

culturing

a book of poems

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15 May 2011

<https://poems.culturing.net/2011/05/the-man-who-knows/>

The man who knows
knows he doesn't know
and loves to sing to sing,

because as water flows and flows
he can't control a thing.

Progress

24 February 2014

<https://poems.culturing.net/2014/02/progress/>

“Soggy feet no more will creep
along the droll, mud-wooden street.
The hills will linger, moaning.”

Ten by ten the honest men
endeavor to bequeath, the end
of younger things yet forming.

“Sulfur streaks and acid leaks
will simmer as the factory speaks,
while Gaea gives to groaning.”

Sluggish men must hear it said
that satellites are on the mend
and cast aside their stonings.

“Out will go the stonings,
and about will rise the loneliness
of dark and lamplit streets.”

One must seek atonement
for the backhills and their moaning,
but the workforce must ascend.

“Gaea’s unheard groaning
will raise heartache for the droning
of the melancholy steel entropic beat.”

One must think of honing
all these younger things now formed.

Paltry flecks of wisdom reach an end,
and there is laughter,
there is blood about the street.

Birth

05 March 2014

<https://poems.culturing.net/2014/03/birth/>

Birth is a slow and painful thing,
a tumult,
longing toward an end,
but staggering,
a shallow wake
of nascence,

For which death doth rend.

Perspicuity (For Example)

14 April 2014

<https://poems.culturing.net/2014/04/perspicuity-for-example/>

Note the indiscriminate vortices
which haphazardly coax the vector
into misalignment,

Or the malignantly languorous
koala supping on divinities.

Song of Sophia

24 July 2014

<https://poems.culturing.net/2014/07/song-of-sophia/>

I. Akrasia

When there were no depths, I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.

Time slipped, fell
through black holes
to where I dwelt,

Stillborn in a rotting womb,
with histories untold.

I cut my own cord.

Day by day I played
between Olympian plains
and Horeb,

Learning nothing,

For the ground had been well-tread
by tanks and wise men
teaching shadows

*HEY
THIS JUST IN
HEY
ERECTILE
DYSFUNCTION
HEY
LOOK
KITTENS
HEY
BIKINIS
HEY
HAVE YOU SEEN
HEY
YOU THERE ??*

*HEY
I LOVE YOU.
HEY
LOVE ME <3
HEY*

II. Nostoi

Does not wisdom cry out,
And understanding lift up her voice?

Thunder roars,
and as a man who pants for water
sees the rock break,

And sees the streams long dried by drought
begin to flow,
and drinks,

So too I flee the wasteland.

III. Paideia

To you, O men, I call,
and my voice is to the sons of men.

I gaze upon a field grown ripe with wheat
and feel the warmth of rosy-fingered Dawn
who has not failed to rise. I grip the scythe,

And take upon myself beginnings
and their ends, and find this meaning
sicut erat in principio.

Somnambulance

05 February 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/02/somnambulance/>

Screams of seven thousand thousand
haunt the seven decades
since they exited throat.

Auschwitz undigested
sticks in throats
generations removed.

We drift in echoes
that cannot be heard,
that pierce if heard.

We have not heard
but drift through echoes and time.

How does one cope?

Before the screams,
there was Darkness;
into Darkness came War,
and Fire began.

Who has not seen the faces?
Who has seen any face?

War consumes Light,
begetting Scream;
congeals to Shadow.

--

We are children of Abram.

Shadow is our womb,
coddling like a cocoon
of darkness.

Have we seen anything?

Battle has moved on.
Convictions make screams
and Law perishes.

Dare we impose?

We wax somnambulant,
Drifting through slumber.

They were like us,
those screaming, and those
making them scream.

Fire burns at back of Mind,

And Blazeless, blinded,
We shiver, huddled in masses,
Fearing sparks.

--

Who will relearn the melody
under the memory,

The song which can bend fire
into warmth, and teach us hope?

Romance Revisited

07 May 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/05/romance-revisited/>

Unsurprised when she appeared
atop the stair,
unsought and yet on cue,
I smiled.

There we were again.

More than sounds were heard,
more said than words
as we relieved the burn
that itched for all those years.

Something in that breeze
put love at ease,
and all those memories
in Sunday Best conceived
some reparation,
some demand.

But lives diverge,
conform to their courses,
drive towards their ends.

This, then, too must end.

--

But if we flee from time,
abandon all but dreams,

Elide the pulls of Jupiter
and Venus,

Would we weary of the world we'd made?

Must immortal Love's embrace
ignore all time and place?

--

Rage for futility,
Rage for bleared horizons,

For rage itself,
which vanquishes sages,
and for the mortal dream.

But though to many moons I've sighed,
and though those eyes when met with mine
still come to life to think of all that was
and what could be, it is not time.

Though it is right.

For time flows suddenly to exit youth.

--

Let us go then, you and I,
to die, and not trace ways
across that sky
where the Immortals lie.

We belong implanted
where the bloom that Spring provides
by Autumn flees, and we get by
on hardened leaves.

20 July 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/07/i-have-wandered-streets/>

I have wandered streets,
Each entrance blocked by blood of lamb,
And I have seen no faces.

These are empty places.

Inner Harbor

04 July 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/07/inner-harbor/>

I spend my days inside,
my nights beside the water
watching young things draw and quarter
lives not yet their own.

This they call maturity,
this ever lack-of-surety,
to be out on my own, be big
but still not fill the throne.

26 July 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/07/there-are-no-words/>

There are no words --
no words, but only sounds
with no meaning.

Is there a balm?
What is a balm?

Nowhere are we to find solace.
Nowhere are we to find others
without lawlessness,

And I know why the free bird sings,
for lack of a cage,
for lack of any air on which to glide.

15 July 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/07/there-is-too-much-noise/>

There is too much noise
inside, between walls,
reverberating through skulls

Which grow empty.

Is there not solace, rest
from Self?

Is there a balm?

I have heard of places,
heard tunes of theogony,
but is there any calm?

What remains are ashes,
What remains are gems?

And must we know the difference?

I've yet to stumble through Eden
but I've heard her song.
I've seen blossoms rise.

If there is a balm, it lies
behind still-naked eyes.

Fragments Shored Against Ruin

24 October 2015

<https://poems.culturing.net/2015/10/fragments-shored-against-ruin/>

1

You are the last fighting chance
for yourself,

A chamber, a kingdom
-- *Cordelia!*

Where is the throne?
What is flesh?

A clock in the hall
A clock and no walls

And spinning
Rome is burning

Tick Tick Tick --

There are things that move the will
that even the atom cannot kill --

There are things there are things

-- If you do not control yourself,
who will?

2

The executive has surrendered
all -- anarchy ensues.

The state in which one cannot say no,
when one cannot stop,
is called chaos today is chaos
and we are revolving in kaleidoscope
houses that looked fun

who am the last fighting chance
for myself, the only opportunity
to be free of that doggerel wretch
who sits on the mind-throne

while, usurped, the executive wastes
in heaps of sentiment and flesh
that wash over all
and bathe with the lime of body.

soma. soma soma soma
take and live.

3

My body waffling through space
and undigested time conceives
Idea -- floats, as it were, above itself
into ethereal otherlands

and waits.

Up, from where is only down,
I fly, and divide this self
into slivers, abandoning each
at the foot of age-old Mind

Who takes them, warping tomorrow
with hands of iron, cold.

I am left unanswered.

4

I fear the smallness of my mind
surrounded by mysteries,

The abstract cave,
philosopher's chains
unbroken,

Bound,
and sinking down.

And are there here no sunbeams,
no exalted forms that dance
on more than cavewall?

5

There are no tunes or strings to play
unbloodied by the rage, unbridled
by fearful faces, names
turned dusty with shame.

How far the sky has fallen,
how far! deep within our bowels

We cannot digest
or swallow.

There is only us -- only the rage
and the cold, swollen cage.
The bruised age.

6

Listen. We will begin
to repeal soporifics
only in the light of more pure
harmonies and form.

There can be no freedom in extravagance.

Love is the beginning but not the fruition,
which comes only through discipline
and a kind of violence.

Once we have established ourselves
at the end of ourselves, and only then,
can we draw from the ashes
some kind of beginning.

7

Is there still a Song,
and can I sing along?

This man, boy, heart beating hard and strong,
'tis mine? And may I be wrong?

I have wallowed verily, wallowed long
in the avenues and twisting ways
of ecstasy and sorrow,

But there is forthcoming joy,
awakened noise which learns to balance
and to hope with poise

The truth of which
is There is There is There.

Scents of the Divine

14 January 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/01/scents-of-the-divine/>

Wonder is the pollen of belief,
and faith, the leaf;

We know only wafts
of distant breezes.

The Choir

18 January 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/01/the-choir/>

By silent seas we sit and sing
Of life's unwrought enamelling
As each day gathers into storm
And reasons with our untold ire.

Rise fair song and banish woe
For we must fear the foreman's blow
For though our fathers built with stone
We build the world again each morn,

And tremble in the shade of steel,
And ache for poison salesmen sell,
And whirl in this ungrateful gyre
To placate pioneering fire.

--

What is this? What is my own?
What good is a peopled home
When urge and urge and urge inspire
Epitomes forlorn?

Hope, where are your lovely feathers?
All your crumbs are swept -- this weathered
Leaf deceives -- these grasses wither.
There are only bog and mire.

Who would dare to ope
Pandora's vessel once again? What's left?
All can see that Zeus has scorned
Those Foresight has adorned.

--

But summon those old voices hither.
Sing a song against the dither.
Won't a mythic world reborn
Reclassify revealed desire?

Make again that age-old beat.
Forget the words that spell defeat.
Abandon prod and thrust.
Embrace the courage of the calling horn.

For we have feared the shades of steel,
But harbor dreams of living well,
And dream of lifting off the pyre,
And lift this chorus as a choir.

Valediction to Images

06 August 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/08/valediction-to-images/>

Image of forgotten beauty,
Face of fire, flesh of music,
Laughter-loving Aphrodite,
Be not high or mighty
 By the altar of my heart.

Rosy cheeks on satin faces,
Eyes that call the heart to race,
O, sculpture of amazing graces,
Shatter. There are empty places
 Deep within my heart.

Come instead, you hidden song,
You dying fall withholding all,
And I will hear you long,
For I can hear you call
 From deep within the altar of my heart.

Another ending

22 September 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/09/another-ending/>

I guess this is the end.
I'm not sure what of.
They say time is no friend.
Things slip away.

I guess it must be so.
But how should we know?
Something moves about,
and I can hear it rumble now.

So I write this down.
Embark with me I pray.
Other thoughts have flown,
or gone some other way,

But within is the promised stay of woe,
and that is where the old roads go.

22 September 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/09/child-you-are-the-water/>

Child you are the water -- have you heard?
It trickles softer words.
Don't be tricked by desert people.
Fear the curse of birds.

Only Begin

22 September 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/09/only-begin/>

For J. Alfred Prufrock and his admirers

If I could only begin,
I would end alright.
But time is riddled with sin.

Lovers never win
with all their might.
If I could only begin

To tell you all of thick and thin
I might get things right.
But time is riddled with sin.

So let me come in,
up out of this night.
Then I could begin

To speak in both sound and sight
of ample groves and measured flight.
But time is riddled with sin,
so I could only begin.

A poem

28 October 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/10/a-poem/>

begins like this:
a note, a phrase,

But then goes deeper,
seeps just under,
slakes upon a thirst,

and ends in growth.

Longing

17 October 2016

<https://poems.culturing.net/2016/10/longing/>

I long for things I've never known.
The shadows curse my eyes.
The scars run deep. They run at least to bone.

And though thunder grants atonement,
Always questions come from other skies.
I long for things I've never known,

And candles burn and scholars moan
And ashes creep beneath the tightest mind.
The scars are deep like bone,

And all the ancient empty tomes
Provide no lasting prize,
But only point to things we cannot know.

The ache for bluer skies,
The ache for home,
The scars that run through bone,
The longing is the only thing we know.

Countrified

06 April 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/04/countrified/>

I have heard the wail of cities,
I have felt their steely cry,
And I have prowled upon the pavement
And been burned from eye to eye.

I cannot hate the people
Who have known no other way,
But I don't think their crippling
must darken my own day.

The Bird in the Glue Trap

06 April 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/04/the-bird-in-the-glue-trap/>

It wasn't meant for you,
that much is clear. But how
those little wings beat such
a fearsome rhythm
just to pull you
those two-hundred bird-lengths,
sticky trap in tow,
I'll never know,

Or how you ripped your body free
to soar on lighter wing.

Ah, those feathers left behind
were not worth dying over.

I am only glad, my friend,
that I did not extinguish you
to put an end to pain.

The New Science

06 April 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/04/the-new-science/>

Under the stars a hundred bards
drop still, dead silent,
to look for a law in the cards.

They know the stomach is violent,
a flame that retards,

And also that men have bodies,
are bodies, whirling
in an endless whirl of leaves.

Therefore they crucify Reason,
that cold Inspector
who murders the seasons,

And go on unvarnished
but do not think
that makes them tarnished.

Can we place blame
for this treason?

Might it be just
that in spite of stars
Man hasn't come that far?

The New World

25 April 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/04/the-new-world/>

Raised among wolves,
we've learned both bite and howl,
but there is a new kind of life coming now.

An old life more truly,
one ought to be sure.
Allow me to answer, I've no sinecure.

Upon an old hill
there stood men young and old.
They bore a fierce wind and were bold.

As one with one purpose
they built there together
foundations to outlast all weather.

That edifice fell,
but the ruins remain.
Do any dare build there again?

Made In America

24 May 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/05/made-in-america/>

For Allen Ginsberg and against many others

America I've given you my mind and now know nothing.

America have you lost it?

America let's come together.

America the times have changed.

America I have nine Facebook friends.

I text them all the time.

America is this what you meant?

Sorry if I'm oppressing you.

Sometimes I eat cholesterol.

I just can't relax.

America I spent twelve years staring at tile growing limp you paid for it nobody noticed is this Progress?

America are we There yet?

America where do Rights come from?

I've turned off my mind but I won't float downstream.

America why Columbine?

America why Ted Kaczynski?

America have you tried thinking about it?

It must be those damn video games.

America this is a problem.

We'd better get out and protest.

America it's those damn liberals.

America it's those damn conservatives.

America I can't believe you.

America I won't watch television.

You really can't be serious.

Three minutes is not enough time.

America millions of kids have no clue about meaningful conversations after years in your schools. I guess they need more Science.

America it confuses me when you bully me into tolerance.

I begin to doubt your sincerity.

America why do you hate the dead?

Are handicapped people more equal than me?

America help I feel alienated.

America this is my inside voice.

America have you read the Bible?

America it has sex in it.

I mean that literally.

America what is the meaning of this?

America why so many pills?

America let's be friends.

America I'm getting anxious.

America is this the end?

America why are your shelves full of poison?

America I don't like corn.

I almost have my energies aligned.

But why is there so much pornography?

America I had a dream that when I grew up I would be strong and capable now
I'm not so sure.

America I'm not finished can I have an extension?

16 October 2017

<https://poems.culturing.net/2017/10/out-came-a-cry/>

Out came a cry
from beneath the great Nothing,
but no one was there to believe it.

An oomph went woomph,
and the meaning went missing,
and no one was there to retrieve it.

And day was like sand,
and the moon went away,
and nobody was there to be free with.

01 April 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/04/a-walk-through-a-graveyard/>

A walk
through a graveyard
reveals a peculiar slumber –

the men of tomorrow.

The sign reads “Help,
we’ve been civilized,
there’s no going back.”

But there never has been any going back.

And the life urge resigns itself
to smallness,
and this too is good,

For too much growth makes weeds,
and we cannot tolerate weeds.

Tomorrow, then, comes anyway.
This is a walk through a graveyard.

Aftermath

21 April 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/04/aftermath/>

I have heard the wild
 ramblings,
 felt betrayed by man
 and steel,
 and I cannot
 keep on
 good clothes –

 but madly naked
run through city streets,
 cry “Kung Fu Tze!
where are you?”

The Secrets of Country Living

21 April 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/04/the-secrets-of-country-living/>

For Robert Penn Warren

I do not know
what

you will find up there
in the brambles
among inhibiting growths,

but I have once
heard an eagle call out its name.

It was a sound like Truth.

Mysteries

01 August 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/08/mysteries/>

O stolen time,
wandering there by the sea,

what will you do with me?

Unfurl your grasp of life,
make plain the age again!

No sooner does one cope
than some new younger hope
steps in and whisks fidelity away.

O vanity of vanities,
great necromancing age!

Tear down thy veils with rage
if that will set you free,

but I will not be free.

For there is still truth in old books,
and the walls will not fall for sly looks.

Indeed, there is room at all tables.

Terror

11 September 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/09/terror/>

Planes, flames, wreckage.

Images played, replayed
in certain ways.

Oh, the horror.

News inspires
terror terror acts of terror
terrorist muslim extremist
terror

all day long,
even though there are children.

—

Loyalty is not at all times virtuous,
but neither is disloyalty.

Either keeps things moving.

For those who have known terror,
what of love?

Can such things be?

—

I hear the Bush
in the wilderness,
burning,

Take off my shoes
and wait.

It cannot speak.

And this will not be easy.
We must live with ourselves.

—

But one may ask,
what *is* treason?

And more than one may answer.

And we have been like this,
and with good reason,
but we will not dwell on that now.

—

I fear the Bush has burnt,
and we are alone.

But then a cry comes from the desert,

“Keep those embers burning!
Night is coming!
It is growing colder!”

And I wonder without wonder
when the world would rather freeze.

09 November 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/11/one-more-cave/>

When Philosophy's just one more Cave, take heart,
for there is still room to start,
and an almost but not yet lost art.

“Romance Revisited,” revisited

14 November 2018

<https://poems.culturing.net/2018/11/romance-revisited-revisited/>

I saw you there
atop the stair,
it's true,

And you were me
and I was you,

And ocean blue
bore love away.

It chastened him right through.

Alas! they say
it is no use to sing,

But I'll take wing, for lo!
Minerva's owl has perched
upon a husk, a lifeless stump,

and there will be no going on
without new songs from flesh and blood.

Nixon at the Threshold of the Lincoln Memorial

13 January 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/01/nixon-at-the-threshold-of-the-lincoln-memorial/>

Something that is completely clean can also be completely sterile

- Richard Nixon, Dictabelt 75, May 1970

What language could there have been
between that tiger, battle-scarred,
and these young cubs, German-tongued
and fearful offspring of Philosophy in ruins?

Ah, one tries to merge with Being as the sky collapses.
Those with thorny crowns spy deep oppression.

Nixon mutters, "What is there to save?"
allows no motion, grins a grin that says
"All shall be well, stop feeling."

This has happened before.

I stood there as a child
repeating "up steps!" in innocence,
for I had not yet learned what there is said
of History or Freedom,
or the other vague ideas men have died for.

I was born too late for that,
and though things have not changed
some hope, yes, even now,
though with less force,
for some renewal,
this time unendorsed.

It will not come on wings
or save us, probably,
but it could make things better,
keep them moving.

And as for the children, well,
they've never mattered much to us,
and who could build a home from such raw material?

27 March 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/03/i-have-withdrawn-from-the-world/>

I have withdrawn from the world
for the world's own good,
I have bound my own hands.

But not with the usual cords
and knots,
not well-fashioned marriage bands.

I come for the darkness,
and whisper it slow:
that this is where all the young tulips go

Which have failed to grow
in dead soil.

—
Whence comes new song,
and will it be long?

The embers are dwindling,
the hearth has grown cold,
and the vagabonds grow old.

I say only this,
that is this not sure bliss,
to belong, to behold, and to bless?

Rosie

31 March 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/03/rosie/>

Rosie works
so hard
to please the factory man.

It is a matter of time.

She has been on hands and knees
since seventeen,

And does not know
what moves her so,

To longing, maybe, for something.

Meanwhile
somewhere blossoms,

but she cannot go,
for it is a matter of time,

though she does know
the way things grow.

The New Bird

09 March 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/03/the-new-bird/>

The idea waits upon a bough.
The bird is in the parlor though.
Tomorrow never comes for us,
and so he sings for now.

But over in the city though
the trees all stand erect,
where there is no sought communion
and the love is all in trust.

I do not speak for them,
and only know the words I know.
But for who would still hear,
I have endeavored to show how.

--

Idea waits upon a bough.
The bird is in the parlor though.
Tomorrow has not come,
and so he sings for now.

But over in the city now,
the steel trees stand erect,
and there is no more communion
where all love is held in trust.

The song is not for those
who sing of things one cannot know.
The new bird sings, alas!
for those who have no other sound.

The Lady

06 May 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/05/the-lady/>

I dreamed I saw a Lady
perched atop a milk-white stair,
overlooking starry oceans
and defining what was there.

Beneath her golden tresses
opened up a gnawing void,
which catapulted us to freedom.
Soon all motion was destroyed!

The Lady did not stir, but crooned,
and smiled a softer smile
than wisest men have dared to dream.
Then she turned her back awhile.

The void kept belching fire,
and the only thing we knew
was its bedevilment and whirl.
It proved that all things are see-through!

The Lady meanwhile, laughing,
stayed atop of how things are,
and by the time we knew what hit us,
saw we hadn't gotten far.

The morning came as always,
and we, naked on her shore,
cried out, "Dear Lady, let us near!
Your sweet forgiveness, we implore!"

She looked at all our nakedness,
saw through our praise and plight,
and said, "Fools, get yourselves together,
or else get out of my sight!"

Crickets

28 June 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/06/crickets/>

Up upon a hill I heard
the crickets chirping words:
O boy, come here, come near,
and stay and talk awhile.

My answer was to smile,
and I did no more favors then,
but crossed the valley of denial
and arrived within their ken.

O boy, I heard more echoing,
and sat, and stayed, and then
felt all around a queer commotion
stir the leaves, and break, and end.

And oh, 'twas cool November,
and the birds did softly sing,
and if there's one thing I'll remember,
it's my softly taking wing

Upon the backs of those cold crickets,
on the hill, who chirped with words,
for as they chirped about salvation,
they made sure that I had heard.

White Shade

07 July 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/07/white-shade/>

A shade of white,
not quite opaque,
disturbs my sight.

It has no form,
but haunts the night
like one unsteadily born.

The ashes of a pyre
lay where
She was burned bright.

I do not see the Lady,
and her absence
haunts my sight.

Lady in the Dark

03 August 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/08/lady-in-the-dark/>

Beneath the moon
I saw her too,

alone,
where null is true.

I did not dare come near,
but felt that here, of all
damned places,
least deserves her.

Lady in the Temple

10 August 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/08/lady-in-the-temple/>

She looked around
like one bound
to be free,

excited truly,
and so rapt
that she saw none
of the holes in the roof.

Lincoln's Memory

29 August 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/08/lincolns-memory/>

So favored forms of power
shall not perish from the earth,
would you please sing for us, O History,
about the urgent birth
of these great, terrible, united States,
which, though conceived in Liberty,
did break, some say, that vow?

This nation under God, twice founded,
ever failing, yet immortal,
did embark toward the dream of Freedom
led by that one stout Kentuckian
who hated much as loved
and took a promise unfulfilled
and made it law to bind on all.

This promise, called Equality,
our hope in days to come,
arose, O History! through violence,
and herein lies its song.

--

Twas eighteen-fifty-eight, whereon a Senate seat contended
led the folks of Illinois to dream they saw a President.
One Lincoln-not-yet-Deity, preparing for debate,
stood by a portrait of old Jefferson, to whom he could relate,
and said,

"Old predecessor tongue with wings, remind me,
whence came our brave truth,
that all men are created equal.
Knew you this in youth?"

To which the painting said,
"It was a growth of many years,
first born on England's hills
in faithful regicide."

And Lincoln asked,
"But had you heard of man's first disobedience
and the fruit?"

Came quick reply:
"Our Massachusetts friends knew of such things,
but I did hope to purge all superstition,
and robe God in Nature."

"Ah, in nature," Lincoln said.

"That's right. For all can become noble
if they're only left alone."

Great Lincoln, growing ponderous,
stroked his chin
and paced before the painting,
murmuring, "If left alone..."

He did not dare to broach the question,
burned on his and other minds,
of Slavery, but rather urged this thought:
"Suppose we find all men not equal. Who's at fault?"

But there was no reply.

The painting would not speak,
and Lincoln found his affirmation.

As the sureness grew,
he pondered long
and nursed a budding song.

--

This Lincoln after many years
appeared before the dead
and spoke the words
we will not long remember,

for we must not hallow,
must not consecrate that ground
where many died and killed.

Thus Lincoln willed,
and thus we must obey.

