

## DeWitt Clinton – Two Poems

### Hello There

The elder of our tiny neighborhood cycled by just  
In time for neither of us to know who said what  
But then it doesn't really matter, does it, as we're  
On our way to somewhere, but now that you ask,  
I'm not even sure where we thought we were  
Headed, but certainly headed somewhere, you  
In your fancy white new outfit, me in a pair of  
Dark pants and pink shirt, off to a meal to share  
With someone, though we still don't know who  
That might be, or how well the night will go.  
But isn't that pretty much how it goes most  
Of the time we set out on a drive to go somewhere  
Even if we don't know exactly when we'll arrive,  
Or even leave, or worse, not ever arriving back  
Where we started this evening when the old  
One down the road waved us by, and the  
Two of us barely had enough time to look up  
To see who it was that was kind enough to  
Wish us a simple hello, but then, none of us  
Expected to sit down on the curb and hear  
About all the tsuris passing through each one  
And for the most part, it's probably better  
To just keep on moving, trying not to stop  
To figure what in the world just happened  
That will make our tiny lives even more  
Miserable than they were yesterday, but  
Somehow that's the pulse most of us have  
These days, pushing the old misery back  
As far as we humanly can, and hoping a  
Friendly voice who doesn't expect anything  
In return, lifts a voice that's barely there  
Anymore as she pedals away on our old road  
Lifting her wobbly arm once again, but now  
She's fading into the end of day and then  
You ask who was that O she's down the road  
She lost her husband a few years ago even so  
We see her fading away in the evening light  
Almost gone, hearing in the distant something  
With a wave and a sweet echo of Hello There.

## Did You Take the Trash Out, Dear?

It's late, as you know, or may not know  
Though you may have a few extra  
Minutes before lights are turned out  
For all of us, but I seem to remember  
So many light bulbs are burning out  
Faster than I can find the step ladder  
To step up into the next layer of light  
To make the tricky turns so as to  
Not separate the bulb from the screwy  
As I've done this and find I'm now down  
In the basement with flashlight looking  
At the updated fuse box to see which  
Has flipped, even slightly flipped for  
These days unless you're the expert  
It's harder and harder to tell, but that's  
Not really why we're here, is it,  
As I've sensed everything important  
Is slowing down, but please don't  
Call anyone as that'd be embarrassing  
But don't you too feel something is  
Just not right anymore, as the light  
Seems to be dimming all around  
Not just in our little brick house  
Which has ample lighting, of course,  
But I'll admit I'm walking slower  
Than I have and when I do, I sense  
A slight tilting or drifting as it's hard  
To stay on that fine line, looking a bit  
Screwy like I've had too much to drink  
Which might be true, but then  
The zigging and zagging of walking  
Down the block happens even without  
Evening refreshments, and another  
Thing that's odd is that the plates  
Are a bit smaller than they used  
To be and I've no problem with  
That just that the appetite is like  
The smaller plate, and we've even  
Gone to plastic spoons, why I'm  
Not sure but the wife says they're  
Pretty, aren't they, and I do agree  
But there's something out there,  
Don't you see it, too, that's making

Everything a bit dimmer, duller  
Or perhaps it's just that time  
Of the year when all the snow  
Has turned to a dirty grey pile  
But I'm quite optimistic not  
About any of this, but just pressing  
The old nose up close to something  
Even if it is sniffing out what's what  
As in what's that yet I don't remember  
That being there, wasn't it over  
There, but maybe these things  
Don't ever bother you, and they  
Don't exactly bother me, but there's  
Just something which I can't quite  
Take out to the trash, but even if  
I did take out what stinks so, it'd be  
Sitting on the curb for over a week,  
And then a neighbor would walk  
By and wonder what kind of bad  
The old bloke is trying to pull over  
Though no one has the nerve, so  
Far, to call the local sheriff to see  
If someone else might move what  
Seems so horribly wrong, right  
There, but can't you see it, too,  
It's right there, and I don't really  
Have too much more time  
With what seems so "off" as  
The Brits sometime say when  
Something isn't as fresh as it  
Could be, but then, nothing  
Quite appears anymore to be  
Quite what it could be, does it?

**DeWitt Clinton** is Emeritus Professor at the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater, and lives in Shorewood. Recent poems of his have appeared in *The Last Call: The Anthology of Beer, Wine & Spirits Poetry*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Verse-Virtual*, *New Verse News*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Diaphanous Press*, *Meta/Phor(e)Play*, *The Arabesques Review*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, and *The New Reader Review*. He has a new collection of poems, *At the End of the War*, just out from Kelsay Books, and another is in production, a collection of poetic adaptations of Kenneth Rexroth's *100 Poems from the Chinese*.