

DESERT COLLAGES

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DESERT COLLAGES

The rules for the construction of these collages were: that words and phrases were taken from sequences in the texts, but though syntax might be changed, the order in which words occurred could never be changed. Some groups of words occur in more than one section of the **FIRST DESERT COLLAGES**. This is because they relate in different ways to more than one section, but they have not been taken out of their original sequence though they have a new context.

The first three **COLLAGES** can be read in any order. The fourth, and the **Prelude** and **Bildung Afterwords**, should be read in the order set out here.

The poems are ordered as follows.

After Iraq: Reflections on a Train

FIRST DESERT COLLAGES

ONE: TERRAINS

Desert Collage out of John C. Van Dyke: Californian Desert, 1901*

Lost mountains

Desert Collage out of Gertrude Bell: Middle Eastern Desert, 1907

roofless

TWO: PASTS

John C. Van Dyke

red men

Gertrude Bell

from Occident to Orient

THREE: PRESENTS

John C. Van Dyke

land of illusions and thin air

Gertrude Bell

the Arak battle

SECOND DESERT COLLAGES

ONE: **John C. Van Dyke out of John C. Van Dyke**

The Desert is Overwhelmingly Silent

Wasted upon the Aboriginal Retina

Almost Formless Masses of Colour and Light

TWO: **Gertrude Bell out of Gertrude Bell**

Roofless, Defenceless, Without Possessions
Boiled Water for me from Camp to Camp
By Four O Clock I was Lodged in the Hotel Victoria

THIRD DESERT COLLAGES

Out of Van Dyke out of Van Dyke and Bell out of Bell

The Voice of the Wind
What of the Footprints of the Caesar's?
Mirage

FOURTH DESERT COLLAGES

Out of Bell and Van Dyke Collages

1 2 3

Bildung Afterwords

1 Sandsong

2 Sandhymn

3 Sandprayer

*

- John C. Van Dyke, *The Desert*(1901), Peregrine Smith Inc., Salt Lake City, 1980.
- Gertrude Bell, *The Desert from the Sown*, 1907.
- Van Dyke was an American explorer. Gertrude Bell helped to establish the frontiers of Iraq.

Warm thanks to John Elder, Middlebury College, for his generous help with desert literature, and to Caroline Bergvall, for her encouragement.

DESERT COLLAGES

After Iraq: reflections on a train

England's green and

Green to the very

blanched sky traverses
the azure one
the pines print across fleet
sudden green pain in hedgerows
print pain across green
windowscape crossings fleet window in
adiaphane green in

reveries stretch across fields linked
to their dreamers revenants
of the retina's memories
write over over write
grassgreen blood in glass
blanch traces something grates in
sandgrains greened by pineprints
painprints glazed
sandgrains grazed
desert in glass