--

But Oh, how Declaration
had sent shocks across the sea
as Mr. Jefferson endeavored
to give ground to that new plea
which was come forth just then,
at last!

And when 'twas time for tea in Boston,
there was Paine in every head,
and 'twas ideas, sir, ideas!
which would leave so many dead.

--

Lord, such war and terror
bled from North down through the South
until the only ones remaining
banished God and punished doubt.

To devastation wrought,
and to the horror not quite heeded,

To man's ultimate obedience,
friend History, give song.

After Lincoln

24 September 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/09/after-lincoln/>

Alas, there came more wars,
at least as brutal,
oddly spirited,

And Lincoln, growing old,
was placed on coins,
enshrined in brooding stone
for all to see and know.

And speakers came
and went, the tanks
went on parade,
and progress dreams
were sung, and listen, listen,
you there, listen,
but don't listen for too long,

because too many have got stuck there
and we may have got it wrong.

--

Wrong and wrong and wrong.
Must we go back to 1619?

Cease your wailing, History!
That brutal, trifling song!

--

If back we go, then back,
but all the way,
past slaves and ships
to Milton, Christ, and Socrates,
as Lincoln surely knew.

And History, sweet Dame,
it's true, we cannot quarrel long,

But oh, your song, your song!
it will need rearranging before long.

Tradition

25 September 2019

<https://poems.culturing.net/2019/09/tradition/>

I think the future
does not belong to the past,
and things are passing,
present and future.

I think things will not last;
though nothing does,
those less than most
which grow from baseless ground,

things passing all around,
and we do well to grasp
for any which are present,
future or past,

those most the old things
which are known to last.

Homecoming

22 April 2020

<https://poems.culturing.net/2020/04/homecoming/>

*Awaking comes in turns,
the day is bright before it burns.*

I walk down streets I never knew.
They are familiar, but I, the knower, have changed.
I did not know what little I knew.
Maybe this is what poets mean by recurrence,
why they return so often to the same things.
I did not know the familiar streets
because I, the knower, had not yet been changed.
But what can bring such a change?
An encounter, a question, another knower?
To know is to be known and vice versa.
This means the streets must know me,
and where the streets have no names
there is nothing to know.
But this is all begging the question,
why knowledge?
Because I, the knower, have not yet been changed.
Maybe this is why poets recur and recur.
If change comes it comes only for now, not forever,
and so I walk down streets I never knew,
the same streets, but I, the knower, have changed,
and so have they.

The Enduring and Unchanging Dao

14 September 2020

<https://poems.culturing.net/2020/09/the-enduring-and-unchanging-dao/>

People die, new people are born.
The timbre of civilization changes,
like always, and we, those merely progenitors,
progenerate, again, at the horn.

What beast,
what rough or otherwise, comes forth
to taste the light of day?

This surely is no newer way
than all the old ways,
dying, dead, or buried.

So what special hurry?

Those come forth go under,
this is so, and temple shrouds,
once rent asunder, can be made,
remade, again, again.

If vanity, then vanity.
The proposition's chord
strikes hard, and oh,
we grow so bored.

What light from yonder room?

'Tis Juliet? Nay, knave,
just one once loved
in some forgotten tongue.

I say be such
that every longing touch
remembers love,

But do step cautiously
through darkened rooms,
and listen for that horn.

Planting Time

14 February 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/02/planting-time/>

In the spring time of the year,
as dawn rises, dusty, over the fields,
I wait, anxious, with my plow.

It has come again, the time for planting,
but this crop is strange to me.
The soil is like all soil, firm but supple,
and I am like all planters,
firm but supple.

Tomorrow rains will come,
and old seed wash away
as new seed takes its root,

And who will then be standing here
in planters' shoes
to cast a growing shadow?

I hope one who knows a little,
treads with greater care.

For people in the village,
I plant days and years

And see strange fruit come harvest time.
I wait for what will grow.

All the Tender Pathos

20 April 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/04/all-the-tender-pathos/>

Every human heart is human
- "Hiawatha", Introduction

Remember how the river moves,
Remember warm embracing,
Bring them here, to this steel jungle,

And know love.
Put down thy burden.

Remember once the wigwam,
Old coyote and the moon.
Relive the sorrow,

Breathe the pain.
Put down thy burden.

See the colored faces,
Out of place in this steel jungle,
Housed in spite of fear and hatred,

See them here.
Put down thy burden.

Know the pain of ages,
Know the sorrow of the moon,
The midnight moon that every age sees,

Warmed by tears.
Put down thy burden.

Dream as one soul dreaming,
Move toward the common dream,
And in the moonlight,

Build a home.
Put down thy burden.

Wait for dawn, and as she rises
Greet her with her own surprises,
As a people wildly singing

In the river's cool disguises.
Thus forget thy burden.

Hear the coursing river,
Hear it coursing, hear it roaring
On its journey to the ocean,

And be human.
Leave behind thy burden,
Leave behind thy burden.

The wind in the leaves

13 April 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/04/the-wind-in-the-leaves/>

Thunders crash,
The wind moves through the leaves,

The paths grow walls,
curve into cages,

Thunder asks,
A certain volume of man,
suffices?

No, it never suffices,

Always more
past overflowing

Thunder crashes,
Floods tear down the trees,

The wind moves through the leaves,
A certain volume of man,
so certain

Thunder, why
O thunder

move through wind and leaves.

What we find by singing

07 May 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/05/what-we-find-by-singing/>

Power brings its many blessings,
Though it comes by other names.
This is what we find by singing.

Days were young and love did sting us.
All young people feel the same.
They mix themselves with power's blessings.

Some find laurels, others cling
To lovely children's games.
Thus they lose themselves in singing,

Thus they fall before the morning,
Thus they are to blame.
But power brings them such mixed blessings,

Power puts off dark of dying,
Power's light must wane.
Therefore, find thyself in singing,

Make thine own some other name,
And know I feel the same,
Because this power mixes life with blessings.
This is what we find by singing.

Predication

30 June 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/06/predication/>

Day turns into day. Each fades.
All things become another.

But can this always be so,
or does *this* change?

What use is predication?

This is true, not that, for now,
and who can know another?

Therefore say it is true,
if not for me, say it for you.

Old House

09 July 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/07/old-house/>

I walk down old avenues,
aware again of impermanence,
perennial friend of the weary,
and stop before the family house.

What otherworldly dominion is this,
where manflesh met with womanflesh
to make *me*?

Yet other worlds must be,
or else our high anxiety
is treason of another kind.

It asks us, whence these beams,
this wood, this angled frame
with memories of forest?

What cold river brought us here?
If not the Thames, the Mississippi?
Say the Susquehanna, rolling slow.

And yet, don't answer.
Let me linger here, and grieve,
until our waters are surpassed.

Old house made new,
another world's anxieties
are haunting you.

Making Sausage

13 September 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/09/making-sausage/>

The bird has a story.
It sounds like a song.
But I wouldn't worry.
He wouldn't sing long.

The people are coming.
They haven't a care.
The people are stunning.
The bird wouldn't dare.

The people make sausage.
What else could they do?
Their story is ugly,
But this much is true:

The bird has to learn how to live with clipped wings.
Indeed, this may be why he sings.

Wandering Sheep

09 September 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/09/wandering-sheep/>

Up upon a hill,
the sheep go wandering.

Nearby cars zoom thoroughly
over the highway.

Not a few sheep find themselves
in drivers' seats
at eighty miles-an-hour.

Would they not prefer to graze
on some unfettered hillside,
near the setting sun?

They are still sheep,
though silly ones.

I think that they should think again.
The hillside is still there.
It has not changed.

It grows less full,
but some say
this is part of its purpose.

The cars make terrible noise
where wandering sheep once spoke
of pleasing vistas, unknown springs.

Lost Forest

28 October 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/10/lost-forest/>

The bulldozers are out today,
are blazing in what once was forest.

I was in this forest
as a child.

Do the workers know
the sound of crickets here
within leaves, the sound
of song that matches oversong?

I am not sentimental,
for I know it to be earth
becoming earth,
and yet I wonder what earth is,

Because the poets ask, and keep on asking,
though they cannot answer,
for we find the question worthy.

Something in the wind
this time of year
must stir uncertainty.

What shall we ask the bulldozer?
What does it know?

Beyond Power

10 November 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/11/beyond-power/>

If Nietzsche were asked,
"Why power?"

He might reply,
"We grow helpless."

But humans
have always been helpless,
are helpless
for decades at least,
and even then will need food.

What purpose has power,
if not to supply
our infirmities?

Oh, but how free we would be,
to be free, very free!

To not be born of woman,
no more of a people
in time and place.

I beg you, dear reader,
be cautious, and do not embark
on a journey that ends in death.

Shattered Image, Fallen Breast

01 November 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/11/shattered-image-fallen-breast/>

At midnight in the basement
of a museum, some forgotten grotto
deep in Mediterranean soil,

I walked slow and silent,
deep in thought,

When lo! the image of a woman,
be it Aphrodite, Juno,
or some other, rose before me.

I came to her side
and noticed lying at her feet
a fallen breast of stone,
hers surely, lying prone,
as though some vandal strove
to make her pure.

I put it back where it belongs,
and held it there,
until her firmness made me sure,

But sure of what,
I do not know.

I thought I could discern
the faintest sigh,
but only she would know
who fills the mind with wonder,

so I wondered
if the earth could be her home,
or if she comes from some far-whispered plane
that only makers know.

Phenomenology of Science

25 December 2021

<https://poems.culturing.net/2021/12/phemonology-of-science/>

From Hegel's brain
thou, spluttering,
spreadst thy wings.

Thou art one more
mythology,
nothing more.

Thou cannot transcend
culture, or fly
as Zeitgeist.

No, thy thinking is
primitive, alas,
just like thy body.

So give up the geist.
Make way for some new
mode of knowing,

Or rather, some old,
deep-rooted thought, the kind
you were made to destroy.

Words

24 January 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/01/words/>

The words tumble
down, jumbled,
stumble over
bumps and rumble
into town, past
rows of corn that
wonder at the world.

I wonder what the world means.

Someone asks me why I choose these words.
I think these words chose me.

And when they ask directions,
well, I think if words are lost,
then I must find them.

I must guide them.

Phalanx of Mind

07 March 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/03/phalanx-of-mind/>

Those Reformers,
in order to flee from imperium,
fell for an earlier vice:

That phalanx of mind
wherein each must stay sturdy or die.

But our world is better
equipped for peace.

Though the devil in man
never sleeps.

Oi! must I now know my neighbor?
And how can I, knowing him, sleep?

But were he restrained
by imperium, phalanx, or rights,
love could be,
but alas, he is free.

Therefore,
what will he make of me?

Saving Earth

23 March 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/03/saving-earth/>

We have taken lightning captive,
 we have made the sky our slave
on our relentless quest for vengeance
 on an Earth we cannot save.

If all is lost, then songs
 cannot be sung, and yet
this song goes on, so all
 must still be found somehow.

If we cannot save Earth,
 can Earth save us?
Or is it not a matter
 of saving, but of trust?

Who is in charge here

08 March 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/03/who-is-in-charge-here/>

I think I shall spend
the rest of my life
searching
for who is in charge here,

so that I may ask them
where they have been.

After Reagan

03 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/after-reagan/>

We have been pre-sliced
individually, wrapped in money.

But oh, he was funny, well-spoken, and phony.
A pity so few will remember
the lens of that time,
or look through it to see
what might be.

Are we free?

I have heard so much talk about liberty,
so little wondering,
"what does that mean?"
that I wonder,
is Freedom for me?

And does Freedom need me?

Far Away

21 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/far-away/>

There's someone powerful far away,
our voices and our stories claim.
I can't hear what they have to say.

This power haunts us, still in sway,
and in submitting we grow lame.
There's someone powerful far away,

And he insists, so we obey,
with voices tuned, though not the same.
I can't hear what they have to say.

And why obey? All power fades,
as every dying day explains.
There *must* be powers far away,

And yet, away they stay,
As if we *here* must give things names.
Alas, if there be powers far away,
what do they have to say?

Technology

12 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/technology/>

The Word
became machines
and dwelt among us.

The Winds of Change

12 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/the-winds-of-change/>

I listen for the winds of change,
but hear so many sirens blare.
They tell me it's under control.

Control is such a forceful word,
so I just stand here unaware.
I listen for the winds of change,

Which bring me scents of other places
and, I hope, will take me where
they tell me it's under control.

But now as children age,
so too a people ages and grows bare.
I listen for the winds of change

And see my people, scared.
I wonder what could make them whole.
So I just listen to the winds of change,
and let *them* have control.

Things Themselves

03 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/things-themselves/>

Until I met a woman,
and her presence strengthened me,
I did not know that God lives
not in books, as Calvin claims,
but in the world of things themselves.

What mystery lies here
remains to nourish those who care
to take the secret that is there
into a home, and let it steer
the very lives of things themselves.

But can we dwell among
the secret song, the hidden call
of Earth's long fall for the abyss?
We have our churches.
Are they tombs for things themselves?

I think we have to think this through,
for God has been a long time dying,
though he rises from the dead,
and he is not the only one.
We know this too of things themselves.

Unauthorized thinking

30 April 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/04/unauthorized-thinking/>

"You'd make me laugh if it wasn't forbidden."

- *Waiting for Godot*

So I've discovered Plotinus.
Have you never heard?
He has shaped your own words.

He is waiting to meet us,
but don't be absurd.
He would never disturb

Your most serious dogmas,
for me put them there.
What a curious bird.

--

All I want
is mystical union
with the Absolute --

is that too much to ask?

--

Augustine doles out freely
fruits of Temple and Academy
with no thought
for the plants on which they grow.

Electricity

02 May 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/05/electricity/>

The wires, I think,
house an evil god.

I hear him questioning *physis*,
doubting that all life lives
of its own volition,

and claiming, instead, for himself,
the sole governorship
of all things.

He who can read the signs
has now not even
the comfort of solitude,

given this god's omnipresence.

I wonder how long it will be
before happens some shocking conclusion.

Streets I Never Knew

04 May 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/05/streets-i-never-knew/>

I walk,
and keep on walking.

When I am old,
will any of what I have seen
be left standing? Or will it
be rubble or, worse still, vapor?
But is that not always
the fate of life, to vanish?
I doubt we could make it permanent,
given that all things are not,
and yet where does it end?
In the place it began,

So I walk,
and I keep on walking.

What calls for poetry?

31 May 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/05/what-calls-for-poetry/>

She does,
the one
whose voice you know.

Fading Feeling

18 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/fading-feeling/>

In our peculiar way,
we were always ones
striving for form, and by form
we meant something enduring,
unchanging, but how much upheaval
and violence it took to learn
how now this striving must change.

For Helen's sake, let us remember
the ways of our fathers,
sea-tossed as they always were,
reaching from darkness
like tentacles on Ocean's floor.

We are like them now, and must be,
having seen once for all
the formation of cracks
in the old Greek edifice,

And thus we must not always be,
knowing full well that not every Greek
bearing gifts can be trusted, but also that
we are not trustworthy either, so long as
we think with stiff minds, and that after all
this is what Plato meant. But in our peculiar
Greek way we are stiff like ones trained for a phalanx,
though soft and bourgeois enough,
not fitting in with ourselves, and not really
belonging here either, no better than anywhere--

Thus we must not always be,
we must fade, like a breeze on a soft summer night,
or the call of an eagle near mountains,
and make some new way for the feeling to come.

Let Go

06 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/let-go/>

Wandering, questioning,
as before Dawn,
I am *sure* of this much:
that we hold our beliefs
far too tightly.

--

I think back,
I think back,
I think back,
but hear only more riveting.

Rosie, poor Rosie,
no place for a woman here.

--

What is the *other* beginning,
the one without steel-plated Mind,
where things grow as we all know they do?

In the mountains,
I hear baby truths being born.

--

Begin *here*. Nowhere else.
This is where you were born and will die.

--

A rowdy patron observes: "You had to be there!"
I think this is rather apt, and tell him so,
but what more could I tell him?
He knows what it is to know.

Light

19 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/light/>

At a red light,
when there is no cross-traffic,
a silence deepens
like the space between man and God.

How stupid it feels,
to wait for nothing.

According to some theologians,
God occupies space *above* beings,
and waits for us there,
as the father of light.

But I prefer when the light changes
and things keep moving.

Lyceum

28 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/lyceum/>

Aristotle and friends walking amiably
over a concourse of trees
discuss beings, assert that no thing
can both be and not be.
In the next room the Christians,
grown weary of faith, re-learn logic
but treat it like faith. Thus the Schoolmen
indogmify plausible maxims,
sit firm and erect in the shade of Lyceum.
Aquinas the only true thinker mourns moanfully.
Science emerges, a novum organon,
a new quest to find what things are,
but old faith, an old cast of mind.
The old school now an archeological find,
remains buried, its questions once answered for all.
But the Germans are not quite convinced,
keep on asking why we are not free
to defy and to blur. After all,
we are protean beings, and know the old stories well.
But what course still remains for those
bred by the ruins of Lyceum?
One looking over the shoulder
to Greek or Medieval or Modern models?
Or one looking forward, which has travelled back,
with a prayer of thanksgiving, a new apprehension
for what every thought must lack?

--

In the East Room, Dionysians revel
agnostically, thrilled to find God
scarcely knowable, free from the Categories at last,
but what darkness stirs, waiting to pounce
on those not yet prepared for the mysteries?

Mulch by the Scoop

21 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/mulch-by-the-scoop/>

I am living in the country again,
back after a long sleep,
and I wonder (at times like this)
what that highway is doing here,
near to the place that sells mulch by the scoop.
It is part of the landscape now
(we forget but have signs to remind us)
though we don't embrace it
where we are all cow, horse, and buggy.
But do we, too, not love machines and their progress?
We use them to market our mulch by the scoop
and to haul it and bring it home,
and to heat those homes and to light them
and to plug in to our wider world.
Yet mulch by the scoop *enchants* us
with the call of the earth and convenience,
the call of abundance and freedom from pain.
I have known of no earth like this,
unless broadcast by LED lights on a neon sign,
yet my heart knows these things must remain.
We are proffering mulch by the scoop.
Will you come over highways and see?

Myth at Twilight

23 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/myth-at-twilight/>

Will we ever
be free of the myth
of some craftsman in the sky
wreaking form over all that must shudder?

I shudder to think it,
but over with the rising sun,
I see others who do not think it.

Science and Technology

14 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/science-and-technology/>

I would like to see
science and technology,
like religion, kept separate
from government
and the lives of regular people,
who cannot understand
the implications, the power,
the ideas embedded therein,
and are harmed,
who cannot make themselves
from steel, let alone make their world,
and who must let things be.
This means letting them fade.
It's true, science has parts to play,
small ones, since stems
without roots surely wither,
but the point is to till the new soil
'til the new crop comes in.

Virgin Queens

28 June 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/06/virgin-queens/>

Nobody can hurt a man more than his wife,
except maybe his mother. They simply
have more opportunity, knowing
where all of the pain points are, because they,
on good days, massage there. That is
one kind of love, but another is
taking in stride all the pain dealt
by mother and wife, so that all can belong.
After all, only suffering brings us together,
as all women know. They require it.
I've come to remind you of this, so that you,
unlike many, avoid the allure of false dreams,
which would make virgin queens out of maidens.

21 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/a-platonist-declares/>

A Platonist declares that all is Soul,
but now we doubt it. Rather, we believe
in clocks that wind themselves, and Nature too.
But what makes Nature go? We'd love to know,
but still we don't. Though answers sometimes
run their course, some questions last forever.
But has no one noticed Plato's chosen mode?
In discourse questions outrank answers
two to one. So when a Platonist declares
on any subject, greet him with a question,
see how well he knows his master's teaching.
Yet let's not discard a theory for a worse one.
Ask, who makes the clock? Not I. And then ask: Why?

Beatific Visions

16 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/beatific-visions/>

I doubt those people on television
realize they're dressed like angels,
calling us back to a realm we reject,
and I think it's a bit out of place
to put these hopes in masters of commerce,
when such hopes are sky-born or nothing.
What see we in movie stars anyway?
Billboards, book covers, and internet ads
still elicit our peasant repentance.
What for? For not being divine enough,
same as before, and yet let me explain:
none are holy. You're made it this far,
you must know that by now.

It's amazing, isn't it, just how much
thought there has been about everything.

Thereby I wander, but what does it mean
to be *lost* in a *place* that is lost?
It means everything. Stand here with me
and observe that at last
all the cracks in the firmament
outline a God-shaped hole.

We are ready for solid food,
culled from earth,
even that which comes only through violence.

Belly of the Whale

11 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/belly-of-the-whale/>

Consumed by the fool's errand of making life painless,
we could never be bothered to think
along lines that were not predetermined,
defined by the will of the faceless consumers
like us, who ran everything. Speechless,
we floundered through chaos and form,
but from time to time one had to wonder
what all of it meant, else succumb
to the roar of consumption
enduring through slogans and signs
and most firmly in minds made of mud
baked like stone. I was never a part of this,
never aligned with the spineless
who bear no weight, who will crack under any demand,
for demanding betrays their life's purpose.

Again, these are errands for fools, but of course
fools speak louder than thinkers and rule all
but auspicious places, those private lands
governed by men who will tolerate no more,
who instead choose to stretch themselves out before knowing
and learn what the gods have in store.

The beatings continue, morale doesn't care,
and one wonders how punishment ever was thought
to cure suffering, or how anyone stands it.
But stand it they do, if they must.
Deeper silence where agony once named a people.
How now to take heart and oppose this new ocean of troubles,
or else turn to brooding for future's sake?

I sing from the belly of the whale,
which pursues its perfection for all,
which leaves open no quarter for others,
which swallows each culture in all,
which cares nothing for time past or future,

whose whiteness is barely a memory,
whose grayness is given by all.

With the hour both hidden and late,
I cry out for the sea-foam to hear me.

Emerge

11 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/emerge/>

In America, we know God
changes his mind. We oblige him
with all of our talk about time
and Democracy. Where, after all,
does one find something permanent.
Surely not here, where we bind
ourselves freely to change, and await
the next Mind, with its talk
about how all is fine.
But ennui is outdated, and we
feel confined by ourselves
and our origins, soaking with brine,
emerge fresh from the foam to remind us
how we know God changes his mind.

Industrial Man

21 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/industrial-man/>

When I survey Industrial Man
in his anxious glory, his endless
competitiveness, I still doubt
that his station is final,
that any part of his nature is fixed.
If by now one knows not to assume
that the spectre of Progress can save us,
perhaps we can doubt, too, its wrath,
which still animates workers,
machine-like and futile,
in cities all over the world.
You have heard this before,
but my question is different.
It grows from a deeper uncertainty.
Reason defies observation. The chaos
is plain, and our planning has ended
in time. So the wrath can be doubted,
the wrath of the godless mind-in-the-sky
who defies observation, whose wrath
is our animus, naked and pure,
like the God of before, without love,
but that wrath drives its heart I am sure.

There is something uncanny about reality,
sitting out there in the ether,
like a renegade neighbor,
the kind that can never be trusted.
Reality, too, can surprise
even those with the best educations.
I wonder what more it will say,
once the moss has grown over broken traffic lights
and deer play through shattered parking lots.
It likes these places best, because less
resists it there. Even here, where traffic flows,
I can hear it call like the sound
of bird-shot through tin, the eccentric neighbor
readying himself for adventure.

The machines never sleep, nor do we,
being imitators of our environment,
and somehow we have to compete,
feeling threatened by gadgets
that do it all better than we can,
and so we assert our own dominance
whenever we can. Apes that shove
one another to the mud, the slow
endless endeavor to be king of the hill,
on a hill now maintained by machines
bred by science in underground labs...
Why is there no more *sunshine* here,
in our minds, where in earlier times
gentle breezes brought birdsong to bear
on a plant's slow endeavor to blossom?

Liberty and Justice

11 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/liberty-and-justice/>

Someone should tell New England
that God has not made up his mind
about how to best organize life,
nor should we, being free.
But why freedom? What do we achieve
in that ecstasy known by frontiersman,
and by them alone? The achievement
is justice, though fleeting it be,
and it is not your grandfather's justice.
Then liberty, justice, and us here and now,
in the swirling of time, decide once and for all
(not for long) how life *is*, what it *is*,
and shall be. But how *free* shall we be?
Free enough to revisit these questions
posed back at the start, and all answers so far,
with an eye to revision, but not revolution,
assuming no violence is warranted, knowing
that violence can never be totally barred,
for it comes from a failure to question in depth
and in time. So let's question. Thoreau
may have been on to something, and so we may be,
if we ask ever deeper what meaning dwells here,
where we are. What is Liberty? Why it *and* Justice?
Could either *be* without the other?

