

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Jon Anderson**

**- 6 poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

### **Jon Anderson (1940 – 2007)**

Jon Victor Anderson was an American poet.

Anderson's first book, *Looking for Jonathan*, was an inaugural selection of the Pitt Poetry Series of the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1967. His second, *Death & Friends*, was nominated for the National Book Award. He won a Guggenheim Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 1976; the Shelley Memorial Award from Poetry Society of America in 1983 for career achievement; and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry in 1986.

Born July 4 in Somerville, Massachusetts, to Henry Victor and Frances (Ladd) Anderson, he earned a BS from Northeastern University (1964) and a MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa (1968). He began his teaching career at the University of Portland 1968-72 as an instructor, becoming an assistant professor of creative writing. He was assistant professor of creative writing at Ohio University 1972-73, the University of Pittsburgh 1973-76, and University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1976-77. At the University of Arizona he served as associate professor from 1978 until his retirement. On February, 2008 they held a tribute reading. Poets who studied under Anderson include Agha Shahid Ali, Michael Collier, Stuart Dischell, Loren Goodman, Tony Hoagland, Peter Oresick, David Rivard, and David Wojahn.

He married Nancy Garland in 1964; married his second wife, Linda Baker, in 1967; and married third wife, Barbara Hershkowitz in 1971, with whom he had one son, Bodi Orlen Anderson.

Anderson died on October 20, 2007, in Tucson, Arizona, after several weeks of illness. He was cremated and his ashes spread, according to his wishes, in the woods outside of Flagstaff, Arizona.

#### Works:

*Looking for Jonathan*, poetry (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968)  
*Death & Friends*, poetry (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970)  
*In Sepia*, poetry (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974)  
*Counting the Days*, poetry (Lisbon: Penumbra, 1974)  
*Cypresses*, poetry (Port Townsend: Graywolf Press, 1981)  
*The Milky Way: Poems 1967-1982*, poetry (New York: Ecco Press, 1983)  
*Day Moon*, poetry (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2001)

## Exiled On Mountain, Bewail Fate & Praise Autumn

Now that I'm actually living my solitude I'm clueless.  
Every now & then the wind drops in & I look at it.  
These are the signs of seasonal change: I'm not sweating,  
& the hollow air in the chimney makes a thrumming noise.  
The doves outside my house look like they're waiting  
at a bus stop & puff into little black & grey pots when  
the wind blows or when the rain comes down in columns.  
Now that it's quiet in my house I can't really think  
without thinking & I can't really talk without meaning  
something else, so I shut up. Some days I wish I was  
back at the factory, moving heavy objects & grunting.

They start out looking for a handout, then they get used to it,  
the birds. What's weird is I think they don't know why  
they come anymore, now that I've stopped feeding them.  
Frankly, they tend to be undifferentiated & cutely stupid.  
Once, when one fell off the wall, I thought I had something,  
it was so embarrassed, lying there like a ruffled pompom  
with a black tack for a head. Turned out it was dead.  
I was so alienated I mailed it back without a stamp, but  
I said this prayer for it: Bless every living thing...

I didn't mean to exclude it.

Shortly afterward I was bombed by a traveling flock  
of chickadees fresh from a meeting on a rotten stump.  
When you're alone every damn word you say has got  
to be how you feel, & then you've got to live with it.  
I think I'll entertain myself by not experiencing anything.  
Word on the mountain is that the wabi of consciousness  
is all your living minus all your accumulated experience.  
That's why the chickadees attacked, because I'd blown it.

Jon Anderson

## Listen, Leo

Listen, Leo, remember the lifeboat  
we pilfered from what you said  
was an abandoned garage sale,

1442 Columbus, not the explorer,  
the street? Last night I came to,  
retired to the basement to ponder

my position on circumspection,  
the fate of the cruel & unusual,  
& drink until I passed out.

I had my underwear on & my .45.  
I was planning to feast on that bag  
of Chicken Shack backs & beaks

we got at the place that went broke,  
put my legs up on a six-pack & drift.  
Anyway, this eerie glow started

emanating from the sewage pool,  
mostly greenish. It winked  
so I shot it, Leo, I've had enough!

Then this long low lump along  
the wall near the bulkhead  
started toward me, so slow

I had time to think. Went  
to the attic & came back down  
bearing Mr. Double-Aught.

Leo, I perforated the lifeboat.  
It has become a dead one,  
incapable, now, of surfacing

above its circumstance.  
We can never return to it now.  
It's gone. Gone like the snow.

Gone like I got a little behind.  
It's a sad world, Leo, we fell,  
like yesterday's laundry

into the tub, let's face a fact.  
There's nobody left like us.  
I got a weathered pate, you

got a ticket to Nova Scotia &  
I'm swimming beside the boat.  
When we gotta die, we're gone.

Leo, I confess, I adore your face.  
Give me a little papa kiss.  
Give me a muscle up. Leo,

there's nobody left like us.

Jon Anderson



green ice allowed him in.

Some ran, and were late.  
These would  
forever imagine tragedy

(endless descent,  
his face floating among the reeds,  
unrecognized), as those

who imagine the silence of a guest  
to be mysterious, or wrong.

Jon Anderson

## **The Secret Of Poetry**

When I was lonely, I thought of death.  
When I thought of death I was lonely.

I suppose this error will continue.  
I shall enter each gray morning

Delighted by frost, which is death,  
& the trees that stand alone in mist.

When I met my wife I was lonely.  
Our child in her body is lonely.

I suppose this error will go on & on.  
Morning I kiss my wife's cold lips,

Nights her body, dripping with mist.  
This is the error that fascinates.

I suppose you are secretly lonely,  
Thinking of death, thinking of love.

I'd like, please, to leave on your sill  
Just one cold flower, whose beauty

Would leave you inconsolable all day.  
The secret of poetry is cruelty.

Jon Anderson



## Voyage

So, at last, we will cross.  
Our season presupposes continents, lands  
of desire. We toss  
like unloved baggage where we stand,

and slowly the land gives over.  
Goodbye; goodbye.  
The water  
rises and hisses; distance simplifies

trees, houses. The small land speeds.  
And we escape.

Here is your flying sea,  
proportionless, your seascape

hung with birds, your frail launch  
lightly bearing us in mist.  
Everything's touch;  
immediate. We had this

journeying at heart; yes, days  
of it, weeks, buoyant, propelled.  
The casual waves  
blur like lines cast back. We have ourselves

out here; what else?  
Birds fail. The sea shines  
daily, is calm and -- who can tell? --  
bottomless. There will be time.

And here I awakened into fear --  
a destination, as your own;  
an inlet, where  
the waters shine

in welcome, where the journey  
cries out: Here, where stones, enormous,  
burrow in the sea.  
The shoreline grows

specific, black and real.  
Here is your consummate island;  
mine. The sea is still.  
The launch glides inland.

We stand in this full calm,  
a journey's  
end. Friend, be kind,  
foreshadow me.

Jon Anderson