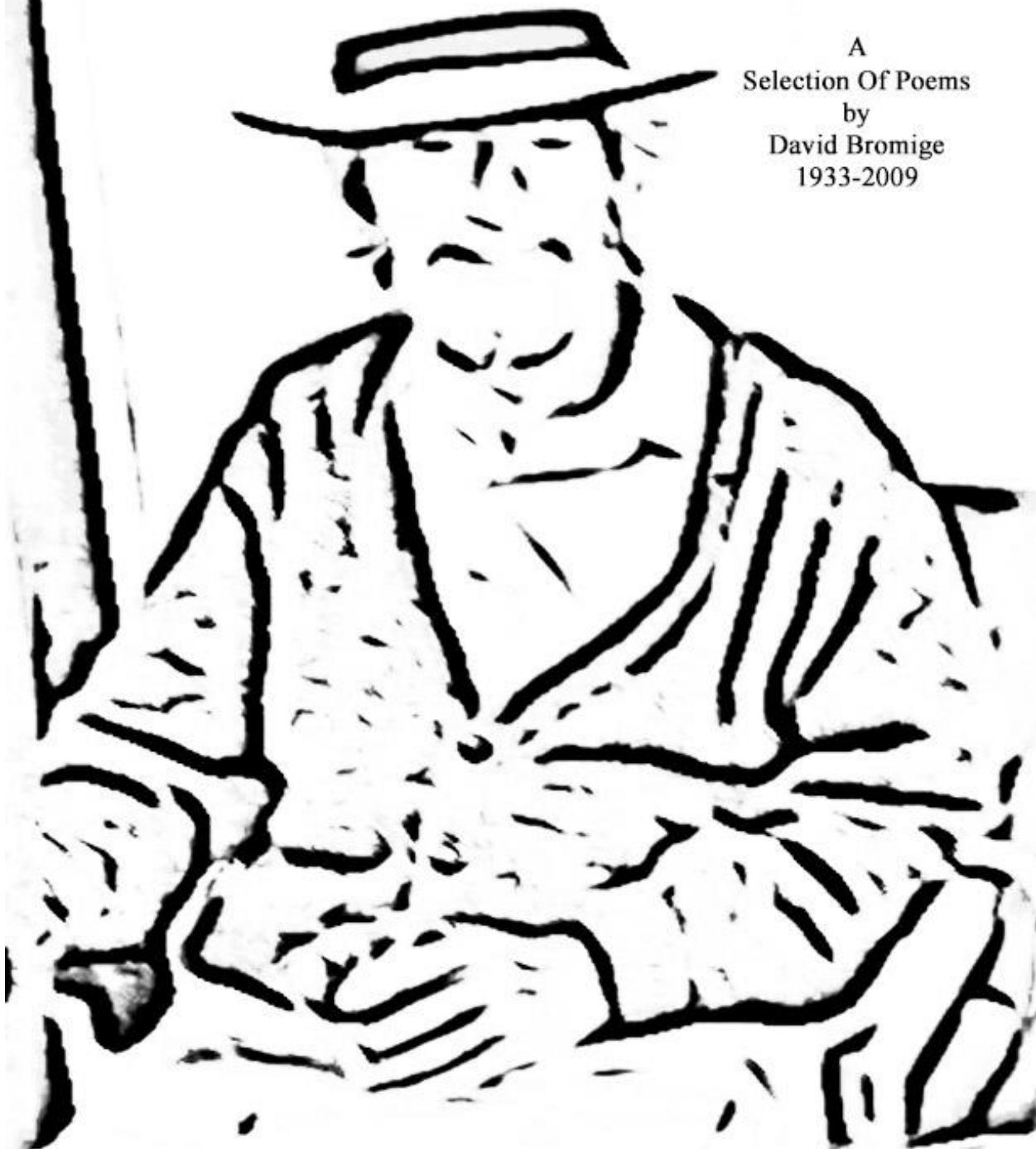


BROMIGE
REVISTED

A
Selection Of Poems
by
David Bromige
1933-2009



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By David Bromige

(1934-2009)

Neo-Mimeo Editions: 2026

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from The Gathering 1965

At Last

Not the cracking of the ashtray on my skull
was the indicator but her
repeated scream, What do I want with a
husband—never once my name.

The ashtray was called Niagara
Falls & our honeymoon, not spent
There, I was calld
David in different accents
& responded differently.

We glues pottery fragments together after a
fashion but I would not have you
hope that a symbol. Less simpl
where the fracture causes the scream & even
that too is too simpl. But of all

the passionat scenes you may encounter
one when you stand for too
much, & that
is the indicator.

from My Poetry 1980

from My Poetry
for Bob Perelman

My poetry does seem to have a cumulative, haunting effect—one or two poems may not touch you, but a small bookful begins to etch a response, poems that rise in blisters that itch for weeks, poems like ball-bearings turning on each other, over & over, digging down far enough to find substance, a hard core to fill up the hand. It's through this small square that my poems project themselves, flickering across consciousness, finally polarizing in the pure plasma of life. The reader grows impatient, irritated with my distancing style, coming at him in the rare book format, written under not one but two different kinds of dirt money, & knowing me to be and english teacher.