Near Mountains

11 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/near-mountains/>

When I consider the electrical wires,
the works of our hands, and when I consider
the cars, and the buildings made of steel,
I ask, what is God that we are mindful of him?

You will think I am being facetious,
but surely these things are our gods.

How have we gone astray? Is it maybe
that no one is driving the ship, that our voyage,
once rudderless, must now be captained?
Or is it that someone *is* driving, and driving badly,
and therefore the crew must resist?
Or is it that both have been tried and retried,
such that now we no longer know which to try?

I suggest thinking harder, and longer,
in some place more tranquil, near mountains.

Reasonable Measure

16 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/reasonable-measure/>

At the end of life's journey
I awoke, not aware yet
of where my road had taken me,
but brightness lit my mind up
like a flame. I'll never be the same.
Discursive Reason failed us. Here we wait
for some new measure to make chaos
something straight, without demanding
that it wear the guise of form.
I beg to differ, if by differing
I bring new thoughts to table,
and as far as I am able,
guide our way. But beggars all
would trade their place for one
in heaven, yet to me that path is barred,
so I use reason in new ways,
feet deep in earth, head free of daemons,
closing in on what it means to be here now,
where I awoke, at journey's end.

Across the sea, I glimpse an image,
be it shade or beast or otherwise,
I only know its visage.
But it calls me with its message,
like a work of human craft.
I say, deception is insidious.
I tell this lonesome image
to release my gaze to this shore,
where I make my only home.

But what home is, I cannot say,
nor can this homely image tell me.

Socrates and Confucius

16 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/socrates-and-confucius/>

In Persia, some say the great thinkers
once met on a precursor to the Silk Road.
They discussed how things change and how some
stay the same, legend has it, but most they discussed
how beginnings occur, both well-versed in this,
one saying History, the other Rationality.
Neither equipped to dissemble his equal,
they talked after dark, in the desert
where lately Zarathustra laid waste to the mind.
Who can say now what echoes remain there,
or which will endure?

Theodicy

16 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/theodicy/>

The Nazis proved that God's law
can be violated with impunity
for a time. It was, after all, America
who stopped them. God was mute.
And if there still be any who would claim
that Auschwitz fits some higher plan,
I say I do not wish to serve such Planning
or a God who makes such plans.
With this, I often wonder
if Herr Hitler has his final laugh,
for though, of course, we beat them,
one long draught of their Nepenthe
has us losing our identity.
They *proved* that God is silent
in the midst of desperate anguish.
Who believes now that he listens?
Do the screams not matter much
to his big mind? But let us alter here,
and ask God what he is. We may be wrong
without discarding years of questions. We may ask
without demanding certain answers. We may think
without deciding in advance. Must God use reason? Why?

Who are they?

11 July 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/07/who-are-they/>

They have built all our highways.
They change how we think.
They've invented vaccines.
But who are they?

They've improved understanding.
They've conquered the moon.
They're enlisting our help.
But who are they?

They speak in equations.
They think like machines, and
They dream of control.
But who are they?

Aletheian

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/aletheian/>

Some do not wish to join the project of empire,
even after all these years. I shall call them
Aletheian, to distinguish them from Roman soldiers
eager for command. They rather seek what's hidden
in the inner world of things, a world forgotten
in the mad rush for imperium. But be things as they may,
these few are hidden, too, unnoticed in the roaring crowd,
the crowd as blind as ever, and no less so for their service.
Oh, the Aletheians have endeavors too, like maybe breaking through
the cycle of hereditary bullying, which, for Caesar,
would make servants of us all. But serving whom?
But more than this, these simply watch for signs,
believing that a god, or something, speaks
and can be heard. I like this last pursuit
a little, and much more than I like empire.
I think I am just half an Aletheian, and part Roman,
but would like to be much more. I dare say you,
dear reader, many years from now, shall be much more.

At Sea

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/at-sea/>

Once in awhile, despite expectations,
you run into someone who knows what they're doing.
Surprising in times like this, but then
also familiar, as if in response to a call
that you heard all along. It won't last,
but for that moment you'll know what it means
to be human. For that moment, all small
uncertainties crystallize into a sculpture of rain,
the most precious made permanent at last.
But time chips at it, wears it away
like a vandal, adolescent, without shame.
You thought maybe it could be like before,
when the stars spelled out stories of heroes
and mankind obeyed and endured, but time
had other plans. And then slowly a new thought
emerged, not quite visible, but certainly there
like a ship in the fog or an iceberg or
some other sculpture. You thought, is this mine
or must I wait for another? It has been
so long since the last one, you thought of
absconding whatever the terms. But this
is not your ship, not your voyage. Your journey
is here, where you are, on this ground.
I had better remind you that ships come
more often now, maybe the old way of choosing
won't do, or at least, won't suffice.
I must know where I stand, on the prow
or on land, but in either case, these legs will do.
So will yours. On the ship, watch the seamen
so proud and hearty, assured of their
artificial discipline. Of course this is mastery,
of course this is justice, of course, of course.
But the course is precisely neglected, already decided,
not open to question. On land there are always
new flowers. Who we are is never so certain.
I like the land better, although I think men
do learn something at sea, to tame chaos,

a Faustian bargain if chaos is in us,
if taken too far, but a call from the sky
to those drowning in worlds without form.

Craftsman

20 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/craftsman/>

The craftsman in this body
(not the one above the stars)
devised this poem. Would you know him?

Feet of Rain

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/feet-of-rain/>

You learn the way but the way changes.
You walk with feet of rain.
You fear the changing more than the storm.
You sink while looking down.

That is one way of doing it,
but others press in from all sides,
demanding a show. You hesitate,
not being a dancer, not being
at all. The way is through the rain.
You think you have heard this before,
but the words change. Why won't they
stay still? Why can't they remain?
They are not, that is why, and they never were.
The rain moves through the way...

Hitler's Bunker

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/hitlers-bunker/>

Americans closing in, after ravaging
much of Italy, I wonder, did any
ask, "What have we done?
What rubble becomes our heritage?"
If any living would know themselves,
I counsel reflection upon these years
when fascists strove to make Rome stick for all.
But now the rubble (no more storied columns,
monuments of power believed), becomes a doom.
Destruction has a new allure, the fasces
christen every room, and man no longer
wills to be alone. It is the total will
that governs even "freedom-loving" people. Where is safe?
There are still mountains, true, but mankind
cannot thrive outside the law, and in our time
the law abuses some for fun.
This must be known if we still
wish to be made human. Both hard sides
of contradiction must be grasped and known.
We need the law. The law abuses.
If there be an easy answer, I don't know it.
This I know: some govern well, but others
move within the doom of Hitler's bunker,
where all hope is lost, the only option death.
Be not like them, consumed by hate,
nor hating them, for then hate wins,
but neither drown in naive love, for man
loves dominance most, for reasons unknown,
and this will never change. Carve out
a home away from man's cold quest
and rule it well. This is called happiness.
One wonders that the Hitlers could not find it
seeking total domination from the bunkers of the world.

Lady in the Rain

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/lady-in-the-rain/>

Evening mistful after rain,
I saw a woman's perfect form,
no halo, but a song fell from her lips.
She said to hope again,
and all was like the rain.

No, it was not a dream,
no journey through Lothlorien
could pass this way,
though she draws from that well,

And who's to say just which
of us inhabited the other?

Mingled Being

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/mingled-being/>

What is it that calls for children?
Why do women weep to see their offspring
leap through flowers? I suspect it is
like that which summons poetry,
what one has called "the unreserve of mingled being."
Hear now how the many voices speak
of loved camaraderie,
as though this be essential to their frame.
I do not know what calls if not
enticement to the game of mixture,
turning one and one to something more.
The dance is waiting ere we learn it,
blending what presents with what we are.
So travel cautiously. Beware the swamps
that pull things down. Avoid the soggy
groundless ground. Instead recall
the energy of youth, and how your mother wept.
They were not tears of pity, no, of joy,
to see herself in you, of you, with you.
And mingled with you, Being, in its full array of flowers,
alive to tell.

20 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/on-this-rock/>

On this rock,
I have placed my insignia,
placed it where all can see,
as a warning against what has been
and an omen of what must still be.

On this rock,
I explain my old purpose
in words not yet known to most people,
to teach and explain what we're doing here,
lost as we are on Promethean shores.

Such Surprises Must Be

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/such-surprises-must-be/>

The way scientists mishandle surprises,
you'd think they were born in a lab
with all variables controlled, where the mother
deduced from first principles that a good time had come.
They go on to the end of surprises,
but there is no end to it, no world
of babies by babies for babies.
Can anyone handle the unrest of history?
Nature has laws! they will say,
thus forgetting that emperors need not obey.
So who then shall be emperor?
I'd vote for one who rules justly,
loves mercy, and cares for his country as his own,
one who knows with compassion
the suffering drawn from surprises,
and that such surprises must be.

The Ground is Lava

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/the-ground-is-lava/>

Late one morning, I ventured
to know myself, like the thinkers demand,
but before I had gone through the threshold,
I saw that the ground had returned to primordial soup.
As I gazed at that chaos, I thought of how children
pretend that the ground becomes lava.
How wise they are, unlike ourselves,
who pretend that foundations are solid
in order that we might erect some grand edifice.
Children know well that foundations are fluid,
and that we just do what we can.
Ask the children how much they believe,
or, importantly, *why* they believe.
I suspect they have far purer reasons.

The New Frontier

02 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/the-new-frontier/>

"It is and it is not, and, therefore, is"

- Wallace Stevens, *A Primitive Like an Orb*

What have we learned in seventy years?
What are the lessons of that war
which lately ripped both Europe and Asia
to pieces, that broke our faith, but left us here?
If God is dead, what takes his place?
Or must the place itself change, into
something open, free for exploration, undefined?
It is, is not, and therefore is,
just like ourselves, our lives, and our surrounding aura.
Who would dare to pin things down again?
Yet how could beasts like us survive
without restraint and limitation?
We have known the pain of man and his machines
on heaven's throne, have suffered Cromwell's vengeful reign
for nigh four centuries. This war (the one succeeding,
recall, the one to end all wars) is but the climax
of the heavenly interregnum. But what *person*
dares to sit on such a throne again?
Are we so human? Human still, despite our deepest cravings,
loyal subjects to an absent king. Why can't we let God rest in peace?
We hear the wind disturb the leaves, those covering his grave.
It's us, the ones you chose to save,
and then abandoned to the formless blur,
which is, is not, and therefore is.
Let's on with it, then, to the new frontier,
where our longings are answered more plainly
and with less fear.

Thinking Deeply

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/thinking-deeply/>

I have been to the place
where truths are born, I have heard
the sirens call me there,
but I rarely return. It is dark there,
and cold, and no homes endure
the hard swirling of winds.
But I'm still thinking deeply,
traditions in mind, because
this is the only way to think.
All else is chaos breeding chaos.
But stiffened traditions expire,
a new generation arises,
and all that is left to the thinkers
are keen ears for cold winds of change.

Too Playful

31 August 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/08/too-playful/>

The poem grows from the same place
as child's play, the soil of human possibility.
What *can* we be? Maybe doctors or lawyers
or dragon-slayers, or maybe plants
or gemstones or rye. But children
grow older, and most forget play,
though its lessons stay with us, for
we are our playthings, we are what we play,
and at one time you knew that.

I write to remind you, though it is no use,
because patients are sick, because clients are angry,
and dragons are burning down villages, but you
are too busy to play with me. If only you knew
that your play is play too, we'd grow wiser together,
and maybe you'd learn about truth
and its too playful hold over you.

Afterthought on the Romantics

21 September 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/afterthought-on-the-romantics/>

They strove to bring the dark into the light.
What evident folly, yet an understandable urge
to see the dark, there, always. It *is* there,
but it cannot be seen. It is the absence of sight,
a lack of presence. To make *this* present
is to hollow what remains. Instead, we now learn
how to build, with subtle lighting, some cool nave
of stone, where light and shadow interplay.
This way we can keep both, and keep them well.

Gettysburg

September 21 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/gettysburg/>

Before the dawn one evening, I went down
to Jackson city, to remember why we here
do not live there. It was a cool miseducation
in the ways of segregation, but it was not
what those elsewhere like to say. I saw a people,
many hungry, some devoted, some misguided, one or two
with hope to spare – in other words, they were a people
like the rest. True, they owned slaves, or those
before them did, but this fact cannot be washed away
with any amount of blood. We ought to know by now
that history is fickle, and remains despite our sternest glare.
There is no way to make it vanish. Nonetheless,
we can move forward, and have done it, though
with golden thread to bring us home. Have you observed
how every poem stacked in order waits in reserve?
They are like people under the lash of cold machines.
Our words have suffered. They have lied to you,
although they had no choice. The words are not
the problem, though they are a symptom, and I hope by now
you know the disease. I am at ease to write,
it's true, but we are not at ease while living,
and eternal life makes us less easy still. Before the dawn,
consider what can still be spoken, and,
more troublingly, think what can speak no more.
It is the silence calling us this time of night.
Beware the apathy of drowning in the noise.
I hear the call of many chain-gangs in the wind.
I hear their rattle, and they will not be ignored
but seek no vengeance. They would like to sleep again
and be released at last from pain. Could we oblige them?
I think so, though it would take a serious effort
and one not like what we've dared to try before.

--

I do not believe in Lincoln. I cannot.
He was a feckless Hegelian, couched in Biblical tones.

He did not govern well. I've said it and will
say it again, he cowed to violence, could not admit
that states wished to secede. Oh, what a sneaky devil,
blind in the face of the obvious. There is no forthcoming millennium
where all peoples of all colors live as one. De Tocqueville
said so. Yet we try and try and try. I do not know
what else we could try, but we at least could notice the obvious,
that humans are still human despite the violence.
We are here, as we have always been, as prone to hate as love.
It will not change. What wars are necessary to teach this once and for all?
I fear the answer as I fear the blight of winter.

--

Why am I here, able neither to remember
nor forget? To absorb solemnity left
by dying men? Or to be thoughtful
about how little we know? These men,
brave men no doubt, died hard, but why?
Should we dare also to die? Again? But why?

--

Had Freedom died? Or was it just then mortally struck?
Why was the new birth *necessary*, and could it be needed again?
And needed by whom? I may digress, but you would not forgive
serenity at a time like this, when lady liberty labors
to bring life into the world. Would we, then, also
be reborn? Some time ago was one, and yet
another, who spoke hauntingly of birth. Where have they gone?
Where have we gone? I think old freedom lives
and could not be reborn, for it was never born.
It merely *is*, beyond the pale of all that ever
comes to womb. It merely is, on its own terms,
in its own time. Say Lincoln knew this.
Likely he'd forgotten, like most others
of his day, but say he knew it. Could we have
a greater leader? Could mankind then rise past folly
after all? Just say he knew it. Say he knew it
for the scores of years of bloodshed we've endured.
War is not pretty, no, but neither is our peace.
The fools immortalize his words, against the wishes
of those very words. I'd have this plaque removed,

along with all the noisy monuments, and rather
listen closely as the ghosts here tell their tale.

Old Flames

12 September 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/old-flames/>

As I sit, I remember the point of the story,
the struggle to keep out the cold.
It was always getting colder, no matter the weather,
and we, like frontiersmen, built houses and fires
to keep ourselves warm. But the houses grow old,
fires dim, and the embers are hardly remembered.
I say, as I sit, I remember those embers,
how long-dwindled fires once burned in our hearts,
or if not in ours, then in our grandfathers' hearts.
But we are the ones who are here (they are not, or may be
but are not as they were), yet their embers remain
unremembered. I think that is sad, but not new.
As I sit, I remember a time, and another,
when history was not remembered. I will not give names,
but you likely know that this is true.
There's a cold wind breathing at the door.
It's for us, and against us. I think we do well
to remember it. Even the best insulation
will never make heat. We will need a new flame.
We must ask where the old flames have gone.

One of Us

12 September 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/one-of-us/>

The veiled criticism always says
how dare you not be one of us.
Yes, be yourself, but first be
one of us, of us, of us...

I cannot do it, not with thirty legions,
not for all the world.

12 September 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/over-the-atlantic/>

How many voices drown in that wind,
unable to make it across?

Sandcastles

12 September 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/09/sandcastles/>

I am watching the children build sandcastles.
I know they won't mind, though I think they will wonder
what keeps me away. I am not one to join
where I know that the wind and the waves will destroy.
But I do not mind watching. Sometimes their achievement
is marvelous, but I cannot silence
the sound of the crashing waves. It's like time,
you know, after a long day, when the quitting bell rings.
That bell rings for me always, and over such noise
little castles of sand have no hold. I don't mind, though,
watching, and sometimes I wish I could join them.
It would be like hope, you know, after a long doubt.
But I cannot shake loose of the grip of the sea.
I will watch these new sandcastles fall, like the last,
and leave only some footprints behind.

All Silence

14 October 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/10/all-silence/>

This moment I'm writing to you
as a man who has lived to see death
not in morbid obsession but only
in rapturous reality. Yes, it is true,
there are things and not just me and you.
Answer softly, my sweet, when I ask you
to be near me now as things fade.
We are dying as sure as we're living.
But listen for me past the hearth flare, in chill air.
I wait for you there in all silence.

As Ever

14 October 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/10/as-ever/>

We no more renew the song
of time wherein by masquerade
the "mortal dross" transforms into
eternity. No more! We live, as ever,
in the flowing, thingly river, day
by day dissolving in new ways
of speaking thought, and so we ought,
if time has brought us here, if time itself
would like to bring us near.

No Reason

25 October 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/10/no-reason/>

Many things happen for no reason.
We dare to admit it now.
The future, hazy, approaches.
We hold a wet finger to the wind.
It answers thus: mankind unfettered,
the child a universe at play.

Risible Time

25 October 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/10/risible-time/>

Born against odds in a risible time,
thou shall rise, as thy parents
before thee did rise, and shall fall
up and back to that risible sky,
with its emptiest center, near time.

Time

14 October 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/10/time/>

Walk here on this beach with me,
where time is, in the evening of
its missionary gaze, the goal to save
all who will hear. Walk here with me,
where gods can die, and often do.
Walk here, but slowly. Know these waves,
the ones you've learned how not to hear.
You'll hear them now, so gently falling down
upon all things. So time falls, so it goes,
and so we go, into the crypt of time,
where all days are reborn, are born, and die.

After Tomorrow

04 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/after-tomorrow/>

I remember from time to time
how those moments when humans
are worse than isolation resolve
into moments when all one can do
is sit quietly, staring off into
tomorrow, as if it won't also
be much like today, and I wonder
what happens the day after tomorrow
when all of us wake up anew.

It is not for me

04 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/it-is-not-for-me/>

Here they are, as ever, making the weaker argument appear stronger, uneven in thinking, so tipsy in mind. What great folly, if even the end of historic progressions or else the result of some King's stiff command. We are tired by now and its restlessness, drawn to all corners of the imagination by a call no less real than a fairy-tale and no more real than the earth. It has drained us of every ambition, but this is no reason to scream, no, the screaming is part of the problem. I ask you for once to be ruled, if you will, if you can, but it is not for me that I'm asking.

No Entry Beyond

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/no-entry-beyond/>

We are free now after long bondage,
no longer seeking to mate with the Truth,
but instead care to *know* it, as thinkers,
not lovers. I dare say this was
a very long time in coming, not empty
but full, at long last, of ourselves
and our families, countries, and tribes.
We are full of reality's emptiness,
brimming with void, and in love
with each other, as passion demands.
We are free, very free (can it be?)
We are wise beyond years, beyond tears,
beyond ghosts of some greater beyond
who no longer hold any sway here.

Thing in Progress

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/thing-in-progress/>

I shall pull back the curtain,
peep under the veil, at the thing
in its progress. It is not done yet,
and yet is the progression in *it*
or in *me*? This is by now old music.
We may do more asking for origins.

The Gospel According to Us

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/the-gospel-according-to-us/>

If you'll listen, I will tell you
of the day before the stars were born
like yesterday, but more in tune with now.
This is the gospel according to us,
not some forgotten fairy-tale
from days gone by, but this here now
by us for us. This is our gospel,
by the power of consensus, reigning free
across America, where we decree
what each thing is and dare
no other. We have tasted majesty
from sea to shining sea, now dare
to speak, and be not worried
if this flag speaks not for thee.
We'll make it speak, with every fiber
of each being, named by us
and therefore there, existing solely
for ourselves, who, speaking, make the world
of images derived from prior times, the sea
of echoes pouring through our lives
as history. Are these not also here,
informing things? Are we so free
that each decree becomes a law?

Untested Ways

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/untested-ways/>

I am wondering what will become of us,
after all this time. I am wondering just
how strange time is, and how strange
we are, living here, at the end of it.
We're aware now that Jesus never
attended church, so we follow his footsteps
at last, but what of it? I suspect
there is more to this story, and until
we get down to the bottom of it,
I wonder if we will find peace.
There are many paths forward, but each
is a severance from what precedes.
This is saying the road does end here,
but some new ones begin. I think I
shall explore a few untested ways,
for your sake, and for mine. This way,
one of us at least keeps moving.

No Will to Deceive

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/no-will-to-deceive/>

God has grown neurotic these last few centuries,
ravaged by ships sailing seas where no ships had dared
dream before, but this is nothing, just men chasing power,
yet power is what makes God go. Are we listening now?
I remember, I can never forget, how the days before ours
were like fire in the night, but the night lasted longer
and swallowed that flame. We're the same when we ask
for forever, though knowing full well it's beyond us. Where we live
time reigns, and the best we can do is believe. I can
only remind you again and again, but I'll do that
with grace in my heart and no will to deceive.

Uncertain Times

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/uncertain-times/>

Lincoln roamed over
the cavern of godlessness
like a leader
in uncertain times.

After "A Late Walk" by Robert Frost

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/after-a-late-walk-by-robert-frost/>

My walk is later, yours
is later still, the animus the same,
no time until we reconcile. This
winter carries history, this harvest
has a name (it's you). I warrant that
the aftermath dishevelled all of truth.
But there's no matter, so they say.
Who'd even try to go some other way.
Perhaps a strong-voiced bird will rise
and sing another day.

Freedom's End

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/freedoms-end/>

I stand upon a precipice,
the great cliff white as snow,
and fear a darkness coming yonder
over fields we used to know.
The day is cool and feckless,
but the night is coming in,
and we are hungry, we are tired,
by the gravity of sin.
There are no words between us,
no embraces bring us home,
and in the darkness I descry
the end of all things we have known.
I am no meager prophet,
and this is no meager poem.
I believe in new beginnings
grown from darkness overgrown.
So take this next step with me.
Through the doorway we will wend
and walk along the newfound pathways
on the way to Freedom's End.

Persuasion

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/persuasion/>

It is strange how our rulers
pretend to believe that they
serve us, as though we don't know
that each offering merely entangles
us more in their web. Still
we go on, each feeling prescribed
by the business of business,
but free! we are free! very free!
If that is what we call it
to be inauthentic or else.
Who could want any service
besides what is standard?
I tell you we could,
with a bit of persuasion.

Darkness Becomes You

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/darkness-becomes-you/>

In darkness I am reaching
from a still place, in this empty space
for you, whoever you are. It is not clear
that we are here, but in these moments
darkness becomes you, and I can see
that after all is said and dreamed,
there is a silence and its teaching.

History

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/history/>

It occurs to me now and then
and from time to time that our role
must be: preserve the living and keep out the dead.
This is history, this is our role in it,
let us respect and partake of this process.

Crimson Days in the Depths of Time

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/crimson-days-in-the-depths-of-time/>

Into the sea he dove, toward another land,
this one no less deplorable, unneutered, never filtered,
and he swam. The currents pushed and pulled his form,
and twisting, writhing, he found sand, the stuff of mountains
long eroded, then descended. Were these not the sands
of time, at last, now freed here from their hourglasses?
Time would tell, as only time could tell.
And so he fell, but falling, not as out of Eden,
rather falling as one drawn to depths by kinship
to those depths, or maybe drawn by some dark gravity.
Leviathan in chains, he feared, would wait for him down there,
or so they say, but on this day he little cared
what fate awaits him, little cared for self at all
when put against the call to sink or fall below the waves.
In crimson days, in patterned waves, he feared the rise
of troubled years, nor dared to counter them with tears,
for they demanded something more, a new beginning,
if a new path could be won, and so he dove
to chart a course, lay some foundation. He struck
rock the second time, this not surprising. He
had heard of rock before, though never seen it.
These he saw, and knew at once that they
could serve him. He delved hard, and threw himself
against the rocks, and when few broke, he knew again
that these were firm. But when he moved them,
when he placed one on another, both proved worthless,
turned to sand. He groaned, but, still resolved, took sand
and pressed it in his hands, until as glass it stayed.
He now had made his way, and none could take it,
so he claimed, but came a rumble from those depths
of things forgotten, drifting memories of all that sand
has been. This troubled him, his glass was cracked,
but there could be no going back. He cut his hands there,
leaving drops of blood reflecting throughout time, and
though those depths had proved unkind, it's said
that he still loves them, like a child, like a patriot,
to the end.

