

States of the Union

PRIMARY POEMS

BY RICHARD J. MARGOLIS

There is a poetry to politics. "A poet dares be just so clear and no clearer," E. B. White has observed; "he approaches lucid ground warily." Surely as much can be said for our politicians.

Herewith are 11 "Primary Poems," each a thickly veiled tribute to one of our Presidential aspirants—announced, unannounced and withdrawn. We apologize in advance to the candidates, and in retrospect to the following poets: Robert Frost, e.e. cummings, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, Vachel Lindsay, and Mother Goose.

The Love Song of Ronald Reagan

Let us go then, you and I
To that big country in the sky
Where each of us is etherized
By the screen's image;
Where elections are a game,
a scrimmage.
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.
In the booth the voters come and go
Remembering Ronnie in King's
Row.

Do I dare
Disturb the universe
With this tiresome campaign?
Have I lost my crease in the rain?
I grow old . . . I grow old. . . .
I shall have the Iowa delegates
polled.

I have sung along with Mitch
But I do not think he will sing to me.
It is impossible to say just what I
mean!
Watch the screen, the magic screen.
In the booth the voters come and go
Remembering Ronnie in King's
Row.

Wallace

I, too, am America.
I am the darker side
of the candidates,
all the bright candidates.
I go to the back
of their bus.
I eat their leavings.
I await the returns.

Tomorrow,
I'll take
the driver's seat.
They'll see
I'm with them, too.
They'll see Boston
is 'bama bound.

Work Song

Eeny meeny miny mo,
Udall wants the unions' dough;
If he loses let him go;
Eeny Meany minus Mo.

r.s. shriver

nobody loses all the time
in this
delicious
mud-luscious
best of all possibles
replete
with peace corps
poverty war
and parquet floor
(not to mention
the big
bright
balloons
that go
pop pop)
in the sun-drenched
fun-drenched rooms
of camelot

Half-Nelson

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If those Republicans vouchsafe
Another chance to me.
So huge, so hopeless to conceive,

And yet one cannot tell:
The race is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

The Fall

Jer and Jill
went up the hill
to fetch a pail of rum;
Jer fell down
and broke his crown,
but he wasn't chewing gum.

On the Road

With Fred Harris

Unafraid and light-hearted in my
camper
I take to the open road,
Singing an incredibly melodious
refrain
Of Freedom, Love, and Tax Reform.
Out of my camper endlessly rocking
I shall forge a new constituency,
An infinitely sweet, registered
constituency
Of young and old, old and young,
And many upright in-betweeners as
well,
Who in triumphant concert from
shore to shore



FRED HARRIS

Shall enrich the destitute,
Overpower the powerful,
Enjoin the judges,
Pension off the pensive,
And enthrone the honest man
Who sits on common kitchen chairs.

(But why am I taking up this
awesome burden?
Even now, as I cross the turgid
Ramapo,
My gas gauge reads Empty.)



JIMMY CARTER

Bayh

One could have done worse
Than to have swung with Birch.

Carter's Ink

The fog comes
on little cat's feet,
a soft mist
from Georgian bottomlands.
All sure-fire fur and purr,
this impalpable cat!



HENRY JACKSON

Jackson's Drum

Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay,
BOOM,
Where the hell is that smoke-filled
room?

Patterns of HHH

I walk down the Garden path;
And all the delegates
Ignore me; well, no regrets.
I walk down the path
At Madison Square
Wearing my stiff, Minnesota smile.
Yes, I too am a
not-so-rare
Candidate, standing in the aisle
Of this ungodly Garden.
But wait:
I espy a pattern,
A mystifying trend:
The nominees are deadlocked;
The ballots are without end.
Finally, at quarter to three,
Everyone chooses. . . .
Me.

I walk down the Garden path,
And all the delegates
Are cheering; well, no regrets—
I've been here once or twice before.
Gosh! What are patterns for?