



Notes, miscellaneous and in progress,
about *Frameshifts* and related works

by
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Frameshifts began with Wando and Fairall. And Irene. And Avery, Richard, and Wayne. And needs and wants. Trailing the project is a pile of research notes, cards, & advertising copy. Irene says she's not going back to it. But one does go back in dreams. One goes back all the time.

Anyway, I'll try to give you the sense of this collection before it's discarded. I work slowly, so don't expect everything at once. And the book is written, so don't expect me to repeat what's in it. And don't expect this account to be tidy. I work from the top of the pile to the bottom. And don't look for an index. I'm doing well to stay awake long enough to remember where I stopped before I fell asleep.

From my *portal*, I watch the wispy monsoon clouds of mid-summer assemble in layers over the distant, layered rock-face of the mesa. The millions of nuclei bouncing about erratically in the troposphere somehow make sense of each other, arriving through random motion at a layered cumulus pattern, just as the dynamic flux and heave of the Earth's innards and the drift of particles and bodies arrive at the layered pattern of the rock-face; just as the random drift of sensations reassemble on a book's page into layered patterns of meaning and purpose, wants and needs. More lines, layers, patterns, sentences.

Why do we write books? It's not simply personal expression; it is the expression of the community's mind.

So you won't see a blog of my daily activities. They are irrelevant to the conversation we have in the book. The book is a skilled performance—or as skilled as we could make it. Like a stage production or concert, it is a contrivance or artifice, an arrangement of selected words made by the narrator-arranger-poet. What I eat for lunch may affect the arrangement, but the nutritional ingredients are irrelevant to the possible meanings of the arrangement. It is a text presented for you to read. It is to be considered on textual grounds. Perhaps you are mystified, perhaps edified. Don't expect for me to claim that it is any more than a text or to invite you to investigate my life in order to make the text something else—an authority on life, a therapy, a self-help plan. Your response can transform it, but to me it is satisfactory as a text. The pattern itself is enough.

The prophet Isaiah wrote (*Is 55:2*)
“*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*”

So much of what we want and need ends up as spending for unsatisfying commodities—goods or services. Consider cigars—goods because they are good for the cigar makers, a mouthful of volatile tars for the smoker, but not good for the population; indeed, unnecessary, useless, and wasteful. Or consider an abstraction. Is an abstraction useful? A poem? A book? We say “whatever gets you through the day,” as if days were viscous and we like Mayfly larvae. Irene might say that a poem gives you “purchase” on the day. Ah, but what if we avoid the harmful, useless, and wasteful? What then?

The terms are shifty. Harm. Use. Waste. One must know who is harmed, what is used; how waste is made. Context is needed. A plastic bag is useful in one context, harmless and not even wasteful; but it’s dangerous, toxic, and useless elsewhere. What is the priority of these contexts (or *frames of reference*)? Veblen showed that social hierarchies have traditionally determined priorities. One group –warrior-hunters, for example—is deemed more important than other groups. Setting values for wants, needs, “getting, spending,” and laying “waste our powers” is thereafter done with reference to this group. But what is good or useful? Not The Good. That vein played out long ago. Is it good or useful to make rope if the rope is used to bind slaves? Maybe it’s better to ask, *What are the criteria for deciding on good, useful, and life-promoting concerns?* One can perform an apparently harmless act and yet damage or hurt. We say this happens “inadvertently.” *Primum non nocere*, the physician says. And yet how many physicians do harm inadvertently?

Too much is uncertain, unknown. Not the least of it is human nature. What is the other guy thinking? What is he going to do? First principles often collapse under self-interest. Use, meaning, reverence –all are *assigned* values. The path we set determines our decisions. Like the clouds and the rock-face, we begin with random motion. Assemblies of thoughts and patterns of behavior arise. Meaning and purpose arise. Layer on layer. And then, at a distance from ourselves, we discover responsibility. We begin to

assign values instead of falling into them. We begin to make order instead of watching it arise around us. We make art; we make lives. The path we set will determine our decisions, so we tell stories. The way we intend to travel, the country we intend to pass through, the place we are going, and those who will go with us—all this informs our narrative and our life choices. In the flux beneath the choice of a path lies the seductive world of random events, violence, disorder, and meaninglessness—seductive because it denies responsibility, as biblical characters were fond of doing.

