

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **John Wheelwright**

**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Train Ride

For Horace Gregory

After rain, through afterglow, the unfolding fan  
of railway landscape sidled on the pivot  
of a larger arc into the green of evening;  
I remembered that noon I saw a gradual bud  
still white; though dead in its warm bloom;  
always the enemy is the foe at home.  
And I wondered what surgery could recover  
our lost, long stride of indolence and leisure  
which is labor in reverse; what physic recall the smile  
not of lips, but of eyes as of the sea bemused.  
We, when we disperse from common sleep to several  
tasks, we gather to despair; we, who assembled  
once for hopes from common toil to dreams  
or sickish and hurting or triumphal rapture;  
always our enemy is our foe at home.  
We, deafened with far scattered city rattles  
to the hubbub of forest birds (never having  
"had time" to grieve or to hear through vivid sleep  
the sea knock on its cracked and hollow stones)  
so that the stars, almost, and birds comply,  
and the garden-wet; the trees retire; We are  
a scared patrol, fearing the guns behind;  
always the enemy is the foe at home.  
What wonder that we fear our own eyes' look  
and fidget to be at home alone, and pitifully  
put of age by some change in brushing the hair  
and stumble to our ends like smothered runners at their tape;  
We follow our shreds of fame into an ambush.  
Then (as while the stars herd to the great trough  
the blind, in the always-only-outward of their dismantled  
archways, awake at the smell of warmed stone  
or the sound of reeds, lifting from the dim  
into the segment of green dawn) always  
our enemy is our foe at home, more  
certainly than through spoken words or from grief-  
twisted writing on paper, unblotted by tears  
the thought came:  
There is no physic  
for the world's ill, nor surgery; it must  
(hot smell of tar on wet salt air)  
burn in fever forever, an incense pierced  
with arrows, whose name is Love and another name  
Rebellion (the twinge, the gulf, split seconds,  
the very raindrops, render, and instancy  
of Love).  
All Poetry to this not-to-be-looked-upon sun  
of Passion is the moon's cupped light; all  
Politics to this moon, a moon's reflected  
cupped light, like the moon of Rome, after  
the deep well of Grecian light sank low;

always the enemy is the foe at home.  
But these three are friends whose arms twine  
without words; as, in still air,  
the great grove leans to wind, past and to come.

John Wheelwright