In Any Case

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/in-any-case/>

Those with the higher sense, who observe our way of life,
can only say "it's all wrong" so many times before
they go crazy, so most just stop saying it. But none
can stop feeling it. Why, after all, make things permanent?
Process is all, and the process itself is in process.
Or am I repeating something said before?
I am certain that this much is true, we know
little, no more than our forebearers, and we all know
how that all ended (or have we forgotten?) In any case,
let me remind you that change can be friendly,
but so can the law, so we'd better plant one foot in each.

Ave Maris Stella

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/ave-maris-stella/>

Stella, bathed in lapis, azure
waves of sky, pray tell me
whence thy rays of amber light?
Am I your child, or am I
self-made, as prophets say
who guide our way tonight?
If any be whose thoughts are free,
I say they well may think of thee
yet still be free, but more to those who find
some thing objectionable inside,
I write with hope to change their minds.

Why Reason?

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/why-reason/>

I have come to you, naked like this,
in the death throes of God, being
pregnant with words and with meaning,
to answer your question with another:
Why reason? To make ourselves stable?

Hegel

29 November 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/11/hegel/>

What did they do to you, Hegel,
to make you so blue and somber?
Perhaps they withdrew when a staying
was due, or perhaps they demanded the truth.
It is sobering, isn't it, being here dead
as a log, in these pages, just one more
firm concept to break through?

Back to the Mines

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/back-to-the-mines/>

I think sometimes we shall never escape
from the general, all-around clusterfuck
(pardon the language, it applies) of humanity
always and everywhere, in general confused
about what it all means, about what *meaning* means,
or why meaning is so indispensable.

Oh well, let's back to the mines
for another long spell of formation through labor.

Why Obey?

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/why-obey/>

Could it be that for some
definition of "we", we must leave
on the pathways of time
some beliefs etched on signposts
for others to see?

You Are The Way

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/you-are-the-way/>

Listen to me. Listen (I will speak) to this beginning
out of no-thing (yet not nothing). There no more shall be
interminable deductions from infallible first principles, not even
if those principles be liberal. We are all that's left, my friend.
The way is you, my friend from afar. You are the way to me.

To Tell This To You, or Changing of the Gods

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/to-tell-this-to-you/>

I walk out one morning like any other
and come back the same as myself,
for once chosen and spoken for one
and no other. I am well-versed in things
farmers know, also tech-savvy, and neither thing
will be relinquished, but I relinquish (kenosis)
the past in the present, the future in the
imagination. So notice the soldiers, so stiff and so rigid,
turn cold to attention, about face, and march
one last time to a palace now vacant, and we,
we are not who we thought we would be. If
stars change, I guess we must change too.
I am writing to tell this to you.

Spring Cleaning

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/spring-cleaning/>

Morning comes, and birds no longer silent
fill the air with song. The night was long,
but this day comes with cheer. Today
is cleaning day, when old mess goes where
order comes to stay. It is the only way.
Note how the sky is flushed with light,
new colors wash the old away. I wish
for you alive and gay to meet me
in the garden. There we'll talk our cares away
until the day is spent. I have a special
gift for those who only can obey, and one
for those who never do. It is no wonder
which are you. The moon is rising, and
the night is crisp and clear. It is the air
that you have been so troubled for, at last,
so clear that one is wondered to the core.

Vortex Afterglow

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/vortex-afterglow/>

In the afterglow of the morning, I walked
to the edge of a growing circumference, never in doubt,
not resolved, but still present, like one from another room,
and I saw there before me an image, but what
it portended no words can express. Yet it took me by eye
and led into the nearest horizon, that place where
the shadows have form and vice versa, and there I saw
only my dreams of tomorrow, a fantasy littered with
chaos and rhyme. There the sun never set, but stayed
stuck in its setting, a sculpture one mis-takes for living.
Soon after the journey reminded of home, so alone
I walked backwards, until stretched by hands unlike mine
through the vortex of time to beginnings, as well as
to ends, before all as my witnesses ready to go and to find.

Compromise

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/compromise/>

The schools are at it again, with their furor
to make a new movement, or else make an old one.
I'll tell you, this will not end well, nevermind
how the old ways have fared. I say clearly,
I want to keep liberty *and* biology, sir,
and I am not now willing to compromise.

Marxists

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/marxists/>

The other day I walked so far
I could not see my home.
The Marxists say such has to be
for any who would roam.

But I remain uncertain, even though
they know my heart.
Yes, I remember, yes, I know,
and yes, I still do see the stars.

In Memory

15 December 2022

<https://poems.culturing.net/2022/12/in-memory/>

I open the door. It is not clear
whose being-there disturbs my being here, but waves
of pure vibrations meet me there. I am a man
one says, another soy un hombre, one je suis etc...
here we are in memory all the same. We differ
outwardly, perhaps inwardly too, yet all recall
the lessons of teacher who *knew* something. Open the door
upon a field, a pasture, castle in the distance.
Is it home? Or are you longing for another?
What is longing, just be-longing without being?
Let us long, then, till we find a set of beings
we can store within our memories. I'll wait here
for you, patiently, recalling what I know.

Elite Waters

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/elite-waters/>

I have dipped my toes in elite waters,
but they proved too cold for me. So instead
I am here (I am writing to you)
about love and its answers to questions.

Horizons

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/horizons/>

Where did we get the sponge that could wipe the horizon away?

- Nietzsche

From Cromwell it came, with vengeance,
for days were not trusted
as long as a Catholic lived, and
with Providence on our side
we strove forth for Britannia,
Science and War side by side.
It was then that the ground
was made firm,
and thus all are now born
in laboratories, laboring, true,
for some queen they know not,
some Elizabeth mouldering probably,
but no true woman. No man of science
fares well with a woman, no wonder,
for women *require* horizons, and science
requires the sponge. But no matter,
has Germany fared any better, or
must we look deeper
and learn of Greek/Roman horizons?

Slumber Much Better

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/slumber-much-better/>

Again I find myself alone
in the dark, while the Christians
dance madly in imaginary light.
What a pity that all of this
suffering goes on unpunished.
I think there will come a time
for licking these wounds, but
until then I slumber much
better without interference.

Specimens

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/specimens/>

Are we to remain collections
of human specimens in the test-tubes
of America, or are we to become *men*?
And what would that mean?

Wait For Another

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/wait-for-another/>

In the aftermath of clockwork decaying,
from prisons of the mind, arise new men
of stone unbroken and yet brittle to the end.
What for? If Übermenschen all, then we
are lofty though we fall, for with some hopes
a certain madness lurks in wait. Say more,
bon esprit, with less. Do be the best, but
know of other figures at the door.
You are no child now, new friend, you grown-old thing,
yet I have seldom felt such shelter from your wing.
Is this, then progress? Or must we wait for another?

Think Not Absolutely

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/think-not-absolutely/>

There's a shimmer on the air, comes flowing over
days and years, to us, who here and now
decide to make things clear no more, who
think not absolutely, then think pure and free
with obstacles removed, and breath returning.

As Life May Yet Be

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/as-life-may-yet-be/>

Wordsworth said of a poem:
emotion recalled in tranquility.
Now I say otherwise. Mine
are like ships tossed by storms,
lost at sea, like reality, never
at port in the kingdom of sheep
who fight no significant battles
and want things done for them --
adventurer poems, explorer poems,
as anxious as life may yet me.

Sick With Struggle

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/sick-with-struggle/>

Here we are, still monotheist saints
or else old hoplites with no phalanx,
sick with struggle, and yet knowing of no other...
what voice calls? Is it the morning dove,
or is it just fair Juliet, the wise man's bane?
She has no other name, for she is fair
no longer than a season. All loves end
the same, as sorrows waver, with a whimper,
and mankind remains enthralled to thee,
O time, the muse of all deep divers,
dwelling as you do beneath the waves.

Strangers

17 January 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/01/strangers/>

As I sit by candlelight,
I know the strangers of the night
who creep by windows fair and bright
to haunt the streets of all delight,
and all the days of love grown cold,
and all the stories never told,
and all the crying eyes behold
the lying eyes both young and old.
I see them in their shadows waiting,
see their fearful forms debating
whether love or lies abating
offer respite to their waiting,
whether love or lies can stir
the shadows that have stolen her,
the one whose love was soft as fur
who bristles now with prickly hide.
So come sit by my candlelight.
Come feast your eyes upon the sight
as strangers in the strangest night
sit man and man, sit side by side.

Emptiness That None Can Understand

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/emptiness-that-none-can-understand/>

We have not proved that life be regular,
only have made padded cages for ourselves
where all is regular. Life remains the same,
a formless void apart from us, so full of mystery
and emptiness that none can understand.

Rest Unassured

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/rest-unassured/>

With the shadows dawning, with dawn descending,
I call for you, weeping, alone in the meadow,
with words for renewal. I say rest unassured,
be aware but not pure. There are days on horizons
not noticed before. As for us, it could be that
this setting defines us, but that is no reason to wallow.

Nutrition by Faith Alone

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/nutrition-by-faith-alone/>

Dinner options: (1) Take it (2) Leave it
- Local Sign

In America we believe God somehow powers
our food with his majesty, making infallible
all of our culinary experiments.
Call it Nutrition by Faith Alone. All that matters
is that *we believe*, as if no thing has substance,
as if, to use Plato mistakenly, thoughts are more real than things.
But we doubt that, and say so, but know of know other.
I wonder what Asia would think?

Dwindle

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/dwindle/>

In the midst of plurality,
egos must dwindle (somebody tell
Whitman) but maybe they
need not extinguish.

The Promise of the Lady

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/the-promise-of-the-lady/>

Come to the temple,
the Lady is waiting,
with courtesans towing
the train of her robe.
She invites you to enter.
She patiently gazes
upon your small splendor
but does not refuse you.
Her form soft and slender
invites you again
to become what was promised
long since at this temple.

The gateway before you,
your form soft and nimble,
she beckons you and you must go.
But don't worry: her promise is good
and her temple will still stand long after.

Like No Angel

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/like-no-angel/>

Wandering homeward, overland
past German towns destroyed
by too-free thought, past English
clocks unwound and French hearts
broken-hearted, stands a man,
not quite your size, some large
American, unsteady on his feet.
He knows too little, feels too much,
but means to help in any way he can.
He feared one day
the old world would cave in
and need the new. It never did. Instead
it hardened into something like itself,
with just a thin veneer of tolerance. And so
it wandered, as he too would wander,
homeward, like no angel one had ever seen.

A more tolerant order

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/a-more-tolerant-order/>

We cannot replace law with tolerance,
however much we try. I suggest instead
aiming for a more tolerant order, a law
that *embraces* diversity but does not enforce it.
For tolerance never puts bread on the table,
though lawfulness can, through cooperation (and
don't be deceived that cooperation comes through
more tolerance). Laws create trust and cohesion
but also cause friction where not all agree.
It may be that universal laws must be few,
but I hope we agree that our mutual survival
is something worthwhile, to be cherished.

Night Sweats of the American Dream

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/night-sweats-of-the-american-dream/>

The Radium Girls, the serial killers,
and all night sweats of the American Dream...
how many kinds of peanut butter
does a civilized people need?

All products of experiment,
all experiments neverending,
all the people entertained.

And yet I feel no disdain
for this ship or its sailing,
for as it goes down I go with it.

The Quest for the Immortal Self

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/the-quest-for-the-immortal-self/>

"After all, it is you and I who are perfect, not the next world."
- Allen Ginsberg

Have we found it? I've looked
under every belief, and found nothing.
Not even despair, nor ecstatic
self-reformulation (the new dialectic)
can grant this old wish. But I wish
that our days were more even, that
sunshine and moonlight spoke softly together
and on equal terms. Do you hear?
There are so many hours left, then no more.
This is how it always goes, not enkindled
by immortal flame, but descending in whispers,
no longer itself, not the same. But this is not
the cause for more triumph, no celebrations here.
Rather, sleep, with its own quiet permanence,
must end each day, most men say,
yet it also begins the next day, fresh, anew.
I am speaking to you, and for you, but you know
more than I can ever say.

The Sound a Plant Makes

21 February 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/02/the-sound-a-plant-makes/>

Will any number of plants relieve the pressure?
No, the iron rages on toward tomorrow, restless,
without reservation. Do any remain who hear the moan
beneath the steady drone of sure-footed, still uncertain
electricity? The moan of earthly things, those things,
alas, that are not standardized, because the earth,
alas, is not a factory. Try as we might, it still
is what it is, and, troublingly, is what we are.
No number of plants will relieve the burden
of care, nor the pain of our carelessness. There is a
tight symbiosis of everything, always,
and some humans know that. But this is no
amicable reverie, longing for forgone perfection,
which never existed. This is but the next step forward.
We've learned well that nature can harm us,
that not all its processes will be beneficent.
Now we must learn how to pick and to choose
and to nurture those things that sustain us.

I have inscribed some future epitaph,
forged in times of strife unlike our own.
It is a tale of war inscribed on bones
ne'er brittle, by command. These bones speak now,
or so the story goes, and yet I weep
for those who militarized the world,
who could not demilitarize their souls.

Ahura Mazda (the Question Remains)

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/ahura-mazda-the-question-remains/>

All hail Ahura Mazda, all hail!
Or fall by the Great King's sword!
I am Cyrus, slayer of nations,
and builder of all that remains.
In the name of Ahura Mazda
I rule over Persia, the land of my fathers.
Begrudge not my epitaph. You also
worship Ahura Mazda. If not,
then how do you remain?

The myth of Progress is Ahura Mazda,
The law of money is Ahura Mazda,
The pain of tolerance is Ahura Mazda,
The god of feelings is Ahura Mazda,
Deified sexuality is Ahura Mazda,
New-age bullshit is Ahura Mazda,
The cult of personality is Ahura Mazda,
Democratic Values are Ahura Mazda,
Both you and I are Ahura Mazda,
or else we could never remain.

Socrates versus Ahura Mazda,
the philosophic struggle against all of Persia
remains undecided, though not for lack of trying.
The question remains whether any accomplishment
stands with finality, or whether any question remains.

I disbelieve you, Ahura Mazda.
No power controls the totality of events.

The Throne of Cyrus

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/the-throne-of-cyrus/>

I feel the weight of Cyrus,
feel it pulsing, feel it moving
through these very words, within
though not without. I feel inspired
and afraid. When bones are laid
in stone-faced mausoleums, when the Shah
himself weeps madly, when the architects
of rule both here and there speak only well,
I am afraid. What fingers clutched the sceptre
as all Persia trembled? Then sang highest praise?
Perhaps the victims of abuse defend abusers,
love abusers, with a love that can't be tamed.
If this be so, how would we know?
With minds beclouded, thoughts well-trained,
we'd sing the hymns of him
who put us in our place. True, Greece and Rome
have put up manly struggles, to what end?
To place themselves upon the throne?
And what of us? Do we dare disabuse, again,
before that mighty throne?

Come Again

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/come-again/>

It has come again, this time
so new, having punctured the sky
I am writing to you, asking why,
and do not even try to deny it,
no, this is here now, here and now,
and tomorrow comes true
if once listened through you.

The Drums of Alexander

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/the-drums-of-alexander/>

Alexander stood finally tall on Persepolis
burning. This was the vengeance Ionia craved,
the dream of a thousand hoplites realized at last.
But what was that wind? O great King,
have you done this? And had you no doubts?
Later on one will stand here and wonder
as you failed to wonder. Were not these
baths lovely, with children at play in the spring?
Rubble now, though perhaps all ends thus,
though perhaps not as swiftly as this.
Have you done it, or does some Ahura
still haunt these hallowed grounds? What was
really at stake, basileus, in so much destruction?
And why do I still hear your drums beating,
louder now, over the Atlantic?

Small All the Same

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/small-all-the-same/>

Caught up withal in the most divine madness
we crash through the Phrygian stables
and lather on filth, with such glee
that no shepherd or pen can contain us.

We crash also through all white fences
on main street, or any street -- crash
as those wild as we are who have seen
through the curtain the man at the machine.

What a small man indeed. Shall we triumph,
or are we still small all the same?

Unfriendly

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/unfriendly/>

After all these years one would have thought
that deleting Facebook would be easier. After all,
it is only a website among many. But strangely pernicious,
its popular draw, even buying and selling turned into
a struggle for approval (to say nothing of genocide).
What is this pull, which determines so much, means
so little. I cannot escape any other way than
the old coward's way, or the nobleman's way
of thick walls. I can still keep it out, have no fear,
but lament that we cannot cooperate. One
would have thought this would be the point,
not to lord my success over others, or over myself
lord successes of others, but rather to speak together,
quietly, under the setting sun. Until Facebook supports this,
I abstain, and expect next to nothing.

The Realm of Reason

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/the-realm-of-reason/>

Have we tired yet of clocks and steamships?
Maybe old Corcyra, maybe Salamis can shake
these rusty bones, but maybe not. This realm
of reason, sacrilegious blend of Greece with Persia,
shall soon end, and maybe then new thoughts of empire
flecked with liberty shall emerge. But is it rather
that Hellenic freedom simply can't be suaged? Apollo
gives his dictates pure, non-partisan, so irony befalls
those who are partial to Apollo. It's a structural
deficiency belying all our thought. Let's think again,
with rightful honor paid to Greece, with due respect
for Cyrus, Xerxes, and with half a glance to China,
just to have a fuller picture.

So Very Greek

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/so-very-greek/>

It is sad, don't you know, to be living here now
and to know that the runner from Marathon
lost his way, for he founded an empire of thought,
not a tribe of free families, so very Greek was he,
and like no Greek had ever been before... I think Plato
would mind being kin to such savagery, such wars
as turn on their victors, devour them, then reign forever.
This is not Platonic, nor Roman, nor English,
but oh it was Greek, was so very Greek indeed.

Larger Accomplishments (Pragmatism)

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/larger-accomplishments-pragmatism/>

Must they be *true* to be useful, or is it
that laws grease the wheels of society,
giving us form, and through form, giving trust?
Perhaps this is their value, not cosmic obedience
to cosmic justice, but immanent trust in each other
which leads to much larger accomplishments.

As She Will

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/as-she-will/>

She grasped my hand, and off we flew
toward a prior world, with gods yet true.
We turned to you, and said Remember
what was said by those lain hundreds dead
before the sun set sadly on the few
who still remained. For here was Greece,
where once a Lady clothed in stone
called forth at Athens for all Greeks,
and here was Ch'in where that same Lady
pulled her maidens to the River.
Know their stories if you dare to live as long as they
and burn forever after, but take care
that you do not become too loyal, for she comes
in many guises, as she will.

Not even sure who to ask

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/not-even-sure-who-to-ask/>

Even the clock on my HVAC
adjusts itself automatically, like some
divine conspiracy of old, but these
gods of technology want us to
keep life ship shape, want each detail
aligned with some higher design
of pure reason. Whose reason? We ask
now pathetically, not even sure who to ask.

Saving Daylight

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/saving-daylight/>

When is there an end to it, the wailing drone of time, the fleeting hours, days or seconds of our lives, the nonstop blow of death's lone foghorn? Not in this life nor another. We must live among the vanishment, and live as best we can. But does it not belie our hubris that we dare tune time itself for maximal efficiency?

Plain and True

20 March 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/03/plain-and-true/>

I watch them working slowly,
barely knowing how they serve
the growing tyranny, the urge to please the people,
as in Greece so long ago. They are
no better, when libido dominandi reigns,
as it does reign, in Europe as before.
But Christian chains could not restrain the beast,
so what hope do we have? Some say
more earthbound hopes, like those of China's past,
to give all dignity, a place upon the stair.
No more enslaving, no more liberty,
but letting dialectic rest in peace.
Give each his duty plain and true.

At Eleusis

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/at-eleusis/>

Follow these steps, if you dare
descend here unaware, and be made known
before a *demos* that is known. First wander
here, then there, but watch! for grasping
fingers in the dark. They cannot harm you
more than life can harm you. Step here
through this opening, join these others, soon
you'll know. Behold! the goddess flies!
She rises from the tomb! It is Demeter,
goddess of the corn. Consider how the corn,
with many seeds, may grow, when this plant
sinks below. There is no other way.
Consider well, and be thus nourished,
threefold blessed by life, by birth,
and by their cousin death.

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/if-he-would-speak-today/>

If he would speak today, the Poet
must be modern, must be metal, but he
must as well be living. He must
vivify the modern soul.

Some Natures

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/some-natures/>

Some natures are harmful,
despite all theology to the contrary,
and we are responsible for knowing
the good, not the bad.

What time is this

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/what-time-is-this/>

They are proud to have learned their lessons
and never question. I wince in their presence.
I have never learned their lessons. What time is this,
that comes when all are sleeping, like a cock about to crow?

On Whose Authority

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/on-whose-authority/>

The people demand a show, like always,
but now ever ringing between their ears
growls a question: On whose authority? *Whose?*

Sources

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/sources/>

No more the uneducated masses,
now the miseducated masses,
squished in one mass by a craving
for universalizable maxims.

O Kant! Father Kant! Hast thou wrought this?
Or must we look deeper for sources?

The Question of Democracy

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/the-question-of-democracy/>

The People are not worthy of their servants
when those servants serve with honor, when
"most people" rule the hearts of men, when
servitude is servile and not grand. The People
groan at honor, moan for pleasure, lack the common ground
which makes men noble, who are products of that ground
and of no other. Thus those fight for what produced them
while the People (hear me!) claw and scratch the same.

But now what of it? Shall we have another war, or is it simply
undecidable, this question of democracy? I say no war
can answer what remains so fundamental. But why
only *Greeks* and their inheritors have wrestled with this question
is more likely to bear fruit, and bear it soon.

Something About Plato

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/something-about-plato/>

There's just something about Plato
that led to his preservation. Was it
the lofty ideals, or was it simply
his extra gear, the secret room of the mind
that would open to him, and him alone?
If the latter, we do well to praise him
but not to emulate him.

Only through turmoil
does genius bear fruit. Many could grow
but don't, because peace does not call out for
change, only troubles bring change,
only change summons genius, but genius
endures. We do well to take care
before summoning genius. We may not like
what it says.

Who are we?

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/who-are-we/>

The peoples of the Mediterranean
were always pretending to be gods
or descended from gods or becoming
like gods, and one wonders how far
this can take us. If creatures
like us act like gods, it would
surely destroy us, but if we do not,
then who are we?

culmination

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/culmination/>

You would think that by now
we'd be perfect, we've striven
so hard all these years
that no pain could emerge
which we could not destroy,
that with gods on Olympus
surrounded by heroes and victors
of various wars and games
we would celebrate, nectar
in one hand, machines in the other,
but why is this always just out of reach?

The Way of the Night

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/the-way-of-the-night/>

Like no one's business, I entered
the place of the skull, on a mission
to root out those staining the temple.
'Twas a dark and stormy time in my mind,
but all indications say all is fine.
After some deliberation, prepared
for denial and banishment, into
the tomb I crept, and was swept
by a wind like no other, from beyond,
toward death, but then also toward
something outside of death, to some
origin speaking through dreams. I
believe it was something like truth,
but not nature, for nature cares little
for truth, or for us. It was empty,
but this was alluring, a void that could
drain the false fullness of things,
so I leapt, and some part of me
left me for ever, to wander the shores
of Elysium, or else to die
but to die in a way more refined,
with more grace, with aplomb,
in the way of the night.

Little Bird

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/little-bird/>

Little bird sings of the break of spring,
new wonders appear, but a soft note
of warning reminds her companions
that some dangers lurk past horizons.

Good Eyes

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/good-eyes/>

I was born sighted in a tribe of the blind,
who, never seeing, are never aware that there
are things to be seen. I was born
nonetheless, and pay homage for that,
if for little that followed. With my eyes
I've seen man betray man, finding pleasure
in cruelty, time after time, but no wonder,
since wonderful things must be seen.
Would you like me to help with your disbelief?

Untold Misery

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/untold-misery/>

How can there have been so much
and be so little remaining? Time
with its cup of lethe, panacea,
so they say. But what good is it,
being lost, without even wounds for guidance?

Wallow

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/wallow/>

Who can stand them, obsessed
with appearing divine, only half aware
of humanity or of its frailty,
lost in the heavens pulled earthward
to wallow away from it all.

Duty

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/duty/>

There are those who accept the old Duty
and those who make smashing a Duty,
but where are those moving past Duty?