Many possible ready-built narratives exist. The Way of Tao, The Way of the Cross, The Beauty Way, The Socratic Quest. Eddy reflects on this in *The Profit of Doom* when he says:

Maybe Crawley wants Tom to know his own reading, his part of the signal.

Maybe for some it doesn't matter about their parts.

They go on serving at tables or fixing engines or writing in their books.

But maybe others want to know where their part is—

What prepared the way for them,

Where they are, and who will receive them.”

Some of the narratives are delusional or destructive. A.E. Housman wrote:

When shall I be dead and rid

Of the wrong my father did?

How long, how long, till spade and hearse

Put to sleep my mother's curse?

For many communities, the answer is “never.” The narrative cannot be changed. The frame of reference is rigid.

You're wondering where I'm going with this. Before I fall asleep, let me get this down: *This brings me to Crawley's solution.* Perhaps his Salvage, periodically dissolving and moving its longhouse-factories to new locations, seems simplistic. Perhaps it doesn't account for all that's needed in a community. As it simultaneously affirms the personal impetus for creative engagement and the necessity of trimming wants to needs, perhaps it raises an issue that it doesn't solve. I take these points. But it is a narrative, not an

exposition. Perhaps it suffices to say that the social purpose of *Frameshifts* is to question some of the rigid narratives of contemporary life and suggest other options.

Brief notes about *Problems with Authority* and the Randall stories.

The icons, such as the hats and jar of peaches, link to the stories they introduce. Even the fifth story, in the center of the book, has an icon: a blank space.

Central to *Frameshifts* and to the Marginal Notes website is a response to this blank space. *Frameshifts* is a threnody for special people and places. A meditation upon loss and transience, it is not a self-help book, however. Because there is no simple or singular path through the work of grief, many kinds of loss are considered. Although the genres shift, the characters continue through the stories, each of their paths a unique response to loss. The book begins as a mystery and ends as a poetic appeal for a sustainable way of life. It shifts its frame of reference from character to character, genre to genre, entertainment to instruction, without losing track of characters or story-line.

Readers can begin the book at any story. Connections will appear in the next story read. The reader who is intrigued by the connections will read on, maybe by going to the beginning. Although it initially seems to be a story collection, the form shifts from story to linked narratives, to narrative poems, to novel. Each of the eight stories has a beginning, middle and end. As one reads them, however, it soon becomes apparent that none of the endings and beginnings is what it seems. The uncertainty and growing suspense about how it will all come out create such anticipation that one becomes immersed in this imaginary world. Readers may enjoy the challenge of solving mysteries, the suspense of a military thriller, the intrigues and relationships of characters who move between stories, the puzzle of the suicide of a young gay teacher, the debate between technocrats and theocrats, the surprise at the shifting genres both between and within stories, and the idealism of the poetic vision of a more sustainable way of life.

The reader who enjoys and is inspired by *Frameshifts* will become immersed in this intricately imagined future America, a decentralized state led by corporations and theocracies using mercenary militias and genetics to control the population. While satisfied with solving the mysteries and discovering how all of the story-lines and characters come together, the reader will also uneasily suspect that the world of *Frameshifts* has already begun. The antidote, according to Professor Henry Randall, is to begin *paying attention*. Pay attention to your body, your habitat, your community. In the stories, paying attention might have prevented a few murders, a nuclear incident, a suicide, a secession, a kidnapping, and a flood. Randall invites readers to become members of the *Fellowship of the Attentive* by responding to *Frameshifts* in creative ways. Unlike George R.R. Martin, however, the author plans no sequels to *Frameshifts*. Because it is a book of books, it is its own sequel. Re-read it and you will discover ideas and connections you missed the first time. Because it is about paying attention, its other sequels are the creative responses of readers.

