

FOUR POEMS



Bruce Dawe

EVERGREEN

When the eulogies are over
and all the obvious guilts are gone
for words said and words unsaid,
for deeds done and those not done,
when these have faded like the wreaths
which the grave-diggers take away
and hares have the cemetery to themselves
from evening to the break of day,
when the names in conversation less
and less often resurrect the life,
and the years have sealed up memory's wounds,
and blunted the most piercing knife,
then, like some ultimate treachery
(willed, even when most bitterly fought)
there comes a cumulative pain
invading daily thought—
a last guilt that can never cease,
fed as it is on all that's been:
the guilt of forgetting, the one grave
on which the grass is evergreen.

ON RE-READING YEATS'S "EASTER 1916" *for Philip Martin*

Reading aloud to myself
That poem which aches to be read,
I thought again of how much
I owed (but have never said)
To you, for that voice which your own
Took up, thus making us see
How passion and art may move
So interchangeably—
Like light's mercurial game
On the stream of imaginings,

Even in such moments plucking
Heart's harp with its sorrowful strings
So that the mind in running
Its fingers over the notes
Blurs the print to the eyes,
Thickens the voice in the throat,
Just as, drawn out of ourselves
By the God-given flight of birds,
We are swept by a tumult of love
Beyond the compass of words—
Take then, dear friend, this thanks,
Folded like a paper boat,
And on deep memory's stream
Suffice to let it float
Further than ever it might
Have hoped to sail on its own,
Clear of the waiting reeds
And the weirs of oblivion...

THE CRAZY PLACE

They move into the crazy place
from various directions; some
goofy-footed already, others
with limbs writhing like triffids
(they are already residents
of another planet and the earthlings
are terrified); for some visitors
a howling vacuum
is crying in sixteen extra-terrestrial languages
to be filled, a plastic star or flower
more real than the real; money—
that relic of the third planet—
changes hands; somewhere in Lemuria
some very important aliens with
the ability to appear human
get considerably richer; meanwhile
the poverty of those lying sprawled
where even the paving is crazed
breaks out all over them in pustules; trembling
fingers pluck continually at the frayed ends
of consciousness, time—
now every city has its own Bombay
and every night is a bombers' moon...