Some Other

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/some-other/>

Upon the way backward
to what Plato meant
(it's for you, bon esprit, all for you)
in this desert I stand
with no road and no path and no map
and where even the sky is blank
and I wonder what anything means
in this way, with myself to blame
or to praise for the barren expanse,
but not satisfied owning it,
searching instead for some other
whose cause is as good as my own.

The Protestant

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/the-protestant/>

The Protestant weeps
alone in the corner,
his own priest,
and not a very good one.

Contribution

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/contrition/>

I believe we are waiting for Caesar,
although we won't like when he comes.
Diversity often breeds unity,
but by the sword, through an act of contrition.
If Greece, if Rome, if Persia, if England
succumbed to this, what hope have we?
Praise the emperor? Thus keep your head?

The Scientist

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/the-scientist/>

The scientist pauses, haunched
like a cat of the mind, poised
for pouncing, emboldened by Truth
which has turned out to be a simple case
of precision in measurement. He is
ready for mysteries to explain themselves
clearly, distinctly, without hesitation.
But after the clock strikes five,
as he hangs up his lab coat,
a question arises which he
is unable to answer:
what are we to measure?
and how shall we choose?

Stop the Bombing

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/stop-the-bombing/>

Amazing isn't it, how easily one now
can say what once got one killed.
But if one or if many rebel, one
must ask, to what purpose? If done
as a duty and not mere licentiousness,
surely some pause is demanded, or even
required. So stop the bombing, so
Christ is risen, and so the new faith,
when it comes.

Monotheism

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/monotheism/>

Will monotheism suffice?
Or must we look under?
Revise the old questions,
discover the author(s) of nature.

Are they One? Or Many?
If many, are they equally wonderful?

Menagerie of Rules

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/menagerie-of-rules/>

There are no universalizable maxims,
no fixed rules, no solid ground
which we could bring from place to place.
All rules are local, but perhaps there are
good habits, good technique, for those
who swim within the sea, that cold
menagerie of rules which never ends.

The Thin Veil

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/the-thin-veil/>

How many graves will it take before
somebody notices? Aye, you will say
some have noticed before, but few feel
what the dying must feel. Let me tell you,
it is not less hostile than life, nor
more cold than compassionless love.
You will answer, but I cannot hear,
being rapt by the shimmering veil,
the thin veil that divides men from murder
and rustles against drums of war.

They May Be Right

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/they-may-be-right/>

I was here before, but did not know it.
Now I know, but that has not made me any wiser.
See the lovers entwined on the beach before dawn.
Unassuming teachers, little did they know that I saw.
But rising beyond them the sea was a formless expanse.
The light broke through the horizon and cracked the surface.
I could not remember who I was waiting to meet.
It was like every dawn in uniqueness, though still being dawn.
As the lovers shuffled I saw ever clearer day coming.
It was and was not meant for them, nor for me.
The shadows grew longer but this time that just felt okay.
The lovers departed before the full sun was in sight.
I have never doubted the feeling that they may be right.

Where They Can See You

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/where-they-can-see-you/>

Your feelings may threaten their power,
but always remember that they
once had feelings, before they were monsters,
and could feel again. Until then, remain wary,
and do not cross where they can see you.

Wait, Think, Speak

26 April 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/04/wait-think-speak/>

Stillborn I fell through the silence of water
past life-forms and fishes uncouth to my eyes
and descended, awakening once more in Asia,
no longer afraid. She was cunning and charming
but little did I know she'd tempt me
to give myself up for her dream, that that dream
was the flower of five-thousand years. What was I
in her thrall? Just a subject of political
experimentation, unburdened of freedom, near dead
with remorse or from absence of light. I would
counter with energy pure from the true well
of Hellas, or if this too sickens, then
out of the well of humanity, some substance comes.
And I take it and groan at the weight of it,
knowing though that such is mine, throughout time,
and that only tomorrow will tell what we do here
but I for one lend time my hand and my ear,
and by this you will know me, for this is my sign,
this remembrance of time in its service despite
the loud claims that all clocks are manmade
and need manual winding. My silence
speaks volumes against these blasphemers,
who never could wait, think, or speak.

Banishing Night

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/banishing-night/>

No great poet has ever made a difference,
for he could not have been other than he was.
He could *only* sing, and by singing bring
hope. But no matter. Do suns make a difference,
or do they just shine, as if banishing night?

Eudaimonia

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/eudaimonia/>

In a room of thinkers, I was quiet,
until each had taken his turn. I heard
the arguments of Socrates and Zoroaster
firmly interrupted by Confucius, who thought
he might intervene and end the struggle.
But all any of them wanted was to understand
what man is, even Nietzsche, who embarrassed
countless Germans, and his protégé, one
Heidegger, who smoothed those rougher edges.
Now all thinking ever was was thinking,
this much we endorse, as thinkers,
as the only ones. But what of friends
sent from afar? Brought near by ritual?
Is not this eudaimonia?

Some Men

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/some-men/>

Some men are born
with insatiable drive
to ascend the mountain of History,
to go to the source of river Culture
and drink her voluptuous streams.

Rolling Waves

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/rolling-waves/>

I am going out to sea,
wish you would join me.
It is rough to go alone,
and no fair hands can grasp
the terrors that await those
who set sail. But do go with me,
and I'll promise you enlightenment
without the heavy falsehoods
of the earthbound ways of man.
I hope you'll understand.
I have no more remorse for life
than dead men have for dying,
but the rolling waves are calling
all the same.

Corporate Man

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/corporate-man/>

It's a god! It's a hero!
No! It's Corporate Man!
Able to leap reality in a single bound!
Able to fulfill all wishes!
Just sign on the dotted line!
Free from the shackles of justice!
Free of all badges of honor!
Who can defeat him?
Not even his mother or father restrain him now!
He is master of both earth and time!
He begets even these exclamations!

Habits

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/habits/>

Where is it going, this spiralling void
of the mind of Hegel, sent Nowhere
on purpose, to dream in some darkened cocoon?
I say off with it, off with the fuzzy delusions
of Reason, whatever their object, and on to
the habits conducive to honor and hope.

Uncivilized After All These Years

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/uncivilized-after-all-these-years/>

By the power invested in the personless rationality
of the universal world-spirit or whatever, we wait here
uncivilized after all these years.

Pain That One Calls Home

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/the-pain-that-one-calls-home/>

We are out here searching for something,
a meaning of some kind, some explanation,
but all that we really needed was in us,
they say, all along. Is it, though? Or
are we still adrift in a godless nothing,
at last on the verge of discovering
forms that administer the pain
that one calls home?

Saying New Sayings

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/saying-new-sayings/>

The Supreme Intelligence in all of its forms
must be killed, but then maybe it's already
taken a mortal blow, dealt by wizards
of German extraction, and some
have moved on, some have not,
but how are we to organize
friendship in commerce, political life,
or religion, without the old sayings?
Perhaps start by saying new sayings?

Both How and Why

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/both-how-and-why/>

It is unwise to blame bad sheep
for bad shepherding. Where are the
greener pastures? Not near the factories,
that much is sure, but one also begins
to wonder if shepherds have ever known,
or if they have simply usurped
both the crook and the staff, out of lust
for power. But then, some sheep thrive
and we must ask them both how and why.

Ideal Republic

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/ideal-republic/>

Asia has had no ideal republic,
no city of God, and yet notice
how greatly she prospers. Must we
then continue to dream a false city
or can we live *here* and live *now* and live *well*?

Flying Lessons

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/flying-lessons/>

Soaring bird large
and bird small
explore sky
both entwined

No Single Force

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/no-single-force/>

I think that we know
very little, that what we predict
may come true, or may not,
that no laws constrain nature,
that nature is plural,
that no single force drives it all.

Dreams

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/dreams/>

When I consider the teenagers over the way,
I'm amazed that they have not been disciplined,
growing so free and inviolate, much like I was
when I thought men could grow up like trees
and touch clouds. Now I know, as we say,
growing never gets old, and all youth is perennial,
transferred across generations, but what is
this secret? If not the true meaning, how
shall we decipher one deeper? The struggle
for youth to make good its ambition for harmony
shall never die, though we shall. Shall we
scold them? I say it's no use, because
life is quite able to punish them all on its own.
Let them dream, and let us still remember
that dreams are the province of youth, across time,
even ours.

Better Judgment

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/better-judgment/>

It is time to reflect, to remember
what words have been spoken, to justify
all that precedes who we are. It's not easy,
like life, and like all of life's dreams.
But go with me toward it, and we
shall be we, not afraid or unbalanced as they,
but as free, we shall breathe different airs,
contra Kennedy, and against our better judgment.

What Surprises Remain

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/what-surprises-remain/>

With a small bit of horsepower,
with little to lose, I have gone
and sublated Hegel, just as
he requires, but what, then, remains?
If not Plato or Aristotle, maybe Aquinas?
But these three won't do
in a world that grows tired of λόγος.
Let's try on Confucius,
and see what surprises remain.

Blank Space

16 June 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/06/blank-space/>

In a field of blank space
a German appeared, out of nothing,
and talked to himself of becoming,
and was not afraid.

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/wouldnt-it-be-nice/>

Wouldn't it be nice if we
could live morally, as heaven-sent,
not as we are. Would it be
nice, to free ourselves from dark
places, to glide in the shimmer of light?

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/clarity-is-like-death/>

Clarity is like death, disallowing
surprises, and hardly the one
to revise what one knows,
what one is, and the tragedy
comes when one little expects it.

Inexorably Ever After

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/inexorably-ever-after/>

Is it time for a new beginning?
Have we gone past the great men
and their great trails of corpses,
or do we still dwell in their shadow?

I say time will tell, and she always does tell,
as she will, as she must, inexorably ever after.

Spiraling

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/spiraling/>

Spiraling, spiraling, into the whirl,
asking what is the value of heaven,
no longer unsure, yet in peril
lest someone acknowledge all mysteries.

This Way Forever

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/this-way-forever/>

I have been trying toaster ovens,
and all of them make me sick.
It's a wonder how far we have come.
The design is immaculate, the interface delightful,
the fumes so toxic I could die.
I have been testing toaster ovens
just to find out what I've known all along,
that the smiles of the marketers lie,
that we live at the mercy of industry
(never one known for its mercy).
I've been testing ovens like propositions,
but this simply can't be refuted:
I dislike machines and their toxins,
and will not accept
that we have to live this way forever.

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/in-the-depths-of-it/>

In the depths of it, wondering
why the Chinese have still never
become good Englishmen (mysteries abound)
and, still further, why Palmerston
thought good to try...

Bind

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/bind/>

Wonder, wonder of the mind,
what has we humans in a bind?
If not too-certain categories,
maybe too much wind?

Moldy Thinking

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/moldy-thinking/>

I can smell disaster ahead,
but nobody will listen. It's like
moldy thinking, the kind that has
sat in the sun for too long, gazing
stupidly skyward, festering,
waiting to be discarded.

To Even Have a Dream

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/to-even-have-a-dream/>

What a crazy *swirl* life is,
when stress subsides, when freedom
breathes again. It is like liberty
was never taken captive by an empire,
or like spirit never had to stand in line.
But we can't live here, not like this,
not as we are, for we are more than dreams,
we mammals, who need sustenance to dream.

I have known women

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/i-have-known-women/>

I have known women (I have known them well)
but what women are thinking I never shall tell,
for one dreams of a home as one dreams to be free,
and another is cursed by the blessings in me.
I shall answer with questions and this much avow,
that the life of the living is death anyhow,
but the solitude curses the wanderer fair
with the foul and pestilent, pitiless, bare,
until ragged or richly he comes to surmise
that with women he was at least somewhat prized.
But too late, alas, they have all found their homes,
as he sups with the misers and picks at the bones.

A Raid on Delphi

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/a-raid-on-delphi/>

We were the last to arrive, and by then
it had all been taken -- the gold, the weapons,
the scrolls -- but how little we knew, thinking
we with our plans could best Fate. Call it
Hubris, whatever it was, but don't tell us
to kneel before gods who spoke Greek, even here.
We are here to rob temples whose keepers
have long since passed out of Memory,
brought by temptation or will to power,
to seek restitution for years of disgrace,
but not here. Even here there are ghosts,
where the skeletons slumber for ages,
where rough beasts, awaiting the turn of the wheel,
shriek to fever at mankind's injustice
and roll out new images and gods.

Arrival

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/arrival/>

I have been on a journey towards myself,
but how shall I ever arrive (who arrives?)

Like America, I am a mixed breed,
but that is not to say I am formless.

We are all of us formed by each other,
including the others both past and future.

I have been on a journey towards myself,
but arriving is never that simple.

The others have been on a journey too,
towards me and away from me.

I must care for them, since we have formed each other,
and hope they will care for me too.

This is the one who arrives.

In the Field

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/in-the-field/>

As I survey my field, I remember
how last season's crop came up fallow.
The soil has had no time to heal
and the seed is exhausted and shallow.
I know what I have to do now,
though it pains me to look on the barren
and doubt that here ever could grow
something worthy of effort. But pain
could be pain of new birth, not this field
or this labor, but pain from some far away effort
to find a new field and to build a hearth near it
where children could play in the morning
and old men retire at evening,
but children would notice the dearth of the field
of the hollow seed, and would surely have questions
as I, gazing blankly at Nothing, remain
unresponsive. Oh well, it was nice as a dream,
though the field and myself are the same,
and though nothing has changed,
I must gaze at it, penetrating
into some essence not well understood or explained,
like an artist, but not like a rabid one,
waiting for what's there to speak. Of this field
I know nothing, hear nothing, and therefore
expect to grow nothing. It's always this way
with such fields, which were not well maintained,
though it happens in even good fields.
I do not tell my neighbor what to do with his field,
and I ask for the same in return,
but in my case, I'll know when my field has run dry
not to hope it will grow if I try.

Where it Belongs

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/where-it-belong/>

I am coming to the point,
this time for certain. With you
standing there, I had simply forgotten
society, lost in your ocean of words,
not yet sure, but approaching it,
waiting for final discovery. True,
you were not one to wait in the past
nor the present, but always going
just one step further, then another.
I never could figure out who you were,
but the message came in loud and clear:
there's a baby asleep in the road,
and somebody has got to remind it
of where it belongs.

The House of the Dead

28 July 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/07/the-house-of-the-dead/>

He had only begun to understand
when lightning came to slice the branch
clean off the bough. It wouldn't matter anyhow
without her or the scent of her still lingering
as though to ask a question though afraid.
It wouldn't matter, as all ages past can fail
to mean a thing, unlike the scent of one
familiar flesh, though this place houses souls.
I ask for a friend what purpose has redemption
after love, for who regrets the love? The pain,
indeed regrettable, will satisfy Osiris, who,
by any other name, enlists the dead
into the legions of sweet peril, lost
in strife, lest loss of love revive their ire.
Tell me, Pharaoh, whether any Isis waits
to mock the dead back into living forms?

--

Come again, sweet spirit, to my chamber,
whence these dreams enlist the tumult
of the darkened days of man
to find what gems were left behind
beneath the pile of burning coals.
Come and wander to the bottom
whence death carries all who dare,
but do take care -- you are not one of them
just yet. I ask your help. This excavation
will take years, and we have time to sit and chat
about what might have been. I'll tell you,
there are many things to learn, but few to love,
and by that God who lives above one suffers bitterly,
but what is to be done remains obscure.

--

Perhaps begin by thinking on new avenues,
then stopping to inquire why these structures, why this order.
But do not be late for dinner, which revives you,
like the hero back from Lethe in the dream of old,
for this is where hope lies. We are in chains, it has been said,
but now with sun-parched eyes we look again and see
the cave itself in motion, hurling madly through the void.
Will all things be destroyed? And are the chains themselves
our safety during impact? How much Freedom does a man need?
And who else could do our work, and do it well?

--

Come let us mock the automatons
and the free spirits, with equal measure.

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/in-this-hour-of-wakening/>

In this hour of wakening, what spirit comes
to revive even these cold remains? What revival
awaits even these mossy chains? Is the sun
to be trusted, or must we learn echolocation?
I've little to gain by remaining unnamed,
except freedom, most untrusty boon, but the path
to formation is wrought with the trials of the hero.

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/we-were-always-at-war-with-nature/>

We were always at war with nature
or in love with it, at all times not
seeing clearly nor penetrating deeper than
whatever suited our momentary fancy,
but I for one saw her differently,
not afraid to delve into her secrets
even if it meant losing myself.

Leave Me

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/leave-me/>

At sunset, the birds
call me skyward with songs
made of aether, but
leave me untethered.

Westward Ticket

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/westward-ticket/>

I have forgone my westward ticket
and set up shop here. It is lonely
for now, but that's not the worst thing.
It's not worse than bad company.
Sometimes the owls hoot at dusk,
but I never have seen them fly.
With a little more coaxing, perhaps.

Sources II

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/sources-ii/>

In the dampness, a little resentment
grows colder, untouched by the warmth
of the sun, getting older and further
removed from the Source. But what Source?
Has this dream run its course, or is thinking
just one of man's fundaments? How could one
think without causes of being?
But are there not many sources?

With Great Justice

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/with-great-justice/>

We were a people that never did wish to be led,
having known all too well where paths lead and how
leaders betray every confidence, sure as we were
that negation was what kept things moving, we struggled
to keep ourselves firm. But the sun always set
of its own accord, unconcerned with our struggles
and even providing false hope for a world ruled
by cosmic order. Such hopes were a threat to the struggle
and, therefore, ourselves, bent on instituting tyranny
of various kinds. Oh how surely we knew what we knew,
having mastered all lessons without even studying,
graced as we must have been with inhuman strength.
But a few in the wilderness still kept their tablets of stone,
saying these, or if not, some like these, will one day
restore order in a barren land, because savagery
brings nothing new, but instead brings to rubble
the works of a thousand years. The new order,
whatever its form, will arise, and decay, and fall.
After all, we are left where we started,
both wary of leaders and craving them, both,
it would seem, with great justice.

All Those Ages Ago

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/all-those-ages-ago/>

What was the point of it all,
the mad dash for adulthood, the scramble
for something just over the next hill?
We are here now, they tell us, but where
and when, who can say? After all
we are malleable still, in the flux
as before, although firmer somehow,
but not rigid. No, we are the end of the dream
that began when our first parents met
all those ages ago.

Trust or Freedom

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/trust-or-freedom/>

We can either have trust or freedom,
but they are opposed and cannot coexist.
We have gambled on freedom, but
whether we're happy remains to be seen.
Whether happiness can be found anywhere
also remains to be seen. But perhaps
just a little more trust would leaven the dough.

Hitler's Grave

17 August 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/08/hitlers-grave/>

I went to Hitler's grave the other day,
just off the beaten path, through rows of trees,
the smell of sulphur lingering. It was a quiet place,
not oft disturbed, but on the stone I saw
a clump of roses, dying though not dead.
Someone had left them, as if hoping
even here in man's best nature. I was touched
and yet disturbed, but it occurred to me
that Hitler may have liked the smell of roses
or the sun upon his face, as we all do,
and that his favor had not made these things less good,
nor had his crimes. If we but had the time,
we might rehearse his glory and his shame,
but we are fading, through this age into the next,
and soon this grave will not remain, replaced by new ones.
What is left to say? I picked up the bouquet
and plucked the rarest, left that one as a memento,
brought the rest back to the living,
where they may still do some good.

Through All Our Fears

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/through-all-our-fears/>

I have found my way now to the nether regions,
all those dark places beyond all prevailing conventions,
where silence rules and where strange plants grow.
I am writing to you with a vision long seen
but just recently put into words. I have heard you
are eager for change, but that's what I know well,
and it's never quite what you'd expect. Listen closely.
The only way through is on *your* legs, with blood
pumped by *your* heart, which comes from your parents.
There is no deeper mystery than why we abide together,
despite all our squabbling, despite all our fears.

Rapt Futility

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/rapt-futility/>

Strange to sit here in the light
while all outside is bathed in night,
and strange to sit, and think, and write,
while others chase utility.

Had you expected something stern,
that each cold strophe would take its turn
in chains, for they are English-born
in rapt futility?

Surely one knows better now.
It doesn't matter anyhow.
The day that dawns awaits us,
and there are so many things to know.

Walking the Line

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/walking-the-line/>

From the darkness, a leader
would sometimes emerge to remind
of original covenants, binding through time,
but I have not the mind to dispute
the dark facts, nor the heart to unwind
the calf caught in the web. No, they come
from another direction, the province of vanity,
soured by years of neglect in an empire
of vanity chasing vanity. Whence, then,
this song? From the light? What light dares
to escape the embrace of a vanity
cherished by all in the depths of their souls?
Only this little light of mine, only this,
throughout time, to the ends of the mind
and back here, of this essence, here
walking the line.

That which wants to be said

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/that-which-wants-to-be-said/>

No one is happy, nor has one ever been,
and the future remains unpropitious (as Possum
scurries back to his hole), but I still stand here
speaking, aware of the Something outside of the Nothing,
to say that which wants to be said.

Kennedy's Peace

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/kennedys-peace/>

Thoughts go once more to John Kennedy,
thoughts that were lost, only here to revive
through abstraction the dream of world peace,
international dream, silly dream in the final analysis,
lost as man is in identities, cages of spirit,
and yet through the din of the bombs I can hear it
speak clearly and truly that something has got to change.
Oh, that change never comes (surely never)
which brings peace on earth while men live, 'til men leave it,
but change in our stars has arrived from the east
which may free us for both peace and war.

The peace movement has its Christ
and awaits its Constantine.

A Typical Day

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/a-typical-day/>

On a typical day, all the typical people
go down to the river to play, the most
normal of folk, acting normally, day by day.
But outside of the current one stands
on firm ground, with strong legs, and skips rocks
to learn how much the current can say,
and to test its vibrations for permanence,
longing for such, disappointed so far,
one who knows one must learn in this way,
because soon comes a time of the flood,
and somebody must watch night and day.

We Silly Mammals

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/we-silly-mammals/>

It turns out the song
of the stars is out of key,
that no melody wraps all that lives
in a blanket of Reason or gives
civilization its name. No,
just we silly mammals, together,
unfolding potentials, discovering holes
in the firmament, forever.

Strangeness of the Ordinary

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/strangeness-of-the-ordinary/>

I suppose we should thank Wallace Stevens
for showing the strangeness of the ordinary,
though one wonders now whether strangeness
offers a home. Is the ordinary, home?
If it's not, I don't know what it is.
If it's not, is there anything more to say?

Submission in Disguise

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/submission-in-disguise/>

Outer peace demands inner war.
Only outer war and its victory
bring inner peace, in cases
of irreconcilable difference, but
can any difference truly reconcile
with its other (Hegel notwithstanding)
or is this just submission in disguise?

Someone Tell Wittgenstein

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/someone-tell-wittgenstein/>

Someone tell Wittgenstein that Europe alone
lives inside of the fly-bottle, ravenous for more
by design. Whose design?

Through the Horizon

23 September 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/09/through-the-horizon/>

First day on the job, I walked
into the factory, noticed the machines
did not want me, and left. The pay
was extraordinary, but ended abruptly
as soon as they saw that some part
of myself was impervious to their
designs, having been forged by time
and not dreamed in a fit of industrialization.
But what ended exactly? I found,
as the door closed behind me, a new
sense of purpose, and tasted fresh salt
in the air, though I didn't look back,
and I'll never forget how the sun felt
that first day of freedom, or how it fell
through the horizon, like so many times before.

The Most Peaceful Stream

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/the-most-peaceful-stream/>

I was always a wanderer, born
in the land of Nod, never still
under one heaven, trying them all,
ever restless, and moving like water
through the most peaceful stream you have seen.

From Time to Time

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/from-time-to-time/>

Philosophers are the leaves of the family tree,
not seeking to start new branches, absorbing sunlight
to nourish the rest of the tree. It begs the question
whether life is, as they suspect, a torture chamber
with no reward for participation, or whether the sun,
in fact, demands to see a show. I wouldn't know,
although the view among the trees is charming
this time of the year, as all the leaves are changing,
turning yellow, red, and brown, in preparation for
the dying of the sun. When day is done, and when
the summer fully fails, the leaves remain a blanket
on the ground, which at least fertilizes
all the coming trees. But more importantly,
the leaves sustained the tree through one more season
of the carnage of the air, always aware
that their own purpose lay in growing future trees
through self-demise, and not in nursing these
that happen to be present, rather yearning,
rather reaching for that sunlight, which replenishes the earth
from time to time.

A New Way

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/a-new-way/>

Can we handle another Kennedy, or will he
just die like the others, unable to bring to fruition
the will of the people? And what do the people will?
The fiction of peace "for all time" is disturbing
for those who think time is indomitable, yet
this is no worse than all Catholic thought.
But the question of truth against power lives on,
and continues to draw cheering crowds. Give us Liberty, then,
or death, but when you will oppress us,
if you find a new way, we'll obey.

