egad

Egad, my son, why do you fib?  
We know you did not wear your bib.  
These pizza stains that we do see  
And all this vegetable debris  
Before our very eyes does stand  
And yet you say it did not land.  
When you grow up then you will find  
It will have paid for you to mind.  
Tuck that napkin under your chin  
And you'll find something feminine.

1948



## Cometh the Adolescent

bright and flashing  
it screams  
half-witted like jays  
it sees through candid seams  
of distant sun-rays

not yet enchanted  
    with beauty  
not yet supplanted  
    with duty

cool and delighted  
it clings  
to baby-dream-waves  
part fury-mighted it sings  
to a vanishing maze

not yet beloved  
    by wisdom  
not yet possessed  
    by freedom

changing and wanting  
it pleas  
to a sometime god  
mingling and talking with fleas  
from a fulltime pod

not yet relieved  
    from wondering  
not yet achieved  
    from blundering

undone and passive  
it sleeps  
in an unfamiliar ocean  
inward and massive it weeps  
for an unforgiving motion

not yet steady  
    for unloading  
not yet ready  
    for exploding

## This Boy

the quiet and the nice  
settles back against the tiring quick  
to make a tiring of its own  
to exalt to please to make believe  
the quiet and the nice  
changes the earth to make a Better Man  
but change this boy with his dreams of love  
these tirings cannot strive  
for he screams against these tirings  
with a struggle of another kind  
his body flows in liquid  
and his mind moves in depths of nonsense  
his crying chokes away  
at anything that's likely  
he is a prince a lover  
finding what cannot be found  
flirting with day to please the night  
he unfolds in spurtish bloom  
like a pooch with kitty in mind  
not for food but for chase  
this wanting bit of muscle  
grows beauty in backyard sheds  
makes telephone poles a sickness  
and scorns the Better Man  
and a book becomes another shade  
of green with godless blue desire  
always covered by the bridge  
that yesterday erected  
he overflows the river  
to wash the bridge away  
his simple is adagio  
his complex strengthens forte  
his change cannot develop  
in a lasting way  
on with this boy  
who homes in his own shadow  
his encounter may be futile  
his watch a meaner thing  
but he aspires

## I've Tried to Think About People

People of turmoil and tasks,  
people of cadre and labor and breath  
contend for a share of the driving steam.  
People who, knee-sore and drunk from the dance,  
stir to an honored and reverent scene  
and shout for the upshot and downfall vying  
of the fountains of yellow, of cure  
to tossing and pain  
crying.

People of calling and thought,  
people of stable perception and depth  
ascend through the flash of the arching spurts.  
People who, level and taut in the sun,  
glare at the pulsating, devious course  
and laud for the alpha-omega upsoaring  
of the fountains of yellow, of cure  
by straining and force  
staying.

People of ardor and care,  
people of wonders and story and fluff  
attend to what seems in the plaiting spouts.  
People who, sated and savored with trust,  
laugh at the smile-again, simmering tails  
and join in the pivoted, affable singing  
of the fountains of yellow, of cure  
in darting and skirts  
grinning.

People of anguish and pause,  
people of fearing and liveness and cold  
are interred in the cause of a faltering dream.  
People who, stained and boned by the rust,  
shy from the onward and searing demand,  
and stray from the consummate strident parading  
of the fountains of yellow, of cure  
from torments and strife  
fading

People of wrinkles and age,  
people of statues and müde and death  
are arrayed on a bench near the settled trees,  
People who, sullened and drooped by the spray,  
sit in the taciturn, sobering shad  
and long for the lofty and glowering sighing  
of the fountains of yellow, of cure  
so shallow and gray  
dying

1958





## The Mattress Factory

In the shavings of clawed wood  
I clamor for the nail.  
A splinter of mercy  
within my calloused hand...  
Fist of mine  
—furrows are clogged,  
pores are bruised;  
stuffed wound is fist of mine.

In the clangor of element clots  
I condole with the rust.  
A specter of void  
circa my vacant prevalence...  
Cipher of mine  
—edges are firm,  
curves are pure;  
firm hollow is cipher of mine

how spurt this year  
    how haste the next  
        how annum per rapid  
            how clock per swift

1958

## Untitled

Enhancements are dwindling off the top of my religious sieve, which won't work properly—has a mind of its own; pun on a pundit pan. Difficult poem! Not minding its edges properly. In no way seemingly proper.

Often accents on Will and Way somehow are rarely said as somehow or among many; although many are mentioned, many are not brought to fore-grounds of possibility—leaks.

As to what which word might mean? Is it so absurd? Always implications? Ram if I cat ions? Never enough? Always to balk, wonder, decide? Isn't there much being not processed about in wigs of the wrong color? Can't I be away?

Pest! Crossword square size fly! Bap! Piece of bad driving! Thousand eyes! Bap! Make wings verb like racecars. Somehow speedway through ear gets; bugs me. Sound of broken air!

I offer pretense as a labor, as a kindness wherever it lays. It makes a go of it; it stings, blooms. As it rushes to its point, it covers adequately. Technical writing is modern literature.

Bottles of nothingness—Dr Schiff's. An intense, humorless concoction anyway when you're not the kidney designed for it. Dumb death-greeting kidney, get off your feet! Go contact a decent disease to occupy your extra time!

Ribs of spare soul—one pound of despair is four sixths of *being* meat, ground round the old old stars—those which say so in so many shines. Always stars are best in poems. Always fearful in their actual gloss. Glass stars, Klee stars and cool ones.

Clarity inside opaqueness presented. Was a failure. Now I'm giving everything the glad eye like an irresponsible child. Flirting metaphysics is like a short poem of lines by me. What an odd thought!