

1971

Three Poems

Jon Silkin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Silkin, Jon. "Three Poems." *The Iowa Review* 2.4 (1971): 8-10. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1258>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

THREE POEMS

I picked a stone up
in the settlement, planted once
among an oblong of trees
which made sounds blowing through
and touching the intricate
vague, temporary mind.
Between trees, some young, some fallen
in earth, buried partly by grasses, I fetched out
a flat stone with marks on.
It heartened me. I grew
surprised that this thing, shaped by two hands,
and then incised on,
had come through.
What did it read, which words
gouging a vouchsafe over
bed, or fire;
how shall I be
communicated with,
now, here, between trees? A further scratch
might be sufficient.
A meaningful incision supposed
to show up lastingly.

In this miserable time,
a friend, dead, you had not
known, we come on the settlement.

You said, it admits us;
and lay coiled and flushed.

Further off, the reservoir
in viscous tension drew
down water off its sides.

Ditches here do not now stick
with blood, clay-streaked. When the refrigeration
of lust, pebble, and smoke
hardened over the sides of this dark box, an intruder
was knived, the cry hankering
momently, a wailing, an unleashing
of wanted life. The bird
hops and sinks.
The dead here patched a life
between trees, geese honking
flocculent in the snow.

And militia, the linked, harrying
mail of this kingdom
skimming the earth to break
into fine separate grains
the upturned bands of soil
weaken, dechain, and sink
under the plough rootlessly
as the souging oil.

And over the ground a chain of mail
harrowed
the earth, and left
it.

How much forward do
we look, I asked you.

The day's light merges itself
on kitchen pans, with forks
put to soak, thickened by egg.
Haste darts onto the carpet, a pair
of roaches, one with belly swollen.
And mice nesting between
foundations pitch a shrunk language
voices sift through.
Can anxiousness wear
itself?
We are beneath trees on
the hill, moistened among them
by darkness.
Some fitted together a settlement
in hunger and community,
the stone flaked into shape, placed, and clustering
a group of heads
over the new-born.

A glistening cry spreads milk
along its web of threads.

This went. Went fast, and suddenly:
the love, where it existed, cut
by militia, the fractured blood
greasing the double-dyked moat.

For what? But then,
an Aenean moment, elate,
and with fear, suppurating.

From between trees and these few
stones, nothing; no, something: a man,
bent, streaming from us
with under his arm, in skins, a package,
wailing, each seamed
to the other in the lineaments
of terror, without eyes, the man
holding to some other husband's child
or his own.