

Three Poems

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (September 2022)



Massage in a Bath House, John Singer Sargent, 1937

“Relax, My Friend”

I've found a type of YouTube video
In which these well-fed Westerners receive
Massages from some swarthy peasants: slow,
Intense. Observe how they unweave & heave
Away suburban tensions, *far away*—
The sound recording so precise that each
Acoustic slough that moving forms mislay

(Each oiled finger moving like a leech
Across each cherished inch of indoor skin;
Each foil envelope of oil, drained;
The deft unscrewing of each lotion tin;
Each rustle) is entirely obtained.

The Son of God was sacrificed for us;
Deny Him, and become ridiculous.

Improvisation on Psalm 63:1-2

"O God, You are my God. Early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary."

Deliver me. I'm thirsting for my home.
The feral dogs are patient. [*Under chrome—
Reflected, sunlight-supplemented gold,*]
The dogs are hungry. [*stands, as David told,*

The Throne belonging to] Take notice, Lord:
My soul, it thirsts [*a Final Word, a chord,
A pane of glass, a ponderous,*] inside
These places dispossessed of water. [*wide*]

Although I give the sense of being [*net
Containing cataracts of fish.*] upset,
In point of fact, I'm tired, [*There's a Crown,
Serene amid the blond*] advancing down

An empty hallway. [*fretless lyre's strum,
The frankincense's lisp. Preserve me from*]
The turning of a doorknob [*any harm.*]
Is like the racking of a firearm.

The Interpretation of Dreams

Those nighttime terrors were, I long believed,
Nocturnal penances I'd somehow earned
According to the Master's scale of pay,
Which thirty-thousand years of Human thought
Had failed to formulate schematically.

The problem, though, was simple *apnea*,
My doctor ascertained: a word that's so
Resistant to belong to English verse
That nothing decorously rhymes with it.

My nightmares, he concluded, were among
The Mind's responses to the Body's frank
Emergency in failing to obtain
Sufficient oxygen—a problem of
Bare, elementary mechanics, and,
Accordingly, to my chagrin, devoid
Of metaphysical significance.

They sent me this preposterous machine
Which forces me to breathe at night, against
The Body's poorly calibrated will.

Although I've never in my forty years
Been better-rested, I preferred it when
My nightmare's bounds would tumefy & burst—
And I was positive that I was cursed.

[Table of Contents](#)

Jeffrey Burghauser is a teacher in Columbus, OH. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo and the University of Leeds. He currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey's book-length collections are available on [Amazon](#), and his website is www.jeffreyburghauser.com.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)