Necropolis

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NECROPOLIS
Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, N.Y., 10/20/88
"...in the dark union of insensate dust." — Byron

Blessed abode of the further, sweet infinity,
I come to taste the thirst of your tears,
The hourglass is shattered within this realm of bells,
Where migrating angels hush the floating wood,
Murmuring in tongues beyond that which touches the ear.
Diaphanous, aloof, the color of luster and marrow of bone,
They speak of incense and wonders vast as night,
Chanting the ecstasies of trance and golden wings,
Of senses hidden within a dark and silent music.

Dolorous earth, who slowly embraces each obelisk and knoll
Of man's frail eulogy, what beckons me
To your sacred temples of funeral fire, empyreal haven,
Savoring the rich perfume of your tantra and canticle,
The mystery of your whorled runes told in leaf and shadow.
I wander alone amidst your blackened pillars
And cathedral hills, through plinth and statue
Bathed in a flame of cirrus and honey-stemmed sun,
Past a fountain where Lethe might flow
That I may drink and dissolve all temporal cares,
And know a slumber beyond this smoke-white marble
Carved with the scripture of your October eyes.

Like jagged teeth these stones poke and sway,
Rising from soaked clay and moss staunch, defiant, swelling
The fields like fallen icicles that have not time to melt.
Mute figures clad in garland and robe stare into eternity,
A black, starless ocean, posing the shape of words
That only truth and beauty can approach without shame.
Sunlight grinning, mischievous, plays in the hooded grove
Darting and leaping between angle and chisel,
Over pebbled roads and wrought iron steps,
Scratching its fingers through cinnamon leaves
Mingled with arch and spire, along tributaries of ivy
That linger over forgotten shrines, emerald tinger
The silver stones moist from damp and bramble mist.

A rustling stillness lies here, languid, profound,
An unspoken fragrance distant but intimate
I cannot accord with paradigm or texture,
Yet ethereal it glides like lace on a chair,
Exuding a resonance delicate yet heavy with scented musk,
Oils and myrrh. I cannot stroll at ease
Within this palace of secrets, pavilion of dreams,
When the chime of street lights become bright as the moon.

Turning around,
I glimpsed the face of rare youth
Ivory skinned, free of worry,
Joyful, bereft of the pain of age

Turning around,
I glimpsed the face of young wonder
Golden hair worn like a crown
Eyes open wide in wonderment

Turning around,
I glimpsed the face of budding manhood
Fierce pride tempered by doubt
Deep concern laced with deviltry

Turning around,
I glimpsed a face of bitter memories
Drawn with the lines of worry
Of dreams lost and glories past

Turning around,
I glimpsed the face of death
Softly speaking my name
And his was the face of rare youth

Darwin L. Gardener

H.B. Dill