

THE GRAND TOUR

POETRY BY

MATTHEW CHRISTIAN KEENER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Christian Keener". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" being the most prominent and largest part of the signature.

Nelson, Robert. *The American Poetry Anthology, Volume IX, Number 4.*
The American Poetry Association, Santa Cruz, California, 1989.

The Grand Tour
An Honorable Mention
With Circles in Circles
A Maze of Many Doors
As Seasons on the Water
Where Were the Foot Soldiers?

Nelson, Robert. *The American Poetry Anthology, Volume X, Number 2.*
The American Poetry Association, Santa Cruz, California, 1990.

Reflections of the Soul
By Both I Am
For No Particular Reason
A Noble Effort
Before the Storm
The Human Comedy

The Best Poems of the '90s.
The National Library of Poetry, Owings Mills, Maryland, 1992.

Motion Sickness

AN HONORABLE MENTION

A sparkling star,
immense and wondrous,
yet perceived unworthily
is only a passing vision,
distant and mocking.

But shine it does,
a thankless shine,
muddied by time and perception...

Content for an occasional spotlight,
appreciated once in forever,
if never again.

-- Matthew Christian Keener

1985

THE GRAND TOUR

I watch,
drifting in an empty void
of experience and wisdom,

and I see
through endless perspectives
into which my thoughts are taken,

and I wonder,
What of the realities that I see?
These islands of thought pass before me
within reach...

limited and incomplete...

I let them be.

1986, R 1989

A MAZE OF MANY DOORS

I was dreaming then,
though not asleep,
when I roamed the halls with open eyes
and did not see.

I noticed on occasion
the careless people I walked into,
and it seemed to me
(it had to be!)
that they were headed
toward empty places I was leaving,
and I laughed at them.
(And they laughed at me!)

But I knew where my path had gone,
and I had to turn and wander on
to look for happiness that was not there
behind the doors of many colors
I did not dare
to open.

-- Matthew Christian Keener

1986, R 1989

A STOLEN MOMENT

Once upon a cool, summer's night,
I roamed the woods so starlit bright;
Content to play the watcher's role
I watched the moon begin her flight.

As I laid down beneath a tree,
The stars shone far as I could see
And all reflected in my soul
As I in them, and they in me.

A brilliant flash, a blink in time,
My life achieved a perfect rhyme,
But soon I lost the moment's whole --
It stole away, the perfect crime.

Then more I watched while deep in thought,
In hopes to find that thing forgot
Which faded to a distant goal
And left my pow'r of words to naught...

And even now I watch the sky
Though days and months and years pass by,
To find the light that dwarfs the sun
And join my soul with it as one.

1986

WHERE WERE THE FOOTSOLDIERS?

The wind caressed the field of green
As men-of-war surveyed the scene;
They planned and plotted strategy...
But where were the footsoldiers?

The generals and the warlords
Sat behind their battleboards,
Drew out their maps and laid down plans...
Did they ask the footsoldiers?

The sides were made (though none knew why),
And patriots were called to die
While fighting others' arguments,
But when the call to charge was made...

Where WERE the footsoldiers?
They went home.

1986

AS SEASONS ON THE WATER

I sat upon a rock
and watched the golden leaves
float, and spin, and race upon the water,
and gave the moment to them...
and I understood the rock.

As I closed my eyes,
my soul anchored itself
like a rock within the water,
and I watched the seasons move about me
and warmed myself in the patient joy of nature.

And as the leaves moved away from me
some stopped short upon the shore,
but others continued free
and I sent my best hopes with them
as I said goodbye.

. -- Matthew Christian Keener

1986

WITH SILENT VISION

I watch with eyes turned inside-out
on lines of endless depth,
and scan the surface under which
the changing forms and patterns play,

as the static fades away.

The laws by which the planets move
I know within myself,
they move me on the winds of change
and hold me in the present day...

while lost in words I cannot say,
I watch the static fade away.

1986

WITH CIRCLES IN CIRCLES

I watch the sun repaint the skies,
but winds of time soon close my eyes
and blow the sands away...

with footprints in the sands erased,
I never noticed in my haste
the habits, behaviors,
and resteps thought new,
and circles grown larger
that always trace through.

So I sail the windblown sea
with sails high above the water
and eyes on the sky,
until they fall once more
as near horizons would implore
for my attentions
and ignore me.

-- Matthew Christian Keener

1987, R 1989

SUNSETS, TIME, AND TIRED HEARTS

Tapestries
and a million candles
cast hazy shadows of ballroom gaiety
and stories of stories of stories,
once.

The stone ^{alone} stood in empty defiance
against time,
against the prophecies of destiny,
against the ravages of the kingdom,
and only the sounds of a hundred laughing people
held the weight above their ears.