The Harry Pettiford mysteries begin and end the first volume of *Frameshifts*. A tiny town squeezed between Arlington and Alexandria, Holburn is like its larger

neighbors in many ways. Harry's return to the region comes the year before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. As an information officer for the police department in the second story, he is the center of attention in stories that encompass not only contemporary events, politics, and policies, but also the past events in the second and third stories which culminate in *Death Wears A Hand-Lens* and prepare the way for the Randall stories in the second half of the book.

Notes about *THE PROFIT OF DOOM*.

Calamities are downfalls for some and windfalls for others. All of us have profited from calamities. Survivor's guilt reminds us of this fact. Most of us however have not caused disasters in order to profit from them or deliberately used them for personal advantage. But we have profited by default.

Life itself is the result of calamities of countless ancestors, most of them not human. We cannot abandon life because it derives from the afflictions of others. Our physical survival derives from disasters of all kinds and scales; our spiritual survival derives from not forgetting or denying this fact.

I began writing *The Profit of Doom* after the death of a friend more than forty years ago. Many drafts later, it took the form of a small book, self-published in 1990 and given to friends and associates during a time when I was changing jobs and trying to be done with some of my preoccupations.

Now, many more drafts and deaths later, it seems that it wasn't finished at all. My preoccupations simply grew into a larger project, called *Marginal Notes*. I now see *The Profit of Doom* both as a part of *Frameshifts* and as a libretto. Currently, I am working on a final opera, *The Profit of Doom: Twelve Ensembles*. If it is worth finishing and producing, it will be posted on the Marginal Notes website when it is completed. (See www.marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org).

The following notes concern the history and rationale of *Frameshifts*, beginning with the seventh story, *The Profit of Doom*. Additional notes are included about other poems and about the musical works in the *Marginal Notes* project. None of these notes are well organized. They are a pile of leftovers that are worth perusal but not publishing. You may determine whether they are worth your perusal.

(A letter that accompanied the 1990 version of *The Profit of Doom*.)

Dear Audience,

Poets,
like so many leaves,
are all of them
crackling with desire
to be consumed—
but by a cupped ear
in perfect stillness.

The book you have received from me is a poem written with people like you in mind. You may not like it. That's OK because there's no special offer or plea for contributions. I've already paid what I wanted to pay for this project; if you don't want it, give it to a used bookstore.

The usual route for finding an audience for one's poetry has not been available to me since I wanted to publish the whole poem in one book, not in fragments. Self-publishing seemed a logical choice.

You are receiving a copy because I believe that we share values. Perhaps you would not have set your belief in the form of a literary rondo that disregards plot and characterization in favor of the development of religious and environmental themes. You may have little patience with the curious combinations of subject matter or the static format. The "Prologue" suggests that you play *The Profit of Doom* twice—once through quickly and then once again for perusal:

. . . as you read Isaiah
Or old love letters
Or as you listen to a fugue
Whose figure centers and surrounds (p.5)

I think of playing it or performing it aloud for oneself as one would a piece of music. Perhaps you will take me up on this.

Cordially,

Dick Rose, Warrenton, VA

In 2009, selections from *The Profit of Doom* were recorded. These will be mastered and included on the Marginal Notes website.

The following letter was sent on November 11, 1990 with a copy of the newly printed book to Hayes Walker after receiving his helpful comments on *The Profit of Doom* (*POD*) His comments about the environmental theme led me to consider rewriting the work in a traditional novel format. I did this and didn't like it; then I had the idea of embedding it into a larger work. This took another twenty years. Numbers in the letter refer to the 1990 version of *POD*. (Some updates have been added.)

