

The spirit plays us strange religious pranks  
To whatsoever god we owe the thanks.  
No one has ever failed the poet ranks  
To link a chain of money-metal banks.

The loss to song, the danger of defection  
Is always in the opposite direction.  
Some turn in sheer, in Shelleyan dejection  
To try if one more popular election

Will give us by short cut the final stage  
That poetry with all its golden rage  
For beauty on the illuminated page  
Has failed to bring—I mean the Golden Age.

And if this may not be (and nothing's sure),  
At least to live ungolden with the poor,  
Enduring what the ungolden must endure.  
This has been poetry's great anti-lure.

The muse mourns one who went to his retreat  
Long since in some abysmal city street,  
The bride who shared the crust he broke to eat  
As grave as he about the world's defeat.

With such it has proved dangerous as friend  
Even in a playful moment to contend  
That the millennium to which you bend  
In longing is not at a progress-end.

By grace of state-manipulated pelf,  
Or politics of Ghibelline or Guelph,  
But right beside you book-like on a shelf,  
Or even better god-like in yourself.