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

Clearings in the throat
for anselm hollo

The grass has grown
over the old scythe

The cork in the wine
no-one would drink has crumbled

Closer to the graves
the paths grow clearer

Come out of hiding, despair
you're even shyer than joy

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

Clocks

for cecelia belle

circled future and past

Handled time

and specialize the same

impulse became now

actuarial in

measureless presence

That's it for clocks
whose cuckoos, quirks and curlicues
introduce the decorative element
with customary loss of striking power

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

Seated at the organ (groan)
for robert grenier

The brain is bigger
than this figure
rapidly approaching

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

Feeling for the blind
for michael palmer

Being a superstitious person
accords wisdom to old ways
There's no control so who can say
Better safe than sorry
and not somehow mean it
We are nonetheless civilized
with touching faith in reason
so a sense of contradiction
goes with me all my days
around ladders and over cracks
and when night comes
in dreams and violent rites
attacks the vacant space
while thinking twice

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

The poet strolls at evening by the river
for tom sharp

You swing on the acacia boughs
over the chainlink fence
to scramble up the bank
and run across the freeway

then down the other side
and through that fence
you come at last to the railroad track
and next to that the creek
where your leisurely stroll at evening may
commence

from Tiny Courts in a World Without Scales 1991

Might be right
for Samuel Brittan

Rawls' test of justice says
Pretend you're not born yet so
you might be born a millionaire
or you might be born a pauper
Now what social system do you choose

I saw myself sitting here saying this
with no small degree of smugness
assured of its success
I might be Rawls himself

for we share the same reason
except that a man began to shout
that he had a gun
We looked up then
It was an expensive one, more accurate

from The Harbor Master Of Hong Kong 1993

from Lines

keep it to yourself

write it down

life is brief

it says here

ephemeral

hang on to that

kiss me quick

too late

no bodies hanging from the lamp posts

we must be in the wrong neighborhood

a poem should not mean but be

whereas the opposite is true

from The Harbormaster of Hong Kong 1993

Logic

He was carried into the garden
Therefore he was infirm
The block was lined with bars
Therefor the town was friendly
She was just like one of the family
Therefore we neglected to disarm her
The night was about to be buried
Therefore we hired lovers of sleep

from The Harbormaster of Hong Kong 1993

For Bob Grenier

It's nothing new for the human to be reminded
To go on too long has varying measures

They placed the object in his hand
breathing a name they expired

When we set out on a walk
we step on some assumptions

The future has entered consideration
raising a hand to the eyebrows

Because we want to see what's going
on the analogy can be rejected

So let's do something else instead
The gift is equivocal, he thinks

and claps his hands aloud
which remain clasped in this becoming narrative

Why not simply accept it appears
one has to at one end or the other

The phonemes begin to play ping pong
so he brings his ukulele to the singsong

When the present is its insistence
Hernia, goddess of Rupture, descends

and from her chariot of pain
showers sensation down the drain

from The Harbormaster of Hong Kong 1993

For Bob Perelman

The assumptions are islands
in the sun
glancing up from the white
pacific
terribly uninhabitable
where everybody goes
who is anybody
to rusticate and masticate
and resuscitate the dead
art of rime and the palms
flutter in whose shade
touts for the status quo
watch the tourists come and go
I too dislike them and their fiddles
and their way of being there
in the grimy trafficridden concourse
whenever they close my eyes

from The Harbor Master Of Hong Kong 1993

For Michael Davidson

Believing I ought to be weak feels easy
and I sleep not like the princess but the pea.
Let Jenny torment others; but I'm queasy
To think that then they'll send her back to me.
There aren't contiguous days in any season
when I press against the bars like an ape.
A dead person who got to me through reason
inextricable from sentiment played tape
singing the invention of the double-bind
and love two octaves above middle C
I'm not to blame for overhearing, in my mind
as usual, believing that the soup was free.
And you can bet, if an encore is required,
the wave's crest is the best place to be wired.

Footnote to sentiment

Below the level of the sentence
Hard on the heels of sentience
A page before the sentry.

from Ten Poems From Clearings In The Throat 2005

Squeaking wheels

I thought someone was parking my car
in front of my house

Then i thought that someone was my wife
and that it was our house

We were un- or happily married
and had a child whom we loved

Friends came to visit
We had careers and goals

Ideas about the world
and brilliant memories

Then I was waking up
escaping from my dreams

which I once enjoyed
and now feel as traps

They are not filled with meaning
I am not

David Bromige was born in London, England in 1933 where he was educated and became a prize winning student. Not content to give his life over to academics just yet, he worked as a shepherd in Sweden as might be depicted in a Glen Baxter panel. Eventually he found himself in Canada, in the province of Saskatchewan for a short time before matriculating to Vancouver's institute of higher learning where he met and was befriended by some of Canada's great poets writing in English at that time. To further his education he studied at UC Berkeley where his writing came to the attention of the eminent poet Robert Duncan. Soon Bromige was teaching in the California State University system in Sonoma County. He found Luther Burbank's "paradise on earth" to be quite congenial to his life style until his passing in June of 2009. He was the author of over 40 poetry selection, many of them prize winning works, of a unique wit and contemplative of the vagaries of absurdity. He fits in no neat category stylistically, yet he was long associated with the Language School. *IF Wants To Be The Same As IS*, a selected collection of his oeuvre, was published by New Star Books of Vancouver in 2018.