Dear Hayes,

Thanks for your letter and special thanks for reading the manuscript. As you can see, I did spend good money to have it printed. It is a very plain and inexpensive printing job, however. Please accept a couple of copies as thanks from me for your responses and send me information about how to purchase your own book when it is ready.

Several poets and academics have looked at the various stages of *The Profit of Doom* over the last 20 years. I have usually taken their advice, rewritten and then repented. Then in 1980 I began to sense that Tom Farley, the part of me that was writing *POD*, had learned that he was dying. He left the manuscript with me, together with instructions on how he wanted it printed, and went into the hospital. He did not survive treatment. None of the poems were to be separately published. The story was to be told in his way, with its parts in his own particular order. This way of thinking enabled me to begin writing my own poetry again while I assembled his for the printer.

The Pathetic Fallacy

When Tom passed away Nature didn't weep.
He was a scrawny, red-haired parts man, poet
and banjo player. Rocking on my porch,
he never sang much about shepherds, sheep
or sacred groves, or demigods who scorch
their paper wings flying into reason,

But nature noticed, though season followed season;
though gray winter lichen on dead fences
burst into rubies; though starling's full-grown chick,
waddling behind, continued to make demands;
bears snuffled ants and lawyers evidences
to make a story true or make it stick
(as poets with words): nature's what remands
the memory into our custody.

Tom had a funny way of looking at things; I censured him in the Prologue, but now, remembering him, I can't help but offer a defense.

The form of *POD*. It is not a narrative or a jumble. It is a theme and variations—or improvisations—set in rondo form. Tom presumes that you know the story of Noah, which he is re-telling in a modern setting. The writing does not advance this story; it simply lets you know from time to time (as in the passage on “vessels,” p. 49) what the relationship is between the traditional story and his version. Similarly, Tom provided only skeletal characterizations—sometimes with the bones scattered at great distances—because he presumed that readers knew the principal players in the story of the Flood: the hero called to save, his family, stiff-necked townspeople, and so on. Tom's main purposes were religious rather than literary. I suspect that this accounts for some of the

awkward and uneven passages and for most of the problems that academic readers have had with the book (although there is another reason. See below, under “view of poetic form.”). Tom was not trying to deliver or package anything for anyone. He was responding less to questions about theme, reader-market, and plot than to the kinds of concern expressed by Eddy toward the end:

But maybe others want to know
where their part is—
what prepared the way for them,
where they are, and who will
receive them . . .

These are religious questions—the religious questions that remain even after disenchantment with organized religion, perhaps. Had his response been in musical form, such as a masque or oratorio in which the story-line plays a minor role, he might have been more successful. Listeners do not complain about an obscure sequence of events in an oratorio, but most will close the book when they lose track of the story-line.

In form, the *POD* is actually a braided wreath of interlocking rondos. I think of it as a rondo because of Tom’s musical way of handling the themes. In his treatment, the repetition of themes and motifs occurs both on a small scale within individual poems like the sestinas or extended sections like “Willy Crawley,” and on a larger scale when similar kinds of passages are alternated. Examples of this frame-shifting are:

1. There is the obvious repetition and development of the main theme, “All things on earth shall wholly pass away” and of minor motives like clouds, storms, touch, bitter taste, angels, viroids and messages. (See pp. 2,9,18,25,54,70,114,128,137-139)
2. The sub-theme of self-critical reflections on poetry writing, as in the Prologue and pp. 7,11,17,25,44,45,48,55,56,65,72,80,86-91,103,107,111,121-126,145. Some of it is self-deprecatory (e.g. 44).
3. The prayerful aspect or theme of many passages (pp. 11,18,25,44-45,48,48,54,65,80,103,108,111,127,128,145,148).
4. Finally, there is the thematic treatment of characters, with each character introduced and glimpsed at intervals throughout the piece. The characters are voices or instruments that are sometimes solo, sometimes in duets or trios. Occasional passages attempt a literary equivalent of *tutti*.