Stronger Knowledge

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/stronger-knowledge/>

From Kant we have taken the fruit
of the knowledge of self and other,
and never again shall we live within
Christendom, banished instead to the East,
where they've known for all time
that our knowledge evolves over time, though
they've rarely fretted over the details.
Armed with our *much stronger* knowledge,
we'll march into capitals, ready to conquer
all change, but it's not been the same
since God died. We must ask ourselves
why we must fight for ideas, when fighting
hurts bodies (including our own), for philosophers
rarely make excellent role models. Neither do saints.
Shall we imitate businessmen? Who else remains
in a nonsacral culture, devoted to ego?
It's only opponent, the Christians, pray on with eyes closed
though the dome of the church falls around them.

The Abbey

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/the-abbey/>

I saw her atop the stair, so long ago,
and I decided to go to the abbey to pray,
but I found it disheartening to see the men
all shackled with crimson ideals, the blood hardly dry
before new lashes opened the next season's wounds.
I was bound to discover these treacheries only
through silence, the prayer of the anchorite
screaming inside for the violence to cease,
as her smile could not soothe every malice
nor carve out a home where love only could live.

In the end, I chose freedom,
but not without heartache and not without shame.

Turning the Page

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/turning-the-page/>

Turning the page in the saga
of purposeless suffering, with never
a *vόστος*, a *paradiso*, a *denouement*,
the machines are in charge, and until
this fact changes, we're not, but before
we can take back the reins, we must
find who exactly we are.

Discard Them Already

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/discard-them-already/>

Who would have thought such a thing had a spirit,
or that it would govern us poorly, with iron grip?
Maybe Hegel or Marx, but to us with our battle fatigue
at its climax, their words feel so hollow and trite,
as with all of our might we endure in a race
suited more to machines than to rats...and what *is* man,
after all? Does he think, even so? And by thinking, produce
ever new ways of doing, procedure after procedure after procedure,
as new as the rising sun? The machines have not taken this much.
They are just one iteration of the latest procedure, so quickly
outdated we might as well discard them already.

Bones (How Things Stand)

29 October 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/10/bones-how-things-stand/>

Someone must put into words how things stand,
not to silence the critics or win some shallow victory,
but only to make ourselves clear -- who we are
and why -- because when we are gone, there must be
some memento. Our children deserve that much, and more,
and although we are sure that we know what we know,
they will doubt it, so someone must put into words
how things stand, for they *do* stand, by miracle, time after time.

--

Or is the miracle within us after all?
These are difficult questions, but good ones.
One wonders whether in the final analysis
the children's children will look on their grandparents
with pity, as toward a girl who has had an abusive father
who fears that all men are abusive. Is all government
bloodthirsty? Or have we just deep collective wounds
from some prior injustices, burned in our memories? Caligula,
what a monster, and don't forget Nero, and of course
there were Hitler and Stalin...

At some point the prophecy fulfills itself.
We get more of the things we attend to.
The war against tyranny ensures more tyranny.
Whence comes the miracle?

From somewhere within, or maybe somewhere without,
but its origin means less than its presence.
It comes.

--

Virtue comes and goes, there's a new thought,
and whether you think it or not, it occurs,
the proverbial tree in the forest that makes a sound,
though the sound is ourselves, though nobody has ears to hear it.
It's what they call Spirit, although it is also

much more than that. It may live in our bones
and our ancestors' bones, and whatever their phobias,
whatever their misguided fancies, those phobias
guide us as instinct and intuition, the memory
of thousands of years of trial and error
with occasional insight, recorded through joy and through exaltation
in the bodies of those who live through it.

Why do we show such respect for old bones
if it's not because bones house the past,
and deep down we suspect that our present
will one day in total be bones?
Could it be that things stand on their bones,
that the boneless are formless, sans history,
without any direction or purpose?

The House of the Dead II

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/the-house-of-the-dead-ii/>

I remember, back when it all started,
somebody explained that I'd gained
for my trouble a "foot in the door,"
but the room smelled like death,
and nobody else cared or noticed.
Much worse, later on, I discovered
that most of the others had acclimated,
now even preferring that smell
to the smell of the earth, which,
though also containing death, has strong notes
of rebirth, which the house of the dead
seems to lack and refuses to even acknowledge.

Doctor of Words

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/doctor-of-words/>

There is a madness, a kind of playful
spirit-imp, that seizes me with joy
when comes a time to speak my mind.
I wish you'd listen, but I'll settle for
your nonchalance, compared to those with stones,
which do break bones (though yes, words hurt
more than the many know, and that explains the joy).
But don't forget that wond'rs must be wounded
'til they learn their place, and that explains my purpose
as the doctor of words, receiving patients constantly,
applying salves, and burning, cutting, trimming as required.

Still More

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/still-more/>

Under the earth, in a cavern man-made
and yet lacking all purpose, the people gather
to discuss their impending doom. They have no more to say,
but as each goes his way, all discover that all ways
lead here, to this cavern. And thus their ennui.
But a light from above mostly frightens them,
hurting their eyes. For it is not the sun. It's a man
with a flashlight and little respect.
But the man lacks respect just to shine them like that,
both exposing their nakedness and blinding them.
They will not trust him, not after a time and a turn
in his light, so he goes on amusing himself (and to no other purpose),
when suddenly the east wall collapses
and all of the people observe there the others
who look familiar but who have no annoying flashlight,
and suddenly they wonder whether theirs is really the only cavern
or whether they might find still more.

Origins II

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/origins-ii/>

In a reverie, I still recall
how before, when approaching to
nature's fire, I saw her, the one
of the dream, yet more real
than all life, and I asked her
how much was required. She said
all and meant it. I knew
that she wasn't for me, but
for others, that this lonely audience
rarely was given, and that,
having heard, I must speak,
but speak where, and speak how?
In a reverie, there and there only,
where dreams can be tamed and where man
may discover his origins, yearning.

Ready For Change

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/ready-for-change/>

Sunrise, after a long doubt, and
our journey resumes, the one started before
stars were named, toward Ashtoreth, maybe
toward some Valhalla, but certainly ours,
here and now. In this legacy, sorcerers
fail to revive, and time passes, as always.
If only the stars would align, like before,
when hope meant something, mankind could rise
and be sure, but our stars float awry,
too disturbed by each other
to fly or to guide human eyes.

--

Is it Dawn, and if so, does she come
from the East, or have we been deceived
for long ages about where hope dwells,
what hope is? In the East, Magi
suffer oppression, and others toil on,
so what dawn could they bring here,
where stars have stopped shining out meaning?
What dawn...further east, in Kung-Fu Tzse's house,
now the master is homeless, his unfilial children
rejecting his lessons in favor of permanent revolution.
Not here, no, keep looking...

When Dawn comes, it comes with a bang,
but it leaves with a whimper,
as previously observed,
but this time is so different, so new!
Are there flowers? And why?
When it comes it just comes of its own accord.

--

What is *future*? What *history*?
If not just a mallet for striking one's enemies,
if really a there-to-behold, even now, in potentia,

the newborn first imitating father and mother,
then leaving the den to seek out its own place
among stars, among earth, with the words that were spoken
remembered and cherished, together with others
together for now, then apart, then forgotten,
but living throughout and within the tradition
which echoes with words, with new words, always new,
to remark what has been for posterity.

--

The newness of the day can cancel Nothing,
see the self-negating spirit succeed
and rid us of itself, with final vigor.
No more piddling doubts or quibbling with the self,
no more self-criticism or phony dialectics,
only learning, only growing through surprise (there is
no other way), and only strong souls daring thought
(all others knowing thought is not their cause).
Then free from terror, free from all the machinations
of the empty revolutions, but still freer of what came before,
we'll build, and start from Nothing, if we must,
for 'tis with Nothing that our forbears stopped,
and we go further, on into the formless cold
of space eternal, warped by dreams of grids
and all false representing symbols, such that
we can actually believe we've mastered time,
and that, like space, it is a thing of grids
and not the source of mysteries and growth.

Enough of this, it has been said,
but let me urge you one more time,
pray do not fall for all you're told,
despite the grandeur of the teller.
But don't be a doubter-on-command.
That is no better.

--

The point, the point...there must have been one,
how else could we live, without purposes, lacking design?
Yet we've failed to find it now time after time.
So what sacred remains from the astral pyre
await some old reinvigoration? The rough beasts

have all come and gone, their day dies,
and the new day is dawning, this time
with less obstinance, no absolutes, and a people
born ready for change.

By Example

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/by-example/>

In the seventh year of the reign of Trump,
we are floundering, just like before, as the businessmen
sell us our candy and hula hoops, and government
roves in search of destroying production. One wonders
where all of the flourishing humans are, why
none of their concerns matter here, in an empire
now far out and well on its way, toward what? If the coming election
brings blood, you may say that I warned you, but I think you knew it
already, though it may lie buried by mountains of nonsense
and oceans of shame. All the same, we strive on toward glory
and know not whence hope comes nor whether our lives can be tamed,
whether here in America still lives that germ of empowerment
that once, twice, and hence fuels revolt, and if so, whither,
where it will go, in the body in which we are parts. If we know
that the swamp has its sickness, malarial as always, that sickness
is sabotage, the purposeful undermine of confidence, always and everywhere,
and not in the spirit of philosophy proper (which by its very name
implies friendship) but rather with sick dialectics, designed to kill masters
and liberate slaves. It turns out that the masters know better
(to no one's surprise) and without them we're nothing, although
the enslaving did get a little out of hand. But is mastery itself
to blame? Or is competence simply essential to flourishing?
No, there are ways to progress unlike this, with less venom,
with generous friendship from first to last, by example.

Crossroads

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/crossroads/>

Where do we go from here, when so much has been said
and so little believed and followed through? Is there empire
within us, or are we provincials at best, better suited to woodsmanship,
hunting for wild game? It is always the same with such peoples
who grow to our size, but the differences make all the difference.
You can tell that I'm joking, but this much is serious:
America stands at a crossroads. Which path shall we take?

Pliable by Nature

23 November 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/11/pliable-by-nature/>

No one has a sure foundation,
not now or ever, for all
are made pliable by nature,
and this too is good.

Red Tinge on East Star

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/red-tinge-on-east-star/>

Alone in my hills, on a night growing cold,
I look over those hills, and I see you, East Star,
shining dimly, not quite as one hoped.
But you do shine and join the night sky,
granting light if not heat, but a little of both.
But pray tell me, why does your light glide
as if governed by my sky, with some point of reference
in Western constellation? We would like to see you
in your sky, which is sky enough.

Home From Elysium

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/home-from-elysium/>

As Bach and Beethoven encoded
the new German Freedom in music,
so too will I write of our freedom
from fantasy and all metaphysical guile,
to teach with a smile the hard truths
of man's station on earth, and to hope
for rebirth from the slime, and at last
bring the soldiers home from Elysium,
battered, exhausted, and ready to build a life *here*.

Out on the Frontier

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/out-on-the-frontier/>

In the morning, one hardly
sees clearly, but lately I've noticed
the goal remains not to succeed
but to fail in the same way
as everyone else. In those cases
where failure is common, success becomes
dangerous -- therefore, let's fail,
as our parents before us have failed,
and not dare to succeed like those
brazen and ostracized weirdos
out on the frontier.

Who Does the Promising?

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/who-does-the-promising/>

When will the promises of science
come true? Or are they, like most promises,
intended to deceive? I see over the horizon
a world in which men live by deeds
and not promises -- one where the future
is present in embryo, really there and perceived,
but not promised, for who does the promising,
and why should we trust them instead of ourselves?

More Than One Power

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/more-than-one-power/>

The Romans did not like surprises (the Greeks did!)
and we are left asking (for five-hundred years now)
just how, how much certainty man can afford,
and if not up to Rome's standard, whom shall we serve?
Not the Greeks, with their autonomic failures,
and not now the English instead, who resemble the Romans
quite certainly. No, no, the Germans won't salvage us either...
I think what we need is a *new* kind of certainty,
firm in action but pliable in negotiation, because,
after all, there are more than one power, and we need our allies
to know that.

To the Girl Behind the Pharmacy Counter

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/to-the-girl-behind-the-pharmacy-counter/>

You with the smile, asking favors with eyes only,
yes, I remember you too. But this is not the time
for a dance or the courting of pairs. You have asked me
to take my time, and I shall, as I linger over
what time has brought me. Not the east, or the sun,
but just you, with all faults still at this moment concealed.
Shall we remember fondly this meeting when hours of argument
wrangle our spirits, or when we find habits distasteful
which each of us cannot change? Yes, we shall, with disdain,
for it's always the same, as the first blush transforms
to the flush of rage, for we puppets on Nature's marionette.
You can bet it will happen again, as it's happened before,
even here, and to us, as we each go our ways
through the spasms of time. But this is not the time for a lesson, either,
when those eyes ask questions no poet could describe.
So here is my answer. I cannot divulge all my purposes
nor share with fellow traveller the path I have chosen.
So adieu, night-wanderer. May you find a home
and a love worth your while.

Vesta

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/vesta/>

Vesta, guardian of eternal fire, what life
hath thou in a time like this? Lord Vulcan
rules o'er all, and we live by *his* flame,
so what of yours? If winter comes, so be it,
for as sure as we are flesh, we bathe
in steel, and watch the lathe, the wheel
coax mechanism into ghastly life. But Vesta,
thou doth call out still within the soul
to all those longing to be whole. Can hope arrive?
Can hope come here, into this desecrated chamber
of the Vestal orgy, long since over, haunted still by ghosts?
They are our hosts, and like good guests we must
not leave here empty-handed. We must take an icon
to be cherished, and to grow into the newest love,
the newest hope. That is within our scope.
But Vesta, knowst thou where the balm resides,
which once soothed aching eyes and aching souls?

Touch

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/touch/>

Let us walk, if you will, through the avenues
of time, to the clarity of iron, a firmness
once realized and never forgotten. Its age
lives within us, with all ages past, in a soup
we call history, in a place we call home.
If we walk, we shall see that all men
are the same, whether born now or later,
that Progress is groundless, it swims in the aether.
Machines have not changed what we are, nor has money,
nor charity, law, or iron. The σπέρμα remains what it was,
is now, and ever shall be, implanted by Vesta, a yearning
for fullness, which all mammals know, though we may
know it best. How has this been forgotten?
How have we illustrious mammals
lost *touch* with those things that define us?

Rule By Consent

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/rule-by-consent/>

Until the day dies, until night covers all,
they won't rest, they will hound and resound
all the corners of man, to make adolescents all,
make belief unacceptable, ravage all temples
and ravish the priestess. Barbarians come
and are already here, and quite powerful within city walls,
but the People remember, they cannot forget,
that the powerful rule by consent.

Into the Sea

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/into-the-sea/>

Into the sea, the Mediterranean Sea,
swim with me, past commander and legionary,
past Athens, all temples of Zeus,
and Jerusalem too; swim past Crete
and the legends of Homer, and rest
on the sea's cold floor. Here find solace,
long sought by all moderns, and here find
the end of all law and obedience,
chthonic remonstrances, pulsing through time
and the hearts of all men, underneath
all ideals, in the bosom of earth,
in the womb of all worlds. Under here,
to the core, thirst no more, for these waters
will satisfy, unlike those others
that rain from the sky. But thus nourished,
return and build shelters for you, and for others,
to live in as much peace as possible.

Barrel of Monkeys

18 December 2023

<https://poems.culturing.net/2023/12/barrel-of-monkeys/>

What a barrel of monkeys,
the whole human race,
not an ounce of perspective,
a drop of grace!

I speak for the people

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/i-speak-for-the-people/>

I speak for the people when saying to the Christians
that you do not get to tell us how to love. We'll do fine
on our own, but we must find some limits somehow.
Until then, we must journey, with no holy books,
guide ourselves, and pray old gods don't rise for their vengeance.

Doubt

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/doubt/>

I have lived with this ache in my side
for so long it is hard to imagine
not having it. Yet, I could thrive, it is true,
under doctor's care..."studies show..."
but they have never studied *me*,
the particular man, he who sleeps in each bed,
who lives under the aegis of Science
but is not known by it...prithee tell me
what *care* is experimentation, the lab-man
set loose on his subject for fun and profit?
I do not know why I thus mock it,
lest others think that I do know,
but in fact, I doubt, as is now the fashion,
but doubt that this doubt could reach certainty,
clarity, truth, or obedience, all of which go
into care. Does my doctor doubt? For if so,
he will not be much trusted. If not,
he shall not follow science.
I go now to bed, to the sweeter rest,
free from doubt and its faithful unfaithfulness,
stewards of Science, but with this last hope,
that some fruit of their labor may comfort me still
even so.

The Ship of Rome

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/the-ship-of-rome/>

Let me sing for you about the ship of Rome,
which crashed at Plymouth, spilling gods and heroes
to the sea. 'Twas not for you and me, that pantheon,
and yet we took that wreckage and built homes.
Did we not know the walls would talk, thus carved
from holy wood? They say strive harder,
on toward the unseen end of gloria, whence we shall be gods.
Did we not know the ship had crashed? That we, too, crash,
and always crash, so long as we rely on only worn-out navigation?

Let the augurs rest, no, let them die,
and let all children of the sky foretell
their own fate, falling faster than sweet Icarus,
to soon with Hades lie. But this old feud
is not worth reappearing, will not settle on these terms.
I crave a new word, *after* Rome, but not
instead of Rome, for who could pluck such mighty organs
out of this, her organism? Surely this beast
has a heart, so we won't start to prophesy
some doom ordained by civic need
and furthered on by bloodlust. No,
we want some answers for all misdeeds
done by smiling men with good intentions
and reputed names. It is the same, the same, the same,
no matter how the poor are skinned,
the plot remains, who does the skinning,
and are they held to account? One doubts
sincerely, and another has philosophy, but these
are even older than the crimes, and have done little
to assuage the unjust blood. Is it not time?
The ship, alas! may hold more corpses than we know.
But this will grow: take heart from this:
by now there have been other ships.

--

Will you listen? I have seen behind the curtain
and the man I saw is uglier than imagined.
He spoke croakingly, without a point or purpose,
flailing madly, with twin sceptres in his hands,
and pedalled briskly on the bike that turns the world.
I won't describe his face. All has its place,
except for him, the mastermind of chaos,
tossing here and there the pieces of our lives.

We dare not thrive, in this, his world,
and so we're cured, or so we're told,
but somewhere someone must remember
how to live...

At first, you give, and only then
dare to receive, for this, your need
to be a giver is the stronger.
Doubt not any longer. Love
is not the answer, though it is
part of the question, as new ships
come in from ever distant shores.
Don't hold off anymore. You have been
changed already, as you know,
and as these winds begin to blow,
depart, and set sail for yourself,
so long ago. So you must go
into the night the knowers know
with many histories in tow.

--

Augustus abolished wonder, that much is clear,
and he did steer the ship of Rome for many years.
Here on the other side, one sees how light can blind
and is reminded of the fateful deaths of Socrates
and Jesus, noble rebels, ever castaways on some
lost seaside isle. But death solves nothing, only life
can bring solution, as it mixes with all other life,
diluting thus the brew. It's nothing new, although
the solvents may be new, the process stands as it has stood.
We guessed it would, when we based Science on a method.
Let us wonder at this process, but think also
that the ship's wreck has been salvaged not in full, but in part only,
and that we may be still captive to its thrall.

--

The ships from the East were a welcome sight,
carrying treasure instead of soldiers, intending to awe
without terror barbarians abroad. The carrot
instead of the stick. But it would not stick
in imperial hearts, proud with punishment, dizzy with wealth,
though still *novi homines* in their own eyes. How to govern?
It would not be long before questions had outstripped answers
and the West would be overextended combatting the forces
it thought to control. But those thoughts were all wrong,
seen in time as the lies that they are, for we govern ourselves
as we govern our friends. We won't treat ourselves any better,
as creatures of habit, when habits are hard to unlearn
or control. How to govern? The ships may return or may not,
but our task is to learn all we can from them,
not as their servants or masters, but simply as friends,
with the knowledge that more wrecks will come
and that we would not like to be among them.

All Man Has Been

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/all-man-has-once-been/>

The Romans did a number on Europe,
and left it unable to roam free.
It's easy to see the obedience,
deep and habitual, challenged by Hegel
but then in the end even he was absorbed,
and the structure remains, bearing even the dead weight
of Derrida. Here in America, we broke free
early, but struggle to find the new balance,
so staggering into the graveyard, we stumble
upon ancient history, carved in stone,
inviting observers to ponder
all man has been or can be.

It may also help you

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/it-may-also-help-you/>

I come to ask you at this lonely hour
to believe less and hope less, and you, being wise,
will discern that to do so will weaken you. Yet,
I ask anyway, to teach you a new kind of strength,
not of castles impregnable but rather of men in pitched battle,
where throw or be thrown is the rule. You will surely
encounter in life many men who know well this arena
and they may hurl you into it unaware. So let's practice
and spar for awhile. It has helped me.
It may also help you.

Beyond the Locked Door

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/beyond-the-locked-door/>

I'm awake, and the gods
are fighting again. Is it Liberty,
or is it Democracy, or is it
their child, poor child
to be born from squabbling, and yet
no different than any child.

As the argument rings through the night
and arouses the neighbors for the umpteenth time,
I must wonder, although we do live
in the large house on the hill, whether any
would envy such conflict or those who live through it,
or whether they'd rather have peace,
even if it comes only through compromise.

Would be nice, I suppose, to have peace,
but would also deceive...and in any case,
we are the children of conflict. But why truth?
I ask this again, having no certain answer,
but fearing the dark night that waits just beyond the locked door.

Savage Dew

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/savage-dew/>

I knew what she wanted, but not what I wanted,
as the wind blew around the savage dew. It is true,
there are lovers who look just like you, but I too
have regrets left unsaid. They won't change, even with you
to change them, alas. I shall pine after darkness instead.

Life Over Victory

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/life-over-victory/>

I see them, streaming in numbers beyond compare,
having been asked to give up even the possibility of violence,
and having refused. Is their day coming? Not yet, but it comes
as it always comes, to political animals like us. Will today
be the day the walls fall, towers breached, with the crown
tossed up for grabs? It cannot be postponed forever.
May the winners choose mercy and the losers choose life over victory.

Never What It Used To Be

12 January 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/01/never-what-it-used-to-be/>

As Augustus created political morality,
we end it, and quash the *libido dominandi*
by conquering only as a last resort.
No peace secured through conquest shall endure,
now or forevermore, for pent up rage
must tear the fabric of the law.
I hear the call of this new herald
summoned by these years of struggle,
and it says we are great peoples,
in the plural, and if something moral
still remains, it is the ash of Vesta
with her embers glowing in each private hearth,
not in the hearth of state, and to all those
who would revive a prior time, she says
that it was never what it used to be
and could not be so now.

Response to a Query

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/response-to-a-query/>

Yes, Athens is in the Bible,
in more ways than one. If it's true
that you know so little, could you please
do so quietly? And have a little doubt?

The Flux

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/the-flux/>

If you really want to know what you are doing,
you will have to discern velocities, and not supposedly
immutable actualities. Flux is the friend of philosophers,
even of Plato, and thinking is just this: observing potentials
and projecting their future interactions. But most cannot do this,
and therefore most quail before indecision, as though it were
insurmountable evil. The thinkers, meanwhile, must keep all of their thoughts
to themselves, lest the noisy potentials discomfit the slumber of all,
while these secretly crave after flux, which they know as a god,
and *make sense of it*, to the dismay and chagrin of the rest.

Carefully

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/carefully/>

If I wander out into the ether,
out past all the ruins of time,
can you tell me how much of mankind
I shall find underneath or beneath her,
the One who encompasses all, who calls out
to the thoughtful, from Elsewhere, to dream
of new vistas and old things reborn?
I am seeking her, but with faint heart,
for I hear that her sorrow is growing
which soon must envelop the world.

Is it hope that deceives, or must we
wait for another, to cleanse our hands
and to break the enchantments that strangle
our tortuous souls, ever wandering here
on the night's Plutonian shore? Evermore
we shall wander, unless we can grasp
what it is that so sends us, beyond,
to some Other world, never once seen, touched, or heard.

Confusion and dismay must be expected
but not celebrated. Man is what he is,
not more or less, prepared at times,
and lost at times. There is no other way
to pass the wilderness of life,
so let us be content withal,
the pains we cannot change as well the joys,
and let us pass this much the wiser
sans the pains of fruitless hoping.

Call it coping, but don't call to it at all.
Learn not to call. Instead, fall back into
the life that fills us all, and breathe.
You must protect this life with every breath.
But you will see that it sustains itself
far better than you can. So let it be,
and as your lungs fill near the sea,

believe, and know that you are free
to live a full life, even one lived carefully.

