

# culturing a book of poems

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## Ahura Mazda (the Question Remains)

20 March 2023

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

I feel the weight of Cyrus,  
feel is 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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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.

## **Emptiness That None Can Understand**

*21 February 2023*

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*

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

*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*

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*

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*

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

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*

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*

"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*

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.

## **Elite Waters**

*17 January 2023*

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

*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 Brittania,  
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*

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*

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*

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 Übermenchen 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*

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 Like May Yet Be**

*17 January 2023*

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*

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*

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.

## **Back to the Mines**

*15 December 2022*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

I open the door. It is not clear  
whose being-there distrubs 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.

## **After Tomorrow**

*04 November 2022*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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

## **After "A Late Walk" by Robert Frost**

*29 November 2022*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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

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 patteredened 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*

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*

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*

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*

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?

## All Silence

*14 October 2022*

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*

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*

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*

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 it's emptiest center, near time.

## Time

*14 October 2022*

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.

## **Afterthought on the Romantics**

*21 September 2022*

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*

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 millenium  
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*

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*

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*

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

## **Sandcastles**

*12 September 2022*

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.

## Aletheian

*31 August 2022*

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*

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*

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

## **Feet of Rain**

*31 August 2022*

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*

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*

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*

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 commeraderie,  
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*

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*

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*

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

"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*

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*

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.

*21 July 2022*

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

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 void.

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

## Belly of the Whale

11 July 2022

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*

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

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*

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

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, now must 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*

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*

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

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*

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?

## Fading Feeling

*18 June 2022*

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

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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.

## Electricity

*02 May 2022*

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*

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*

She does,  
the one  
whose voice you know.

## **After Reagan**

*03 April 2022*

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*

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*

The Word  
became machines  
and dwelt among us.

## The Winds of Change

*12 April 2022*

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*

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*

"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.

## **Phalanx of Mind**

*07 March 2022*

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*

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*

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.

## **Words**

*24 January 2022*

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.

## **Phenomenology of Science**

*25 December 2021*

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.

## Beyond Power

*10 November 2021*

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*

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.

## **Lost Forest**

*28 October 2021*

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?

## Making Sausage

*13 September 2021*

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*

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.

## **Old House**

*09 July 2021*

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.

## What we find by singing

*07 May 2021*

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.

## The wind in the leaves

*13 April 2021*

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.

## **Planting Time**

*14 February 2021*

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.

## The Enduring and Unchanging Dao

*14 September 2020*

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.

## **Homecoming**

*22 April 2020*

*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.

## After Lincoln

*24 September 2019*

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*

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.

## **Lady in the Dark**

*03 August 2019*

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*

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*

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 pond'rous,  
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.

## **White Shade**

*07 July 2019*

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.

## Crickets

*28 June 2019*

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.

## The Lady

06 May 2019

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!"

*27 March 2019*

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*

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.

## Nixon at the Threshold of the Lincoln Memorial

13 January 2019

*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?

*09 November 2018*

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*

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.

## **Mysteries**

*01 August 2018*

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.

*01 April 2018*

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*

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*

*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.

*16 October 2017*

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.

## **Countrified**

*06 April 2017*

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*

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*

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*

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?

## A poem

*28 October 2016*

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*

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.

## **Another ending**

*22 September 2016*

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*

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*

*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.

## Valediction to Images

*06 August 2016*

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.

## **Scents of the Divine**

*14 January 2016*

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

We know only wafts  
of distant breezes.

## The Choir

*18 January 2016*

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.

# Fragments Shored Against Ruin

24 October 2015

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.

*20 July 2015*

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*

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*

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*

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.

## Romance Revisited

*07 May 2015*

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.

# **Song of Sophia**

*24 July 2014*

## **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.*

## **Perspicuity (For Example)**

*14 April 2014*

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

Or the malignantly languorous  
koala supping on divinities.

## **Birth**

*05 March 2014*

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.

*15 May 2011*

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.

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