



*(Photo: Fastnacht (or Carnival), the Alps)*

# Clown

With blue-paper arrows on my cheeks  
And a yellow star stuck to my head,  
I stay, as a monkey takes my hand,  
hanging upside-down on a balancing beam.

My master wants to make the world happy,  
—"Satan's Apostle" I'm called by my sign—  
And the people, a procession of mad pilgrims,  
are sent here, and I am to entertain them.

They laugh at everything my craziness does,  
I play dog, play human, play elephant:  
I bark, I cry, I dig around with my snout—

Late at night the tent empties itself:  
On the plain, where the lanterns are burning,  
I lean against a pole, and call my deeds good.

*Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953)*  
*(tr. from the Dutch, Cliff Cregoe)*