

# 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.

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