

GEOPOETRY

These poems on geological themes are among my favorites.
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THE GLORY OF GREECE

The Greece of Plato was built not only with words,
But from hard-hooved cattle and greedy goats in herds,
From terraced olive groves, and fields of grain,
And tree-clad slopes logged again and again
To rebuild cities sacked for plunder or spite
And war ships made to show military might.
Some kings prospered, kept household bards,
Who sang of the past better than pottery shards.
But these immortal lays were purchased at great cost,
Of slopes denuded of trees and thick soils lost
Downhill in slides. From woods and flowered heath
Rose gaunt rocky crags welcome as wolves teeth.

SUPERSOD

The form of woman or upward reaching tree
Is much praised in song by all who see,
But who shall speak for the glory of grass,
For leaves of green and hay colored like brass,
For rich brown earth with sharp smell that lingers,
For tiny round clods that fall out through fingers
Without leaving a smear, for deep and pliant sod
That softens where weary feet have trod.
The teeming soil takes all our festering dead
Without sickening itself, sending up instead
Slender green young shoots of timid grain,
Turning over the short cycle of life again.

DINOSAUR DEMISE

There was no warning, nor a place to hide,
On that day of doom when all dinosaurs died.
A fireball's flash on a distant shore
Preceded a crack and hot wind's roar.
The sudden light, sound and breeze on the face
Made many turn to that far-off place
To a great column of expanding dark cloud
That slowly, steadily wrapped all in a shroud
Of choking gas, stinging, flakey ashes
Settling quietly, relentlessly on dying masses.
There was no way to prepare for this.
Large and small succumbed to its deathly hiss.

FOREST HOME

Oregon has cathedral forests as well as open spaces.
Its deserts stretch eastward from volcanic cliff faces.
Sage and greasewood dot the dusty, salty plain.
Floods of mud follow short cloudbursts of rain.
Life is difficult in desert, chancy and hard
Unlike the cool, ferny forests which guard
From the blazing sun and the swollen stream.
Raindrops pass leaf to leaf, down to ferns that gleam,
Then are let down to roots and moldy leaves
Of brown and spongy soils, that slowly sieve
It clean for steady streams. The pattern was sown
Ages ago of forests that make a home for their own.

LIFE'S ICY LEGACY

Here in vast Antarctic ice, I take some rest,
In a yellow tent, as a storm does its best,
Singing through guys and ruffling walls,
The liveliest thing in this world without calls
Of birds or bees. Yet this great ice desert
Is not barren of life. In the rocks are covert
Lichens. Just beneath rock surfaces is greenery
Unapparent from snowy and rocky scenery.
And so it was in ages past, that life itself
Let oxygen cool air to make a glacial shelf.
Earth without its cells and leaves of green
Would be choked with sunlit clouds of steam.

LIFE'S ORIGINS

The paradox of life is its complexity
Too much for chance, but not necessity
Of natural selection. But what was chosen
Before genetic codes and cells were frozen
As basic to the ancient tree of life.
A simpler starter system was its wife
And mother. No other than the soil itself
Could spark a prelife and give it health.
Carbonaceous slime and clay in the ground
Gives immunity from erosion all around.
When life came it played the same role.
In sun, mineral, water flow, it kept hold.

MOTHER EARTH

Like a rose amid a charred black ruin
Of war-ravaged London or Berlin,
From chaotic swirling rocks in darkness
Embodied by the Greek god Erebus,
A blue living orb spun forth
As goddess Gaia, or mother Earth.
Her life and soil filter water and air
And bind the hills with grace and care.
Erebus still strikes with volcanic plume,
And asteroid impact spreading doom.
But life has grown since it began
In tilted balance, more yin than yang.