More Authentic

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/more-authentic/>

Something changed a hundred years ago,
but was it the machines or was it our
collective unbelief, the signs of chaos poking through?
Amidst the dollars breeding dollars, men found
mysteries, and wondered, is this all, or are
new thoughts around the bend? Some still pretend
that worn out Order could revive, and others
dance in naked revelries, but we are not
who *they* were, so it seems. These changes mount
toward their climax, and it will be more authentic,
but it will not save us from the gasping seas.

Through the Unknown

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/through-the-unknown/>

If I venture out through the unknown,
will you follow, or will you deny yourself
freedom? Think not what you will, but what is,
and thus free yourself from the dominion of
power, awakened at last to the mysteries,
life's strange embrace, and the colors of all
that has been or will be. Do you see?
These are waiting for you, just beyond the heart's door.
Yearn no more, be at peace, find release, and let be what shall be.

New Healing

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/new-healing/>

Is there another way, out past ways that were tried
and retried, or is man eternally doomed to recur,
like poor Echo, alone in his cave? I would like to think
more things could be, that as old things were made,
so could new things be made, and encouragement
comes from the sun, which each morning endeavors
to rise like before, but with just some small hint
that the new day is new.

About you, listen, it is not my place to tell you,
but I will say anyway that dawn has awoken, and you
remain stuck to your bed, eyes glued shut,
but before long your hunger will drive you to wake
and by then it will be far too late.

Is there another dawn for stragglers, or will they
be left all alone, to fight over the scraps,
while the rest of the living world rises early
to chase the first light and its offering?

There will be time for repentance, be sure,
but there will not be baths to make pure.

I suspect it will come from the same place as always,
that kernel of hope that men need for their labors,
without which life pales when compared to its opposite,
and which rests inevitably upon mere conformity,
the group being group-like for its own sake.

I cannot make this prettier, ugly as it is,
and must be, for we spiritual beasts, always ready
to rip and to tear those who differ, to secure for ourselves
some asylum from loneliness. And yet it is we, the most lonesome,
who persecute, in order to shape the whole world in our image,
when perhaps they are fine as they are. I know not, know it well,
and proclaim it to all who will hear. Is my doubt unappealing?
Perhaps you will find that you too are in need of new healing.

True Healing

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/true-healing/>

I have often thought over how
in Eastern Christianity, sin is considered
a sickness to be healed, instead of
a violation to be punished. Much follows
from this, like how we blame the victim,
or really consider all sufferers to blame.
Could anything be less effective than punishment
if the goal is the curing of misery?
Thus our reformation, in the face of the most
ineffectual healing. We must break this habit
and restore to society places of healing,
true healing, which do not turn face and attack.

A Time is Coming

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/a-time-is-coming/>

A time is coming (it always comes)
when men forget themselves and punish others
in an effort to remember. Let us here recall
ourselves and stave off terror, lest it come
(time as my witness) as it always does,
and let us be not blamed, for though
the seas will rise and fall, we heard them call,
and tried to warn the sleeping masses
of their graves (we did not dig them),
where the floods will carry all
who dare to build on sinking sands.

Let it be remembered that here stood one
both firm and tall amidst the early gusts of storm,
and though this marker may be worn,
it holds a heart that may revive a nation,
even one so torn.

No More

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/no-more/>

Something in the soul cries out, "No more!"
against the lies, the toxic products, the malaise,
the lack of meaning, the addictions. How much more
will be endured before walls fall, and men find
hope again, and will it be true hope, or will
it lie again in time? I fear the worst, but is the best
so much improved that it won't also burn to ash
just when it's needed? I don't know, and I don't trust
those who do claim to know, but something in the soul
now stirs, and those who feel it tremble like those
waiting for the savage hordes to flow.

If I Yearn For More

23 February 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/02/if-i-yearn-for-more/>

The president stumbles, like so many times,
in so many places. Is this what it looks like?
The man, like his culture, stands pert at death's door.
This has happened before, and to us, but how little we know.
Is it back to the Gilded Age? Back to the old problem
of starving farmers and captains of industry, presiding
(please note the same word) over all. Who's in charge? Back
before the Progressives intended to intervene, there was money,
lots of it, but somehow not enough to go around.
It's as old as Cain, like our president, these cycles of bust,
the perennial bust of the workers, or so the Marxists say.
But is this how a culture dies, or how one is born?
Or both forever, interminable differences generating
life and death? I don't know. I will never know.
But I like to explore. It is good for the spirit
(especially one at death's door) to be exercised. So far
I've seen this president preside at death's door over
his hearse and that of his century, but time will forgive me
if I yearn for more.

The Task of Man

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/the-task-of-man/>

Let us turn the page here, and let us ask
who we shall be, and know we have a say,
for time, though strong, is neither master nor enemy,
but friend. It's time we think, if we dare think at all,
and only time makes worthy those
who rise before its call. So let us turn
and rise and make a better life, that they may say
that here a few stood tall who were not daunted
by the task of man, who faced it with all courage
even as dark winds were blowing.

--

The poets are singing again, about how cultures blend
and one fades into another, across the sands of time,
which litter the desert of peoples, lost and forgotten,
yet ever new, like the rising sun. Does that sun parch
or does it vivify? Only time will tell, we know that well,
although we also know ourselves, and possibly only that.
But poets sing regardless, knowing that this too shall pass,
that all must pass, but most of all this ratiocentric
obsession with self, with reason, with power, which plagues
this hour with Man so magnified nothing else breaks through.

--

But what else is there? Only God? And Nature?
We, no longer children, will not take our fairy-tales,
but crave more solid food, the real meat of the matter.
But too bad for us, the stories are the meat,
and always were, and our mancenteredness is only
one more story. C'est la vie. Back to the task,
as ever, editing, revising, and then publishing the draft
that we've received as our inheritance. But let's make it
a good one, not a tragedy or farce, but one
with heroes in their prime and worthy deeds.

Machine State of Mind

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/machine-state-of-mind/>

The problem with machines is they never change.
So we must simply have less of them,
having them only where they are most needed
and thus most effective. The mindless rote tasks,
the menial labors, the painful tediums: these
the machines may alleviate. But why did we ever
believe they could help us connect or find love?
It may be that our deepest, our bedrock identity
(here in America) always was tied to machines
and their state of mind. Our Constitution sits,
nigh a quarter-millennium after inception, there tempting us
never to change, though a change comes, it comes
and it always comes, from beyond the horizon.
But it's not here now. We have kept it away
with machines and their promises, so often kept
that we dare not examine their failures, lest we also
slide into failure with them, as so many ancestors have before.

Seeking Authorization

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/seeking-authorization/>

None of these thoughts have been authorized
by relevant authorities, but, nonetheless true, I
shall speak them, for truth is the common property
of a people, and a people is made up of persons who
(believe it or not) sometimes think their own thoughts.
Have you heard this before? Am I overreacting?
Then why are you here with your pitchforks?

Speak It Out Loud

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/speak-it-out-loud/>

Let it be remembered
that the stasis grew impenetrable,
that each side fought to kill
but weakened slowly, that the dawn
came ever closer but was not known,
that mankind in the twenty-first century
stayed unsure, despite its patina of knowledge,
and lest we be informed, we also grow
toward that dawn, because time moves us
out of Progress, into homes manmade and durable.

The living commences then with a story
about how we got here, through chaos and also
executive action, which foists upon common people
feelings and thoughts known to dazzle great minds.
Bamboozled thus, all wander aimlessly, doubting
that aims could exist or that any who champion them
have any motive but domination. If only they knew
about history, like that it exists, or that others have lived
other ways and still prospered, sometimes more than we.
But such things cannot be under this dark dominion,
the spectre of progress asleep at the wheel, like the God
that it claims to displace...

This disgrace is expiring, but what takes its place
it's not my place to say. Let the ones who will follow
decide what to call it. I only speak now, but I speak it out loud.

Whatever Comes

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/whatever-comes/>

It has been said and rehearsed that mankind is evolving,
that up the glass staircase of progress we tend,
but I fear that within us gnaws something familiar
from primitive times, which throws stones that could shatter
the staircase, whose fragments would rain down
and murder all those who live under it. Am I
just dreaming, or do you too feel it, the throb
of life dammed up inside living things great and small?
It could conquer us all, like it did when Saint Paul
said the stones would cry out after justice, but then what?
Rebuilding the same stair again, or rebuilding
glass cages again, or else onward to follies
we have not yet dreamed? I am cynical,
this you can tell, about Man's final purpose,
but I still believe in improvement, the struggle
of good against bad. It's just that there are no
godlike spectators, tipping the scales in one way
or another, and no covenant either, but just us
and what we have done. Can we live well this way?
I think I can, but you must decide for yourselves.
In the meantime, let's think, and not hurry in search
of replacements for gods that have died, but let time
in its time turn our clocks toward whatever comes.

Wait For Me

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/wait-for-me/>

What for me, I am thinking, it only
will take me a moment, but by then will it
even matter? Please wait for my answer before
you decide, I am sure it will be worth your while.

All Must Again Be Decided

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/all-must-again-be-decided/>

If posterity glances our way, they may say
we were craven, asleep at the wheel,
 lulled to sleep by American dreams in their
 haunting and chaste unreality, steady
 as life passed us by. Or they may say
 we strove with such recklessness nothing was safe,
 that once woken we crashed into everything,
 breaking the finest monumentos. But both were true,
 and how these can both be without cancelling each other
 remained our most pressing question. In some ways,
 they couldn't, and each chose to keep to its quarters,
 afraid of the great confrontation. Ideas, like kings, are enfeebled by flattery,
 losing their warlike spirit, assured of control over this much,
 no more. What happened when some chose to fight?
 What became of a once mighty country grown fat
 on its winnings, where none dared to fight,
 when it woke to the clarion call of new gods claiming surely
 that all must again be decided?

Anti-Nature

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/anti-nature/>

Somebody tell the president
that Nature intends to kill us,
she wants us all dead,
and she tells me so every day,
but she also brings forth all her flowers,
and if we can read the signs,
this last point may prove most important.

In Our Midst

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/in-our-midst/>

There's a story that goes untold
beneath the layers of simple nicety
where men are bought and sold
and where the rules are always clear.
Here power speaks while others listen
and plants dreams in helpless ears,
while foreheads glisten with the sweat
of wasted years, time out of mind.
This kind of thing is now familiar.
Those with no end in sight
must labor on for someone else
despite all promises of freedom.
Above ground we play and sing
the patriotic songs, forgetting,
as the healthy always do,
the sickness hiding in our midst.

Upon the Dawn

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/upon-the-dawn/>

Something now is seeming, and the stars
must shift awry, thus making way for some
messiah in the hay. It will take years,
but even these old fulsome ears may
hear it cry, before time comes to drop
the curtain on it too. So many things
have been and so few still remain,
but here we are, and we must try.
So turn your telescopes, and swivel your receivers,
for the messengers will ride upon the dawn.

Cultural Marxism

22 March 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/03/cultural-marxism/>

Call it what you will, but I
think "dialectics" will do, if understood
to mean what Hegel dreamed, the absolute
that flutters free. Of course we thinkers
know what he means, but some of us doubt
universals. Cannot some things be
believed, just because they have withstood
time's testing? Why must we apply
our own testing, in all times and places?

Regardless Marx too cared for ideas
more than he admitted, he just sought
to change them by changing material
conditions. His Doctors of History
have failed time and time again.
But "cultural dialectical materialism"
is just dialectics. The other two cancel.
The question remains when and where
to question, and how. Maybe Hegel
has worn out his welcome. Maybe Plato
knows best after all.

Set to Expire

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/set-to-expire/>

I find myself where I always was,
not quite perfect and not quite nothing,
but only a something that's set to expire.

All as One

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/all-as-one/>

What is to become of it,
the whirling gears of time
being what they are, and they,
or it (there being no difference),
aswirl together as if as One?
I do not doubt it, though
I question whence doubt comes
and whither any go who doubt
and thus hold firm. To some
cool purgatory perhaps, but
when the empires fall, when God
appears, when All casts off her veil
revealing Night, what will become
of us, the time-bound, who held doubt
as though a totem that could save?

A Relief

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/a-relief/>

In the deep,
the time swirls
like Nothing ever,
hurling out new gods
and old beliefs.

It's a relief,
really, after all
the faith, to be
set free, to be
as one is,
as all is.

Sending Signs

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/sending-signs/>

In the moonlight, one can see
what one means flicker like a flag
on a windy day. What *means* it
anyway? And what awaits that one
when all has passed away,
when time, the author of authors,
revives her spooky angels, sending signs
for those with ears to hear?

Believe in the Dawn

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/believe-in-the-dawn/>

In the twilight there's Caesar Augustus,
who brought in the Pax Romana,
becoming its sovereign, supreme over all.
But what violence lies behind every peace
we have learned. In that time we
have also discovered ourselves (go figure)
and now we shall never forget that all laws
are manmade, and can be manunmade
as required. When is it required? We know
of a few examples, no more. In the twilight,
we reach for a candle, but stumble,
take heart, and believe in the dawn.

Good Enough

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/good-enough/>

What did I want from her anyway?
Some affirmation? Maybe a thrill?
I know this: looks can kill,
but not words, which bring order
to those things that lack it.
I am not alone with my many selves,
so what role had she, if not merely
Intruder? Yet some sadness lingers
like a man defeated, and I must be
with the birds and the trees, for whom
I am good enough, 'til it passes,
and all the black mourners at all the black masses
never can lift this one pall, that I lack
what a woman needs, not by my fault
but by nature, and so I must seek
that of nature which does not offend.

Itself as a Prize

12 June 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/06/itself-as-a-prize/>

If one should ask for me,
tell them I wait by the fire
where life is consumed. That way,
if they look, they will go
in the right direction. I do not
know what follows after, but
this way is not for the mild.
It offers itself as a prize.

Tethered to Freedom

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/tethered-to-freedom/>

How do I cope with it, spent
and yet grasping for more, like a fish
out of water...what water can hold me
and not let me go? Or am I not
a creature of water at all? There are
things that one sees to believe, but
they are least important. The instincts
know better, and one of these yearns
for community. We are too free,
so it seems, each as free as the rest,
to fit in. If belonging were not in
our hearts, who would want to be free?
I see armies of others
refusing our freedom, insisting on some
new coherence (their own),
and yet we are here tethered
to freedom, for better or worse.

As All Time Passes By

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/as-all-time-passes-by/>

Love is a reason to suffer,
but one quickly finds that if one
disregards all the evidence, soon
the morass of unanswerable questioning
lingers like the stench of a swamp
with no egress. Still, without love
one finds nothing but thought
and its herds of passion, beleaguered
by hope without hope that some thought
could once matter and make out of men
something good. But no matter. Love still
is our greatest achievement, if known
in its truth as the glue that makes
coherence possible, here where men lie,
where men fight, when men live as all time
passes by.

Surely We Know Best

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/surely-we-know-best/>

It is a miracle each time, but,
none the wiser, we plod on,
transforming Nature's bounty,
making hers our own. What *is* life?
Just the animating principle, just
the motive force, the cause of growth,
just *everything that matters?* But
no matter, surely we know best.
Let's kill it all.

Things Unseen Though Known

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/things-unseen-though-known/>

In the beginning, one finds God
alone, on an empty beach, the waves
descending and ascending, like before
but never the same, slight modifications
adding up an ocean of change.
It makes much difference whether we
are there as well, or if we dwell
within the waves, well, then no use
in trying. But the moon and sun
and other stars reveal themselves to those
with open eyes, as other causes,
to the point that one was many,
and that God reflects the lights of all
as in a mirror darkly, surely a mirage,
as sure as man can be, yet free
to twinkle like a passing ghost
within our minds and memories,
of times long gone and things unseen
though known.

Justice

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/justice/>

How does one answer them, naked
and screaming for more, when the task
ever new yet the same, makes demands?
One is rapt by Sophia, beloved of philosophy,
whose darkness conceals all we know,
and makes hidden supposed self-evident truths.
Evermore? Or shall we again find that thing
that makes peoples cohere, nestled in us,
right next to the beating heart? It's a start,
but the task, ever new, makes demands,
and we may find ourselves unequipped
for its burdens, until we revisit
our gardens of men, and equip them
with sturdier material.

--

Child of darkness, darkness unverified,
tell me your secrets, and I will make hidden
what ought to be so. Let me guess. You are sure
that the empire is falling and ought to fall.
You have known all injustice. The beaker is full
of the dregs of revenge, and mankind is no better
than its worst have been. You will say this,
but time goes on, turning its wheel,
as you squeal and you moan about nothing
not already known by all those who have lived.
For you will not survive here unless
you can learn to forgive.

--

Turning and turning the wheel that keeps turning,
we know now that all Rome is burning,
was burning, and always shall burn
'til we learn that we are not pure atoms
but live here as one holy tribe.

It is hard to describe what I mean,
but not so far beyond that it cannot be grasped,
if one only had what one first came for,
so long ago, out of the ether and into this world
of mankind gone awry. But whence comes this true hope
for a justice no earth-dweller knows?

The Wind and My Place in It

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/the-wind-and-my-place-in-it/>

Can anyone remember the point of it all,
or have we lost it, falling
into some oblivion forevermore?
I am not one to remain
where I am not wanted,
and so talk of substance or soul
bears no weight. But I am among others
myself, and thus crucially work out
salvation through trembling (the fear has abated),
but just *whose* salvation remains to be seen.
I won't be there to see it, having
other things to be, and until then
I work for another. Is this, then, the point?
Or does this too not satisfy? What of the wind
and my place in it?

A Start

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/a-start/>

Let this be a start, and let it
answer for the pain of years neglected
by a faith alleged to free us from all time.
Is God still there when you are alone?
Or does he come in groups of three,
as legend has it? Answer me this
and I will leave you to yourself, and I will leave you
as you were and are and shall be.

Assassination

27 July 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/07/assassination/>

In those moments when everything changes,
by bullets or otherwise, know this:
that time carries on, and that we
are its ministers, solitary here
despite chaos, despite bloody pain,
though this is not enough to assuage
the unrest. What becomes of a people
shorn thus from itself by an act
of the most basic barbarism?
Some will say yes, others no,
but all must feel profoundly
the change that has come, and
the change that was barely averted.
In times like this, weep, but then
rise to your feet and speak loudly
that *weakness* inspires all bloodthirsty deeds,
for the strong have no need of them,
having instead the support of the people.
This weakness remains the great animus,
cause of all fear between men,
though this time it has been unsuccessful.
In time we will see what this means.

The Fulcrum of Time

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/the-fulcrum-of-time/>

In the face of death, who stands?
Buddha says an unwounded hand
may handle poison, but I say life
lives to wound, and who is not wounded?
But grant that the virtuous bear it better
than those sick with desire, death still
comes reaping through time to this moment,
the hour of decision, where all things
can change and where death also
reminds us of spring and new birth
on the fulcrum of time at the pivot point
of our lives.

Kindle the Flame

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/kindle-the-flame/>

Kindle the flame, turn the hearthstones,
and tell yourself why you have come.
A reminder to always believe,
even when there is no ground beneath you.
That flame flickers bravely in all darkness,
which ignites an embryo's life,
and drives it on. It's no small wonder
that we're here, or how we're here.
But then from time to time the hearth
grows cool, as part of the cycle, and our duty
is to tend it with all care. It's there now,
bhikkhu, and your path goes in a circle,
out into the dark and cold to bring flame there
and then back here to tend your own flame.
You must be aware. It's ancient,
inexhaustible, and rare. I thus commend you
to the present, if you dare.

Somewhere Other Than Belief

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/somewhere-other-than-belief/>

I see you there, pacing, remembering
all that was done or left undone.
Injustice, you know it well. It is true,
the belief is flawed, but so will the next belief be flawed.
We can do no better. Accept it,
and lean somewhere other than belief.

Good Left Undone

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/good-left-undone/>

How many wise men live quiet lives
withdrawn from the world and its folly?
Indeed they are wise to withdraw
from a world that is perishing.
Yet how much good is left undone?

A Warning

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/a-warning/>

Lost sheep want the shepherd's crook.
They feel their need.
But in the evening glow, few know
that night will come. This is your warning.

She's There

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/shes-there/>

I cannot find her, Sophia, the maiden
of stars, in the heavens, nor here
between men, but instead I discover her
under the surfaces, deep in the veins,
through the cracks of mankind in the chasm
of time, where all life begins, under
ideas, below even words. She is singing,
and I cannot find her, but I know she's there.

Where You Are Stepping

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/where-you-are-stepping/>

Power attracts the power-hungry, who,
always unfriendly (despite good appearances),
see other humans as prey, and devour
those too close to flee or too innocent to see
what man is. But take heart, there is room
in the emptier places, where trees are permitted
to grow as they will, as are men. Know this then,
that your place may not be by the glowing lights,
but in soil, time's detritus, the life or your elders
transformed into nourishment for you. Tread lightly.
You never know where you are stepping.

The Clock

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/the-clock/>

The Clock is a cruel master, compelling
the best of men to kneel and bow
before rhythmic, infernal vibrations of machines.
I am keen to unwind this tall tale
before more are injured, but I fear I'm too late,
for my schedule is full.

On the Verge

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/on-the-verge/>

Here we go, on the verge
of ourselves, at the edge
of another tomorrow, awaiting
enlightenment, which comes from...where?
If ourselves, then for what are we waiting?
If not, then we've got it all wrong.

Everyone's Wrong

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/everyones-wrong/>

Everyone's wrong about everything,
that's all, nothing more serious than that,
and yet all flickers bravely while perishing,
and few ever notice. Oh well, we are here,
are we not, so let's party, and not dwell
on substance or other mirages,
those lonely chimeras that keep thinkers up
and keep all others down...no, let's none of that.
Rather let's trace our way back to the stars,
where the gods always are, though we know
how they change, as *we*, always the same,
are the true pole on which it all turns...

Some may say it's absurd, and I hear them,
but how is a man to stay sane
in a tribe come mad?

Ancient Masters

11 August 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/08/ancient-masters/>

The ancient masters still know best,
so trust them. Let them lead you.
For you may find grace awaiting
in a secret place, known by the few
who think, there where a garden grows
for those who speak the truth.

Plants in Their Soil

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/plants-in-their-soil/>

When the peasants arrive, then you know
you're in trouble, for they do not come
when it's sunny. They'd rather destroy
than create, and their countenances indicate
malice deserved and served hot
like the flame that they carry
to torch all the structures that wrong them.

But Revolution itself has been absorbed
by the blob of authority proselytizing
itself forever and no other, that world order
beneath which we wallow, without which
we wage endless wars. But why struggle?
If some of our needs are met, why
complain? It appears that we need some third power
to mediate any antagonism, but this third
cannot be supreme without sucking the life
out of men, because (by definition)
it must not take sides. So it floats as its own
sideless side and makes cowards all those
who live under it, until they revolt.

But what grows in its place?
An American federalist dream, where each place
has a voice in the whole, but stays rooted?
I know of no better third, none more just
nor more durable, than one which respects
its constituents, who grow up like plants in their soil.

Nothing but Chaos

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/nothing-but-chaos/>

Humans live always on the edge of a knife,
and what separates death from life is decision,
made plain by the struggle, the crisis through which
we become what we aspire to be.

Metaphysics is goal-setting, a politics
of the imagination, turned upward by hope
to the light. Like all living things, humans
as well need that light, and the lack of it rots us
from root to branch. It's no wonder that we
are so rotten, indeed, it may be lack of wonder
that turns us away, back to mud and slime
and the perishing of all ideals. I am writing
to cast an illumination over all
that no longer deserves it, to thereby revive
and to elevate life from the trenches,
to send it back into the sky.

But what sky will receive us, who know too much,
who have tasted the fruit, who are God itself?
Only that which we dream for ourselves?
But my dream is not yours nor yours mine.
Yet we long for it, some true belonging,
the kind that was prophesied, coming to roost
over all. But which all? The true All, or just our "all",
the sum of experiences marking our world?
We say this will do, and we dare not look deeper,
for we find there nothing but chaos.

Dignity

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/dignity/>

Dignity is imbued through participation
in rituals (no other way), and the tribe
holds the key to the stair of advancement
on which men climb. It's a pity
to ask a man to raise himself, as if
he could, as if this is not itself a ceremony,
as if men think for themselves.

The Source of Most Problems

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/the-source-of-most-problems/>

I have been to the mountains,
I have been to the valleys, and I say
that all's well that ends,
but what goes on too long
is the source of most problems.

