

TWO POEMS BY PAUL PETRIE

Ye Old Cottage Inn

(Lynbridge, England)

It perches on the road below our house.

At night, from my bedroom window,
I can see those brown-glazed, diamond panes shine out
with a warm, convivial glow,

and through the door that opens
and bangs shut, hear strains
of a gay, communal music —
and when the lights go out.
dark knots of voices staggering down the road.

A hundred times I've passed those massive doors,
but never entered in.

Behind, the great, bronze tankards
sway through the smoky light
of excited voices.
The barman at the bar
taps his wit and pours,
Smiling like Franz Hals.

In a hubbub of tongues
they are all talking at once,
faces flushed and gleaming. White foam
runs down the tankards' sides.
They throw back their heads and sing,
hands pounding the tables,
feet stamping the floors,
till the mugs on the sideboards rattle,
lamp shades tremble,
the oak-beamed ceiling echoes like thunder and shakes —

Which would all stop,
if ever I entered in,
and turn to a picture
of somewhere that never was.

Elegy for Virgins and Big-Game Hunters

Goodbye white nymphs, once chased into laurel trees.
Goodbye dear Marys, immaculate mothers of God;
and all you maiden aunts.
Laughter deflowers the woods.

Nuns' habits have disappeared. Frustrate in air
swans hover, cut off by the backs of men.
And even the moon's
undone.

Saintliness, ugliness, bad breath, shyness, pride
are not enough.

All over the world
roses fall from the windows of the air.

And for the first time, in hell,
Don Juan cries out —
both the hunt and quarry
lost.