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Stanton Mellick

Poems

The Jurors

In the square they sit
like an extended jury
on separate seats,
mute,
like an extended jury
on separate seats,
mute,
autumned,
each a book of yesterday's.
The unaware stream by
locked in docks peculiar
pressing petals and fragrance
into an unheeding pavement.

In the sun they sit,
age dumb and grey,
watching,
seeing only
last year's petals
last year's leaves.

Hill of Misery

This, *says James*,
is no ordinary hill
fire and friend
burned its sod
under my black pot
my life's warning
its sprint ash
sum of my days.

This, *says James*,

hill of misery
servant and bitch
was stoop of my back
each sod that I cut
one more block
for my tomb.

Query

(for JJM)

What was he like?
Very kind and
a strand of life, I said,
then lifted his old felt hat
from the peg and saw
a stain in the band
a mark from his being.

*You trickled sand
felt the days
shivered the nights
sighed,
worked the thirties
night and day
coughed and died
and the wine of your being
was the rare wine of pressed days.*

*I lose the now
as yesterday's return
gold and red
fine and full flavoured
distilled from memory's flask.*

But how could you tell them that?

Between

Only some on a road can walk,
only some on a theme can talk,

only the strong can smile apace
when an all around is a mad mill race.

When youth has set in a sun red glow,
and life's no longer a mistletoe
then distant fields aren't quite so green
and the ladder up doesn't seem to grow
for most of us are caught between
what has been done and the might have been.

When Plato Looked

When Plato looked for reality
in a world of forms
I wonder
if he wondered
what happened to the form
which took shape as madness
in the hearts of young lovers?

Did it vanish
into Stygian black
or float for ever
a blur
on the hard etching of Time?

Or did its misty symbols
come into blazing focus
when he saw
what you see
when you look
into the deep pinpoints
of another's eyes?

Or was he too busy
with Platonic love?

Stanton (JSD) Mellick, former Senior Lecturer at the English Department of the University of Queensland, and early President of the Friends of the Fryer Library. In 2005 he was awarded the Medal for the Order of Australia (OAM) "for services to the community, particularly through the restoration of St Paul's Presbyterian Church, and to Australian cultural studies". He was involved with the journal *Australian Literary Studies*, helping its

financial as well as its literary side. He is the author of several published literary works including: *A Centennial History of the Pharmaceutical Society of Queensland, 1880-1980*; *The Passing Guest: A Life of Henry Kingsley*; *Keeping Faith: A History of St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital, 1958-2003*. His poems have been published in Australia and in the US and he is an advocate for Queensland's early writers. His work as a research consultant after retiring appears in the *The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia*, the Academy edition of *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* and *Writers' Footprints*.

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