



[Home](#)

[Summer-Fall 2012](#)

[Spring-Summer 2012](#)

[Autumn-Winter 2011-12](#)

[Summer 2011](#)

[Winter/Spring 2011](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011](#)

[Summer 2010](#)

[Spring 2010](#)

[Winter 2010](#)

[Autumn 2009](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Contact](#)

Three Poems

by Robert Joe Stout

Today, Not Yesteryear

No movement in the pines
or in the bougainvillea
dangling
like discarded lingerie
across a chipped stone wall.

Just sunlight,
weak and distant,
effete against the cold:
past loves, I think
remembering

embraces

that hover,
distant,
like the listless pines,
bougainvillea purple
—beautiful
but lacking vibrancy
—a pleasant emptiness

that seeks storm-driven
gusts, limbs lashing,
cracking, blossom-flung
projectiles
hurled against the eyes,
the mind,
emotions surging:
anger, exultation, lust
not calm

mere nothingness,
thought cold and distant
as the winter sun.

Oaxaca, Not Wyoming

Wind whips
umbrellas inside-out,
rips plastic tarps off ropes,
teenagers duck
from door to door
swiping water
from their faces,
wetly kiss

as though they really care...

And I,
beside my little dog,
dive into snowbanks
that aren't there,
head flung back
to taste wind-driven cold...
Storms were fun!
(Icicles hanging from the eaves,

hot chocolate
steaming on the stove
life was great!
spring breaking up the river's ice,

dandelion parachutes,
tadpoles growing legs
—one laughed and tried to somersault
through piles
of crackly autumn leaves)...

I startle
a poor vendor
with a loud *Whoopee!*

Reading Beckett

A banging in the alleyway, a shout,
then laughter floats my thoughts to Dublin
in the book I read, life squeezed down
upon itself to find a somehow point

of light so small it destroys all. Misty neon
leads the way down Grafton Street.
Shoulders hunched against the cold
I ward off beggar children lunging out

to plead for pennies *how long ago?*
The room returns but Dublin fog,
clanging bells, diesel stench still curl
around me. Me and someone--something—else.

A man—Molloy—but not the one
I read about. Hair like a flag
around his face, bent finger raised,
this one stands alone as he did

forty years ago reciting in his thunderous voice
the Yukon cold, the miners' gold, tears
on his cheeks as he accepts a penny here,
a tot, applause. I sigh, let hurdy-gurdy

clamor ease away. *Escape it all?*

*Or open up to take all in? Molloy seems lost.
Like all of us. The laughter sounds again.*

Robert Joe Stout's fiction has appeared in *Interim*, *The New Orleans Review*, *The South Dakota Review* and dozens of other journals. He also has published the novels *Running Out the Hurt*, *Miss Sally*, half a dozen poetry chapbooks and the non-fiction *Why Immigrants Come to America*. He lives in Oaxaca, Mexico.

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