This has always seemed to his critics an unfortunate way to treat characters, but Tom was not asking the questions about plot and characterization in the usual way. He wanted the redemptive religious message of his work to be embodied in the form of the work. Like a chemical polymer made of repeating subunits arranged in repeating sections and ultimately “recurving” on itself (p.10) in what Eliade called an “eternal return” (p.2), the *POD* was intended to suggest that the apparent chaotic escape from us of life, “awe, hope, or love” (p.18) is a transformation, a slow ceremony, a “procession of our explorations” (p.51). Of course, Tom would not have put it this way. The closest he gets, perhaps, is Crawley’s “vision” (p.129). He wanted his writing to embody this conception—at all scales of observation. This is why I say that he was asking the usual

questions about story-line, plot, and character in a different way.

The Prologue warns you that if you are looking for the questions being asked and answered in the conventional way you will be dissatisfied. Is there a satisfactory way to read *POD*? Yes, I think there is.

As the Prologue suggests, read it quickly through—almost in one breath—as if watching a performance of the flying Walendas. Perform it for yourself. Then peruse it—as you would read *Isaiah* or old love letters. Like music, it is designed for performance and reflection.

Tom spent hours listening to the music of Bach—both the instrumental fugues and the chorales, with their verses alternately narrative and reflective—just as the narrative sections of *POD* alternate with reflections on the meanings of events. He spent almost as much time listening to jazz improvisations of Monk, Brubeck, Hines, and others. The kind of reality he was trying to embody in *POD* was closer to these forms, or perhaps to the installations one sometimes sees in galleries, than it was to the sprawling novel or the little “rondures,” as Ammons calls them, of formal verse. He also did not feel close to the phenomenalist assumptions about nature and science being made by many of his fellow poets. Furthermore, although his intentions were religious, he felt the need for a different kind of religion. He offers a religion that embraces accidents (pp.25-42, 99), surd evils and absurdities in a vision that is not foolish, doctrinaire, exclusive, or unkind. Since faith is an invention (p.52), it can be perfected. Myths deserve new treatments and interpretations. (It’s fortunate that Tom was able to link his efforts as librettist with the musical composition of G.S. Smeltzer.)

The time-line of *POD*. Tom deliberately disturbs the order of events. At least three different explanations for this are given. He suggests that this is partly due to the “temporal confusion” of an elderly man with aphasia. He also offers a mathematical explanation from the catastrophe theory of topology, mentioning “Brouwer’s theorem” (p.133, p.141). It’s now called “chaos” theory by Gleick and others, but Tom encountered it in the form of Thom’s applications of topology to a wide range of events from economics to physics and meteorology. At that time, it was called “catastrophe” theory. He noted a correspondence between these ideas and theories of developmental biology discussed by Waddington in his book, *The Strategy of Genes*. Finally, he suggests that Crawley is seeing the fulfillment of his vision in a different kind of time—the “eternal present” of the religious thinker or physicist:

“Of course, there are no ‘same time’ experiences anyway. There is only developmental time-experience. Each of us constructs his own time-transforms. We all experience the conventional ‘same time’ differently. Perhaps when, for a moment, we fully experienced the reality of a time-transform different from our own—a personal disaster, an accident—a critical point of some sort was reached. A personal disaster always strikes at the center of a universe—at Eden, or Fara, or Fairall.” (p.142)

Referring elsewhere to this as a kind of “dream time they no longer enter (p.127), or “holy time—all disappeared” (p.94), Tom wants the reader initially to perceive a kind of historical logic or at least dream-logic behind the episodes, as I suggested in the Prologue, p.2. Then, as the events become more historically irreconcilable (pp. 77-78), the other themes of explanation predominate. Tom is trying to recreate the dream-time of a myth or fairy-tale—but for modern adults. W.H. Auden wrote that poems arise from

sacred encounters. Poems embody the form, eternal time, and setting of such encounters.

