

Classic Poetry Series

Mac Hammond
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Mac Hammond(1926 - 1997)

Mac S. Hammond was a poet, a professor emeritus of English, and the director of the graduate program in creative writing at the university of New York at Buffalo.

The author of four volumes of poetry, *The Horse Opera and Other Poems* (1966); *Cold Turkey* (1969); *Six Dutch Hearts* (1978), and *Mappamundi, New and Selected Poems* (1989), Hammond also wrote for magazines such as *The Paris Review*, and *Poetry and Choice*. He was invited to the White House in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter for a program honoring 200 American poets.

Hammond made audio and video recordings, including *The Holidays* in 1968, a a three-track tape comprising a selection of poems for simultaneous voices. He combined video art and poetry in videos that were shown in Buffalo, Chicago and San Francisco. He was cofounder of the Nickel City Poetry-Video Association, and president of *Squeaky Wheel*, a non-profit organisation devoted to the video arts.

Carl Dennis -his colleague and fellow poet- described Hammond's poetry as "a mixture of romantic hoping and very down-to-earth concreteness...He was very much his own man. He wasn't part of any school."

Halloween

The butcher knife goes in, first, at the top
And carves out the round stemmed lid,
The hole of which allows the hand to go
In to pull the gooey mess inside, out -
The walls scooped clean with a spoon.
A grim design decided on, that afternoon,
The eyes are the first to go,
Isosceles or trapezoid, the square nose,
The down-turned mouth with three
Hideous teeth and, sometimes,
Round ears. At dusk it's
Lighted, the room behind it dark.
Outside, looking in, it looks like a
Pumpkin, it looks like ripeness
Is all. Kids come, beckoned by
Fingers of shadows on leaf-strewn lawns
To trick or treat. Standing at the open
Door, the sculptor, a warlock, drops
Penny candies into their bags, knowing
The message of winter: only the children,
Pretending to be ghosts, are real.

Mac Hammond

Thanksgiving

The man who stands above the bird, his knife
Sharp as a Turkish scimitar, first removes
A thigh and leg, half the support
On which the turkey used to stand. This
Leg and thigh he sets on an extra
Plate. All his weight now on
One leg, he lunges for the wing, the wing
On the same side of the bird from which
He has just removed the leg and thigh.
He frees the wing enough to expose
The breast, the wing not severed but
Collapsed down to the platter. One hand
Holding the fork, piercing the turkey
Anywhere, he now begins to slice the breast,
Afflicted by small pains in his chest,
A kind of heartburn for which there is no
Cure. He serves the hostess breast, her
Own breast rising and falling. And so on,
Till all the guests are served, the turkey
Now a wreck, the carver exhausted, a
Mere carcass of his former self. Everyone
Says thanks to the turkey carver and begins
To eat, thankful for the cold turkey
And the Republic for which it stands.

Mac Hammond