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## Mediterranean

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## MEDITERRANEAN

Come and behold this old arena for yourself.  
 Scuffle sand where barefooted Moses went  
 and Caesar's bones were tucked away  
 in this navel of the Occident.  
 Many an unremembered hero, many a saint unsung,  
 was mothered by his faith and then abandoned.

Here the crusades argued over Christ's remains.  
 Here the storm of commerce awoke misguided argosies.  
 (For whosoever imagines a just exchange?)

Let us not underestimate the spectral riches,  
 the struggle of apostles to outwit the limits of destiny,  
 the chains of malady that took the noble races down.  
 We might wonder, too, what sorrow must have  
 shouldered the Pyramids, and hoisted Zeus's name.

The battlegrounds are left exactly where the soldiers  
 put them in the flower of Hannibal and Alexander.  
 The broken ships that were the ropes of empire  
 still huddle in the shallow mud of islands  
 under a steady dirge made by the sea.

What outrages this clear-eyed sky has brushed aside!  
 What shame has drained its epics from these shores  
 where slavery divides the heart with coins  
 and battles come as frequently as tides.

Here in this faultless sunlight that served the Moors;  
 here in this same water where Phoenician mariners  
 reinforced the purses of a Biblical neighborhood,  
 would you guess what jest or argument  
 once banished Troy and Israel, strangled Carthage too  
 and Tyre?

If you would learn how bitterly is history  
 measured out by drops,  
 come visit at this bloodstained shrine

and offer one sweeping praise for all the glory  
that has gone to scrub the floors of yesterdays  
and all those stonefaced martyrs whose ghosts  
still bleach this sand.

WILLIAM PETERSON

A MAN IN MIDPASSAGE

Is that life over  
Who had covered and assuaged its central grief?  
The cadres in cruel conflict  
Bend the hot hallways of belief.

Out of what window should memory look:  
The book in the brazier, intricate typewriter  
The epitaph's instinct: which one select,  
A man in the murdered frame, perhaps,  
Locked in his caricature like a convict  
Or strict conscience of that good  
Incompletely created by any  
If not blood beaten into his earth,  
Tombstone tilted against evil  
West of childhood, hate.

Would he walk as upright man  
Once could, while adamant animals  
Moved flat on the landscape  
Like light over the railheads  
Converge in developing thunder;

Take office, make public meaning  
His poems contracted  
Between airshafts

Who had first felt tamarack  
Sharpen his taste  
And future's handshake.

NORMAN MACLEOD