

## THOMAS SEEN

For Heathcote Williams

The hunchback in the park  
    *"Thomas, oh yes,*  
A solitary mister  
    *I saw him,"*  
Propped between trees and water  
    *Said my friend Heathcote Williams.*  
From the opening of the garden lock  
    *"I was only a child*  
That lets the trees and water enter  
    *But I remember still*  
Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark  
    *That cut glass voice, that presence.*

Eating bread from a newspaper  
    *"I remember*  
Drinking water from the chained cup  
    *A huge pint glass of frothy beer*  
That the children filled with gravel  
    *On the cozy dais*  
In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship  
    *At the Victoria and Albert Museum*  
Slept at night in a dog kennel  
    *In South Kensington*  
But nobody chained him up.  
    *Sometime in the 1940s.*

Like the park birds he came early  
    *"The man appeared,*  
Like the water he sat down  
    *A 'solitary mister'*  
And Mister they called Hey Mister  
    *Throbbing*  
The truant boys from the town  
    *And orating mightily—*  
Running when he had heard them clearly  
    *No hunchback but possibly*  
On out of sound  
    *A dwarf*

Past lake and rockery  
    *Making a sound*  
Laughing when he shook his paper  
    *Like an inebriated church organ*  
Hunchbacked in mockery  
    *That had somehow procured entrance into the sacred wine*  
Through the loud zoo of the willow groves  
    *And was bellowing*  
Dodging the park keeper  
    *In ecstasy of alcohol,*  
With his stick that picked up leaves.

*Heaven, and poetry.*

And the old dog sleeper  
*"Rubbish!"*  
Alone between nurses and swans  
*Said my father*  
While the boys among willows  
*'It was all*  
Made the tigers jump out of their eyes  
*Rubbish'—*  
To roar on the rockery stones  
*The marvelous syllabics*  
And the groves were blue with sailors  
*And the grandiloquence of vowels.*

Made all day until bell time  
*"Did not make*  
A woman figure without fault  
*A woman figure*  
Straight as a young elm  
*But a fierceness of figures*  
Straight and tall from his crooked bones  
*A perfect vastness of vocables*  
That she might stand in the night  
*That might stand*  
After the locks and chains  
*In the consciousness of all*

All night in the unmade park  
*"Lovers and drunkards,*  
After the railings and shrubberies  
*In the vast night of those who hide*  
The birds the grass the trees the lake  
*Behind pencils and books*  
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries  
*In the shrubberies*  
Had followed the hunchback  
*In the snuggeries*  
To his kennel in the dark.  
*Of their kennels and their kennings in the deep fierce heart of the dark."*

Jack Foley

California