Even the ivy and mosses
refused to grow upon the castle,
over so many years.

Now the people leave
with backward glances as the fires go out,
and the light dims to a somber hush behind them.

After so long,
so long,
and when the last ^{one} person is gone
the halls will stand dark for the first time ever,
the heavy walls will fall with a mighty anguish,
and the ivy will slowly grow
with cleverness and certainty.

1988

BY BOTH I AM

I find myself in hollow dreams
that I see from time to time,
with Black on white and White reversed
in a place upheld by rhyme.

The backdrops fade and patterns change,
I blink my mind and wait
for feelings fresh to flow within
from pools of love and hate...

But Stop!

I see my eyes have closed
and I've missed the point again.

So I leave the place of timeless space,
an inward state of peace sublime,
and lose myself in hollow dreams
that I see from time to time.

1990

The Human Comedy

How bittersweet,
this life we greet
with open arms to meet it...

And when the years
of pain and tears have gone,
we sadly leave it.

1990

REFLECTIONS OF THE SOUL

The lake stretched out before me
in shades of green and blue,
and on the surface I could see liquid mountains
that scattered in the wind.

I stood beside the water
as the pictures reassembled,
and my image stared back mockingly...
I did not recognize Me.

I sat down disconcerted and my eyes wandered
to flowing reflections
of trees, and birds, and clouds
that left themselves to play upon the water
and share the other world with fish and rocks,
whose reflections I did not see.

I stood upon the shore once more
and studied my reflection...
Could it be that it saw me?
What does it see?

And as I watched in thought,
the wind dissolved the picture
and caused me to tremble.

1990

I'LL HAVE A BLUE SKY WITH BREAKFAST

A jar stands
drawing attention into itself.
The lemonade takes in the light
and keeps the color selfishly,
making itself brighter.

But as the day turns cool with evening
the empty jar lies forgotten,
reflecting distant clouds
that follow the sun to find other pleasures.

In emptiness,
beauty shines forth in prisms of discovery,
and the mind turns
smiling
toward new things.

1991

BEFORE THE STORM

The clouds of feather flock together
like flotsam on oceans of air,
and struggle to float above onto higher currents
that await them there.

And if they could break free,
should it be that they would stay
on currents sought today?

Or would they need their freedom still,
and rise beyond the sun?

Or when the upper course is run,
- what of the ocean?

The need stays yet the same,
and the game continues until the rain...
then clouds move on
to where the rest have gone.

1991

FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON

The leaves of spring grew green and strong
and waved along in friendly breezes
that smelled of life.

But seasons change,
and summer nights bring autumn winds
which dry young leaves and make them old,
and turn the green to red and gold
upon the tree.

One by one, the crisp leaves fell with grace,
without farewell they took their place
upon the ground,
leaving widowed branches to mourn again
'til spring...

But one last leaf would not let go
for it had heard some talk of snow,
(and it had mind to stay).
It bravely fought the call to leave
until the first snowfall,
and of all the leaves upon the tree
it was the only one to see the snowflakes
when they came.

Then,
in the end
the leaf surrendered peacefully,
and floated proudly down
onto frozen ground.

THE MOMENT FOUND ME WAITING

The water falls soft
upon the roof,
and I sit rocking in an open space
watching the world rest
beneath a grey curtain.

The house sits dormant behind me
waiting for the world
to move again.

I leave my thoughts,
my tomorrows,
and the games in my closet,
content to watch the rain,

and my heart goes out to birds
perched quietly beneath the leaves
of tall trees,
and deep underground rivers
that lead the water
into timelessness.

1991

A NOBLE EFFORT

'Twas nice enough,
a man I met the other day.
We sat and talked
and parried thoughts along the way.

With cautious eye and easy smile
he listened to my foreign view,
but all the while he gazed upon the points I made
as children
in a Hallow's Eve parade.

It was quite sad how wise he was.
His replies would barely fill a sheet of paper -
yet we talked all day.

We parted friends but still estranged,
regardless of the words we spoke
neither had changed.

What a joke.

1991

MOTION SICKNESS

Life devours what it needs like a rabid dog,
with desperate Passion
and the strongest, most brutal *LOVE*,
 a screaming Love that rends the heart
 and wrenches tears from fragile eyes.

Life demands Expression
 and *EXPRESSION* demands *ITSELF*,
as Chaos reigns with heavy hand;
then, within the confusion,
the Many Things are thrown about;
 See! Water to ice, enslaved,
 or sent to vapors,
 quite unable to resist.

The unborn child outlives the parents,
 absorbing, *GROWING!*
Behold, the Maelstrom of Expression!
It pulls the strings of the Many Things
and reveals the monstrous face of Destiny!

Matthew Christian Keener

11/28/91