

POETRY OF ROBERT GIBBS

Myrt Called Myrtle

Am I awake to your dreams old woman?
Made by you I made?
Lying now on this side now on that
restless as your tongue possessing mine
thoughts upending thought?

Topping years as you top your stairs
three flights up in a house about to fall
bind the northeast winds off Courtenay Bay
with that black pine oil you brew yourself
and burn off rheumatic aches

that rise with sewer gas off the marsh
with your fiery universal liniment
and underdressing of flannel pads
and broken stays that leave you purpled
where your flesh falls loose

ribbed waists and petticoats and layered stockings
and felt slippers and rags to curl your hair
and acid drops you roll that set
your blood sugar shooting
and Dr. Foote wagging his hypodermic finger

Nothing you've buried lies interred
Bennie or Burt or little Danny
and your own special Lord who alone of all
called you Myrtle still will come to you
in plain shapes as needed

Leveling Measures

Carpenter -- no, nor carpenter like
I'm bending back straight
a bent nail I'll bend again

There's no point imagining
the shelf built
not to sag
or wag at both ends
or the cupboard doored to shut after itself
or bed slats cut to rest
great coiling double springs
quiet as a grave

will not tear loose and cry out loud
"Maker, Maker, we are made
to spill over
anything that isn't wholly true"
before settling for good
all my insides out
upside down

Robert Gibbs was born and grew up in Saint John, N.B., and received his education at the University of New Brunswick and Cambridge. He has been a professor of English at UNB since 1963. Professor Gibbs is editor of the Fiddlehead magazine, and has published two books of poetry, *The Road of Here* and *Earth Charms Heard So Early*. A third book of poetry is in the offing.

A Boomerang Is Something Else

The frisbee discoboloi
pull up short in flashy sportscars
and come fanning over the green
claiming all its openness
with natty lederhosen and sunwhite hair
good for tossing on high leaps
or swinging round on swoops
and girls in all the right lengths
sunned like themselves to a gold turn

Who would say their freedom ends
at the toes of their bare feet
or at the end of a game leaped
into and out without rules?

If it's release -- if it's that
you're after
not final but casual
a jailbreak
from your eyes' enclosures
or throat's rigging

But see how crustiness
is coming on
day to day and year to year
green scum and thickening toenails
elastic stretched out of itself

A kind of release -- if it's that
eating you --
it's not to be named
since naming itself imprisons

If I could sound certain
about springy tendons
and unslippable grips
but all my certainties have snapped
like shoelaces
knotted again and again
past use or fixing

And that is something good
not to know
like how to keep a plastic disc
from hurling on and on
into the sun.

"Too long a sacrifice"

It was no dream
I saw a poet flounder on a river
sticky and black as mimeograph ink
I saw him blooded
and eaten off
Leeches jerked like typewriter works
dugging salt from his hair roots

sugar from his tongue
Words no longer words
divided him assunder
and left him to stink
like a split fish on a drying rack
and unred herring