Dreaming

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/dreaming/>

What won't men do for a bit of dignity?
Somewhere a conscience stirs, but not here,
where much power distorts what men feel.
It's an end well begun and done many times before.
There's no hope of averting decline. The hope
is to reproduce and to leave in posterity
some seed that lingers and dwells in the hearts
of those marching into *their* decline, who thus also
must hope for some future, etc. But when does the living begin?
Or was this what life always had been, and shall be,
an imperative, blood-sucking physiology? No. I mean, yes,
but we also live otherwise, and harmonize, one with another,
in some holy music, divine if anything is. There is hope,
pure and natural as body but based on the human experience
of city-building, surely our most striking feature, although we don't
always succeed, we must try evermore to combine. Thus we shall
journey on, into whatever future we dream and, by dreaming, become.

The Discipline of Virtue

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/the-discipline-of-virtue/>

They have too much freedom, but who can stop them?
Surely no teacher, no sage, would dare impose on their freedom
unless willing to die, given what they are. And yet justice
rings true and cries out from the ether that we
are like mushrooms in a damp, dark cave, ill-adapted
to light and preferring our own noxious fumes. This
is freedom, the freedom to wither and suffer without
any destiny, not knowing better, forgetting that any have ever
been good. We won't hinder each other. We have that much.
But what of the discipline of virtue, acquired
through must repetition?

The Loss of Justice

26 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/the-loss-of-justice/>

These are the pieces of our lives
tossed over the board by a careless hand
which relinquishes claims to authority
and weakens its own grip on power.

The loss of Justice is the eternal theme,
for she remains queen of our hearts
though not queen of our hands.

Beasts

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/beasts/>

Our ideas have not caught up
with the torrents of change that have washed
over Europe, and thus Europe's children
still linger near old flames, but oh,
they grow awfully cold. What can spark
the next hope, when the flame dies completely,
and men once again become beasts?

Caught in the Gears

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/caught-in-the-gears/>

The wailing expands our horizons,
out past all we know stands
an answer, and further, new questions.

The people push down
the delusions of compliance.

A primate is caught in the gears
and nobody can help it.

We didn't move

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/we-didnt-move/>

We didn't move,
but the ground beneath us moved.

It was a tremor hardly felt
but soon observed with careful instruments,
then felt. I was aware too soon,
but others feel it now, and so it grows.

We are now somewhere else, but who?
The ground beneath us moves,
but we have never moved.

Genius

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/genius/>

The genius wanders through a field still wild
and says "Look at that!", then continues until
time runs out. Later others arrive and build homes there
with schools and with workshops and all the attendant
filth of mankind. Who can say which one knows
the place better? Who can say, because all are but one
or the other and none knows its opposite. But I
take the side of the genius, as one that is closer
to the original spring, the first fountain from whence we arrive
here on earth or wherever we are. Look and see
how very little the others have done that won't wither
and maybe you also will join in the next expedition
to who knows where and for whatever purpose we dream.

Many, Instead of One

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/many-instead-of-one/>

Nature is both good and evil,
and we are caught up in it,
tossed by the yin-and-yang tussle
within and without. Who then knows
whether nature opposes itself,
or is many, instead of one?

No Leg Up

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/no-leg-up/>

Gaze with me into this crystal ball
and see people asleep. They really believe
they're in heaven. Just look at them slumber,
as if they have banished all danger,
as if there will be no more pain. I choose
honesty, even when it must be ugly, and even
when others exclude me for it. Life's better
without the charade of success, the mirage
that the race ends with prizes, and not,
as it must, with return to the dust for us all,
with no leg up for those who have climbed.

Journeying Ones

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/journeying-ones/>

We were the journeying ones,
on a wander through wastelands,
forever approaching but never arriving,
mirage just beyond the horizon.

Less Imposing Principles

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/less-imposing-principles/>

Nature has no purpose,
and least of all is its purpose
ourselves, who cascade between energies
controlled by nothing. This is our belief,
though unspoken, well-founded
on experience we try to forget.
But may be some new hope
could order thought, around less dubious
and less imposing principles.

Care Again

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/care-again/>

There is a God-shaped hole
in our sky, and we
do not care, do not *take* care,
take care of life itself,
in all of its forms. How can we
care again?

A culture in which we can thrive

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/a-culture-in-which-we-can-thrive/>

It is one thing to know there is chaos,
another to nourish that chaos, and make it grow.
We are not in the mind of God, this much
is true, but for that reason we must *think*
and bring the world under a rule. It will not
rule itself. Our order is good (at least
it can be), but it will not grow itself.
So let us sow and tend and reap
a culture in which we can thrive.

Out there in history

27 October 2024

<https://poems.culturing.net/2024/10/out-there-in-history/>

We have learned all the virtues of formlessness
and thus become skeptical
that any such thing could cause happiness.
What do we know?
Maybe out there in history were some
who knew better,
and maybe we still could be like them.

Pilgrims

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/pilgrims/>

Sheep remain sheep, like most men,
and I know of no other way for them,
but I know that my own way is different,
and therefore has differing rewards.

I'm alone, it is true, but I'm also free,
and that's part of the American dream.
More importantly, I have seen God
in the hidden places, those which no group may enter,
where each one is man and man only,
no tribe to fend off the attackers.
God dwells there, in a holy of holies,
awaiting the pilgrims who soon must come.

C'est la vie

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/cest-la-vie/>

The stupid are at home, meanwhile
the wise are lost at sea,
and we can be so many things
that few are anything, but c'est la vie.

Now and Then

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/now-and-then/>

The artist scours an empty mind
to remove any residue. Then he begins.
He must find his misfortune in asking
what questions are askable, and by whom.
It will be no quick summary, no
sudden triumph, but rather the slow decline
of all that has come before. Only then
will he lift his brush or pen, to define
what will grow in new spaces, what begs
to be heard, or what utters the gulf
between now and then.

From Beyond

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/from-beyond/>

How many cultures have come and gone,
and how many days remain unborn
in the cavernous womb of the world?
What is time, that it comes and goes,
and yet some things remain, like the Ship
of Theseus? Washed here by time, we have no eyes
for what could have been or will be.
We are stranded, denied true transcendence,
but seeing things come from beyond.

Light Bent by Earth

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/light-bent-by-earth/>

Gaze (with proper protection)
upon that boiling vat of hydrogen
on which all things depend.
What mind of God dreamed such a thing?
And yet we dream it?

If you dare, you'll also learn
that eyes can be damaged by staring directly
and must find some other way.

As light bends, refracted by us
and what we are, that glowing star
becomes another Power, holding sway
as men hold sway, until the break of day
when light, most practical light,
becomes our guide, whether bent or otherwise.

We do not care for the truth of the matter,
for truth never brought a child to maturity
nor guided a people to water. But light,
bent by earth, can do both, and much more.

Never Been Wrong

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/never-been-wrong/>

I've never been wrong before,
but there's a first time for everything,
like that time when two plus two equalled five,
or when men lived together in peace.

Still I'm tramping on
through this wasteland of abandoned dreams.
I find a few worth keeping, and yet
all is not what it seems.

One More Line

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/one-more-line/>

This begins where that ended,
after all this time.
It was nice while it lasted.
Here's one more line.

One of Those Days

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/one-of-those-days/>

It's one of those days
when the shadows invite contemplation,
and all that has been becomes again.
Revolution has been overstated.
Have you tried just not worrying?
We highly recommend it.

Keener Insight and Better Plans

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/keener-insight-and-better-plans/>

In a few years the world will look different
and we are to blame or to praise,
but it's too late to stop it now.
In a few years, days, months, hours,
the sun will continue its circuit
as we, silly, unravel our momentum,
and reveal who we were when decisions were made,
back when things could change. Things keep changing,
of course, as expected, but I hope
for a day with keener insight and better plans.

Think with Me

18 January 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/01/think-with-me/>

I do not know where you are going
or where you have been, but I think
you are here and suspect that you
really are somewhere. Think *with me*,
and allow these still words to move again,
through your soul. I am warning you,
many ideas are dangerous, and you,
only you, are the one who can help yourself know,
which will help you, and which will hurt you.

The Form of the Matter

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/the-form-of-the-matter/>

Are we at it again?
Always moving, progressing, becoming ourselves...
One way ends as another begins.
There are secrets within, and yet I
am without, on the fringes, where men
build their fortresses which soon turn to sand.
Who's to say whether this rubble matters
in the cavernous space of time,
whether we even matter, whether anything matters,
or what mattering even means? It has meant
both too much and too little. It means that
we have set for ourselves a goal, but we're fickle
and have had too many goals already. And yet,
what else can we do?

But I say
we matter, because otherwise life becomes
too much like death, too unmoored
from the form of the matter, and this
is our greatest fear. Is there no other way
to explain the true wonders of life?

Think Harder

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/think-harder/>

I invite you to think again
your own thoughts, not the echoes of others.
I invite you to be that much human,
for although most do not do such thinking
the few that do earn a place for mankind
among stars, in the nebulae of wonders
that nature produces. So, please, go on thinking,
to your mind's content, ere the rabble return
from whatever destruction they've dreamed up today.
But think harder for them, with some pity,
for they did not make their own natures
and you did not make yours.

Dream Wisely

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/dream-wisely/>

Witness the morning,
alive with the rising sun,
moving up through the treetops.

I have come to remind you
that you are the vestibule of dreams.
Dream wisely.

Outside the Law

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/outside-the-law/>

Who would have guessed
that another dawn comes,
even for us? Yet it comes
as we wander from day to day
like the children we are in the morning.
when life is too bright and we shield our eyes
lest they burn out, as has happened
to those who were here before. In that dawn,
I stand ready to embrace the new spirit,
for the blind have at times made good poets,
and I feel likewise aligned with the tides
of those minds that can linger over all
the minutia that others pass by, and thereby
can derive at their leisure some new eyes
for a new kind of pride for mankind.

But you know none can do it alone, and it's true
that belief is the glue that combines us, even those
found untrue, but for me, as for you, the delay
between my needs and the will of the group forces
solitude, and I would just like to invite you to join me
outside of the Law of Rome, where the spirit can grow
to fill needs and then test the waters apart
from any pre-ordained Plan. Yes, there's life there,
and lots of it, but we who have broken our chains
now stand dumbstruck, unsure how to build or produce order
without simply rechaining others, as well as ourselves,
with the shackles of Law run amok (even making
chainbreaking its own kind of law!) I would like
to remind you: think harder. Our children depend on it.

Hardly two millennia

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/hardly-two-millennia/>

What does it mean for Rome to fall,
to keep falling, as if through space,
a figment of the mind? It means
that we are free! The masters perish, and we
gleefully divide their very bones, and yet
we live on their estates or what is left of them.

New Hearts

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/new-hearts/>

Who will remember us? We,
doom-scarred and battle-stricken
who never initiated the mysteries of procreation
but still create in other ways,
through song? It is at least a hundred years until
our names be lost, our property divided or destroyed
though words live on, not just on paper or on screens
but in new hearts.

More alarming by the day

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/more-alarming-by-the-day/>

Who is to answer them, the critics
without a direction, the spineless destroyers,
the miserable seeking company? Not more like them,
not their progeny, not those in chains, but the free.
We have made all men free, so we say,
but it has not gone well, or at least
it has been a mixed blessing, where most cling to freedom
as devotees, as fervent and small-minded as any peasant,
and who is to sing to or for them?
Such a soul is not a place for song,
being wracked with uncertainty and crushed by the burden
of thinking through things on its own. Why despair?
Even that is unhelpful, when men have been made
more than useless by systems, demands, institutions
that expect them to doubt what they are, although
at the same time, to belong is in fact what they are.
They are drawn to the group by instinct, but these groups
proceed to destroy the group instinct. So what can we say?
There is nothing to say, one would like to pass by,
but this power becomes more alarming day by day.

All Too Soon

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/all-too-soon/>

Observe the winds of change, but do not bow.
You are here anyhow, where things can change
and where we must make choices, yes and no.
It is *your* time to go, and yet you do not know
what happens next. I beg of you please with respect
do not tarry forever or plan every inch of your kingdom,
but go and be baptized by fire, as some were before,
and take heart, and take action, and burn what is rotten,
but leave root and stem that the plant may regrow,
for the next harvest comes all too soon.

Lord will it also be sweet

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/i-have-lived/>

I have lived in a time when living
was out of fashion. I have heard my own howl.
What happens when the sword of Damocles falls
as if by accident? Who prospers? In the nick of time
I am running toward renovation, and it will be painful
but Lord will it also be sweet.

A Time for Beginning

08 March 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/03/a-time-for-beginning/>

If there was ever a time for beginning, it's now,
in the cool embrace of both past and future, holding firmly
the hands of both, in between what has been and will be.
But this now, at this moment, is specially charged
with an urgent decision, to moor to the shores of a recent past
or cast off into waters unknown. But those waters have been known before
by some like us, and some came out better for knowing.
Are we so accustomed to Progress and all its accoutrements
that we grow too fat to endure? Or are we so hasty to abandon
the ways of our fathers that no sacred temple shall stand?
It is both, and neither. It is time to begin
the assembly of the future, but keeping in mind
the successes as well as the failures of those who came before.

Ever Ready to Blossom Again

05 April 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/04/ever-ready-to-blossom-again/>

Let's break open the shell of the past
and invite the discomfort of knowing. This way
is the way of the hero, demanding courage.
You are that hero, and I...I am only your guide,
here reminding you of quests left undone and treasures forgotten
out there on the cold plains of Lethe. So many
have come and gone, so many...but you are here now
to remember, and put back together what once,
or a few times, made life more bearable,
here where the shores of the past meet the future's ocean,
where all life occurs, and where, if you listen,
an ancient god stirs, ever ready to blossom again.

Hard to Explain

05 April 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/04/hard-to-explain/>

I, too, was young, and carry inside me the memories of youth.
Like an onion, the layers grow, but the deeper layers remain.
It is hard to explain but it's easy to know.
At one time you, too, were aware of this.

All Rise

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/all-rise/>

It is time to face your adversary,
but does he have a face? Or is he
idea only, or, less, an abstraction
imbued by one's training for combat?
It's time nonetheless, notwithstanding these questions,
for there are the drumbeats of war,
and you, poor you, are heard chanting
destruction upon those you do not know.
Is it time, or are drums known to lie?
We must fight one another, they say,
in good Latin, but I have begun to doubt
their designs. Can you question it?
Can you too sniff out these rats of the mind
and in place of them take hold of visions
in which all rise? It is time
to expunge adversarial lies from our laws,
from our thoughts, from the skies.
We have only begun to understand what could be
when our whole is greater than its parts,
when we all comprise something noble,
when no one is master or slave.

The Curtain Falls

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/the-curtain-falls/>

The curtain falls on a people in pain.
"God is dead" says a man born insane.
There is nowhere to run. There is nowhere to hide.
They are standing alone in the rain.

A jester appears by their side.
He is laughing though he is no guide.
Tomorrow, he says, is no longer.
His apple is tempting their pride.

Still, he is certainly stronger
than those who prefer to fear-monger.
But even the laughter must wane.
And then what remains?

Yeats' Footsteps

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/yeats-footsteps/>

If I follow Yeats' footsteps
to the gates of Constantine's city,
what will I find? A sense of order,
perhaps, most lacking in the West,
but one we can borrow? I doubt it,
as much as I share the longing,
for we are committed to Roman belligerence,
scions of the eternal city. What care we
for order or harmony? Conquest is too much fun.

Thinking Begins

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/thinking-begins/>

This is an impression made concrete,
the birth of ideas, the origin of reason
(of one chain of reason), and next comes
deduction, and then experiment. But listen,
friend, for the sounds of inspiration
made manifest by one who has had his thumb
on the pulse of time. Only after this,
thinking begins.

Somewhere, Somehow

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/somewhere-somehow/>

What are we building? A kingdom,
a fiefdom, for a new rule of law?
We have been to the top of the pyramid,
discovering Nothing, the black hole consuming
all those who pursue reputation. But what
are we building? It is not enough to tear down.
We will have to live somewhere, somehow.

You Carry It Always

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/you-carry-it-always/>

The Spectator steps through the door
into Nothing, aware of himself and the other
selves of which he is part, falling faster
than rhythm or rhyme can describe. It's a pity
no home was awaiting, but this is no time
to look back. With feet braced and arched back
he descends through the labyrinth of thought
toward origins, never a settled being, forever
turned forward and moving with things that flow.
But you know he remembers another time,
before he was here, before any here was,
in the space between thinking and being,
the caverns of essence, brimming with glittering stones.
I would like now to show you this place,
to invite to your mind a new feeling,
the oldest knowing, which hereafter reigns
as it always must reign, although so few can know
(are you one of them?). Look to the hills
for the meaning of meaning, and you will not find it,
but look to your heart and it's there, where
it cannot be dislodged by violence
or brought to account by tribunals...it's there,
and you carry it, always.

Nothing

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/nothing/>

Nothing is what is claims to be.
It has no things.
Without things, it has no thought.
Without thought, it has no meaning.

How Much Time

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/how-much-time/>

How much time must pass,
how many ages fade
before we build to last,
before our debt is paid?

We labor, it is true,
amid the factories and glass,
but skies are sometimes blue,
and one would like to ask,

What purpose serves the labor?
It is very hard to prove
that working hard can save her
who is troubled by our mood.

But no more questions,
for they do not seek an answer.
It is only in the quest for more
that life has any savor.

Many Smiles

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/many-smiles/>

There's a sort of haunting indiscretion,
a pain just peeking through, in many smiles.

Corners of Strangeness

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/corners-of-strangeness/>

I am having the strangest life,
and you are my audience, always
just barely there, in potentia, never in flesh.
But let me remind you, lest you forget,
about corners of strangeness left unsaid,
where clocks strike forever and both you and I
become One.

Had You Been There

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/had-you-been-there/>

Had you been there, you would know
the way the sweet day-lilies grow,
but you had too much email.

On the Side of the Earth

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/on-the-side-of-the-earth/>

I shall plant myself firmly
on the side of the earth,
and take part in discussions
about love and worth
with perspective: we are not
forever, though something calls warmly
from elsewhere, to beckon us home.

Labor Pains

30 May 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/05/labor-pains/>

These labor pains are for you,
as I offer this gift. Can you take it?
Or is it unwelcome? I cannot decide.
But *you*, you will have to decide.

That Hollow Moon

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/that-hollow-moon/>

*We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.*

*I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.*

- Yeats, *Adam's Curse*

Moon shines ever new, a changing world,
as we, thrust in the void, spin madly,
daring not to be deceived, but also
floundering. Oh, if only the old high way
could save us, bring back to earth the faith
that once illuminated ancient hearts. But
it is lost, and has been lost for quite some time.

Can time redeem us, or is time itself
most doubtful, playing cards with all our hearts,
without remorse? We sit grown quiet too.

I could go to her

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/i-could-go-to-her/>

On the doorstep of adventure, I write to you
(one last time?) about all that could be.
You will know so much better than I
what became of myself, whether obstacles
or I proved stronger. But here on this precipice
overlooking all, I confess it,
I feel afraid. Is it courage or hubris
that pushes me on? Is it time? Or
is it mere chemistry, stirring these bones
with infusions of blood? I don't know,
but I do know that I must linger
and dwell within this possibility: she is there.
I could go to her. I could also be there.

Woken by Storms

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/awaken-to-storms/>

Climbing back down, into sheets of myself,
I have danced at the summit of dreams,
but no longer. The way goes through many a village,
all dark, with no room at the inn. But no matter.
I must venture on as my only companion,
I must face the frost with no fear in my heart,
lest the others be woken by storms.

Just One Moment More

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/just-one-moment-more/>

Back to myself, coming home, it's a wonder
that any can dream, that the dreaming goes on
amid war, amid pain...can it be? or are dreams
merely dreams? But who authors them? I do not know,
though I think that we do it together. So why
be alone? That I do know. Because I am drawn to the water
of origins, back before any were separate, I feel
its love far more strongly than any love of mammals.
I feel that the earth is my home,
and no smaller home will do.
So I wander in spirit, awaiting
the needed reconnection, unable to settle
or build any firm foundation, because
I know none will suffice.
And yet it was nice to believe,
to be free, then no more be deceived.
It was nice, and I choose to remember
before I forget, and to dwell and to linger
among all the sugar and spice
for just one moment more.

Passion chokes out thinking

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/passion-chokes-out-thinking/>

How many thoughts must I lose
to distraction, to chasing dreams
or ghosts of dreams? It is written
that I shall abide here. In time
you will understand, you will follow the thread
back to daylight, and nurse your own wounds.
Why then linger? Why hope? Is Pandora
still casting her curse? It gets worse.
She is queen of this world, and her gifts
must inspire destruction. Who hails
from a distant land? Who knows
or cares, when passion chokes out thinking
in its slumber?

The Presence of Love

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/the-presence-of-love/>

Come to me, spirit. Invite my displeasure,
but don't leave without first deciding
which moments to spare. You are there,
I am not. Can it be some other way,
or must I be like those burned by light of day
in the presence of love?

How much love

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/how-much-love/>

How much love can I muster,
What kind of rule can I bring
To a heart that has lost its luster,
A mind that can only sing?

Daylight

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/daylight/>

She was like daylight, her visions
unfolding beyond my control. What a pity
no strong arms could greet her. A pity,
but one that I cannot assuage.
But then why must she be so beautiful?

Make my dreams true

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/make-my-dreams-true/>

There comes a time when a man
is whole, and can truly say yes. That time
may be coming for me, but the hour is late
and so many decisions have already been made.
Is it true? My heart beats for her,
yes, it is true. But am I fit for love,
or for even attempted love,
after all this time? Worms will eat through
all things, so they say, so what lasts?
Only dreams, but is love but a dream?
I'll dream longer, and make my dreams true.

As Only You Can

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/as-only-you-can/>

I have passed through the valley of Sirens,
and, tied to the mast, I could hear
what I wanted to hear. It is fine
to move on, to break free, from this strangest disease
we call love (although love like Proteus has many forms),
but this dalliance had not the flexible grace of Greece
but the harsh and inviolate law of Rome.
With the Good Book strapped to her girdle,
there was no way in for intrepid sailors like me.

Bon voyage, ma chérie. I salute you
in French, hoping some of its grace
(grown on top of Rome's soil) can inform
what must be a hard life, and make supple
what begs to be so. You are *woman*,
and I know you know what that means.
You must bend without breaking, receiving
the energies of just one man,
here on earth, not in heaven. They will not be
perfect, nor can you demand they be so,
but they will be yours to distribute as only you can.

The Land of the Same

02 July 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/07/the-land-of-the-same/>

Who is the boss of them, clambering
after Forever, in search of some other world,
if that world is not real? Who's to say,
whether this is permitted or that? They forget
how to answer these questions. Afraid of the dark,
they burn five-hundred candles each night,
as Zoroaster might prescribe, to no avail.
The dark reemerges in sleep, in dreams,
and in each indecision that comes their way.
Who's to say, when nobody can *say* at all,
in the country of echoes, the land of the same?

The one who will understand

01 August 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/08/the-one-who-will-understand/>

I think humans are monsters
and there's no cure for it.
But you, mi amore, you are different.
You are the one who will understand.

Less perfect than it seemed

01 August 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/08/less-perfect-than-it-seemed/>

Even unrequited love
can change a man, awaken
sleeping powers of the soul, inspire
courage. So take heart, and listen
from the start to every call.
Don't be afraid to fall.
But do not fall too fast,
for as things pass, this too shall pass,
and what remains will be less perfect than it seemed.

Vassals of Despair

01 August 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/08/vassals-of-despair/>

*God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.*

- E.A. Robinson, *Luke Havergal*

What is our theme? Alert
while others dream, we see through all?
But then we start to fall,
and though the whispered words do call
through falling leaves, we hear them
not at all. It's too much trouble,
hearing, isn't it? I say awaken slowly
in your own time, not as words or leaves
or others make demands, but when the light
inspires in you that moving force, which drives
the bud to blossom. Only then can you
feel free.

Listen to me: there is a way out,
up through years of painful memories, to hope,
which sits enthroned upon the hearts of happy people,
who, like us, were once the vassals of despair.

Farewell, Isis

01 August 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/08/farewell-isis/>

Evening comes, and day wanes.
What a glorious dream! What a hope!
Then no more. Are you sure
you can make things last? Are you sure?
I have been to the house of the dead.
I have waited and moaned
with the other lost souls,
but when Isis appears, I say:
staying is better. What folly.
And yet it is better to know,
I suppose, than to wonder,
but life without wonder is death,
and no hope can awaken all those
who refuse. Farewell, Isis.
Return to the world of the living
and look for your happiness there.

Growth

01 August 2025

<https://poems.culturing.net/2025/08/growth/>

Into the fathomless woods
goes a boy, and then out comes a man.
Do you understand? It is foolish, and yet
it is life itself. What *is* growth?
And how dare we control it?

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