The setting of *POD*. Just as several explanations are offered for the temporal jumble of *POD*, there are several overlying explanations for the place and setting. Where does it take place? *Fairall* is a nice equitable American name; it also stands for *Fara*, traditional hometown of Noah. There are also reference to a place of beginnings or origins—an Eden. *Fairall* is apparently near the old Capital, presumably Washington, D.C. The *Bay* and the speech of Patton Long (one of the disguises of Henry Randall) seem to refer to the Chesapeake and its old tradition of “patent tong” oyster fishing. The passages about Gingko trees, federal agencies (p.118), and “defedding” (p.95) definitely refer to Washington. Crawley, however, seems to view the setting in a global, philosophical, and religious context, sometimes even referring to prebiblical flood myths. For example, the words “It is thou, O River . . .” come from Uta-Napishtim in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. (Other references to this work concerning pride, partnership, and human transience also occur throughout *FRAMESHIFTS*, such as *Enkidu* and the *Utnapgen Corporation*.) References to the Euphrates and the Pawmack rivers (p.18, p.137) and to other features of both the Washington-Northern Virginia region and Biblical sites reinforce the idea that Tom is trying to compare the modern flood due to global warming to the ancient flood due to human pride.

Environmental theme. The environmental theme is persistent, but does not take itself seriously. Indeed, that seems to be the point. To understand and feel this vision, it must be approached indirectly. “Tell all the truth/but tell it slant . . .” Dickinsons says. The inability to sense, feel, and communicate without words is entirely a human “problem.” In our search for “significance” to make our ideas more clear (or to cover our tracks), we often lose contact with our goals. (p.49). In “probing past speech to find speech” (p.2), “probing to gain common purchase” and to “appraise surfaces” (p.145), he finds that, although we “reveal our want of skill in feeling without words,” we (like oysters) *can* reach “past speech, “overcome distractions and comprehend the wholeness of his vision—described variously as being able to “swallow the river” (145), “describe boundaries . . . without ascribing ‘within-ness’: (p.130), see and read “pieces of all of us in each of us (p.123), see beyond “the flower of the proud,” (p.94a0, make a “new arrangement of contingencies” (p.85), tend a “fire/that borrows us to be our lender” (p.72), “find your own place” (p. 64), and “embrace . . . accidents and menaces” (p.52). Unfortunately, perhaps, Tom *does* use words—occasionally complaining about this (p.44)—to convey this vision, but he uses them in an iterative form that, taken as a whole, tries to reach past its parts for a special kind of musical wholeness of its own.

What this vision may be is not as clear as claimed by Avery Crawley. He seems to know this:

What it becomes is like a touch
Both feel, yet each unequally—
The giver who would gain too much;
The taker who gives sparingly.

He tries to number the kinds of visions he has had but also states that he had not “felt the doom” until he had taken the viroid into his own body. He emphasizes the importance of

being able to “feel” this vision. The only way that he can get this across is to try to arrange for the reader to have the kind of experience that “strikes at the center of a universe.” All of the characters’ experiences are presented directly rather than descriptively to encourage the reader not simply to read about but to perform and therefore feel the events. Even Crawley’s monologues, which are usually ruminative and descriptive, drift in and out of direct experiences—such as the observation at the nursing home of a bee caught inside the window—caught inside like the old men sitting in the hall (p.101). This observation becomes a kind of small version of the larger vision. That is, it embodies the experience of having such a vision. More extended “embodiments” are to be found in “Willy Crawley” (p.26ff), “Layerings” (p.137), “Crown of Leaves” (p.92), and in most of the narrative passages. Let the kinds of “signs” whose daily flow and order seem so commonplace undergo this kind of transforming vision, Tom says (p.111). As one rummages through old letters or listens to a fugue “whose figure centers and surrounds,” one looks for patters of meaning. In the same way, we may perform *Isaiah* or the *Psalms* for ourselves and discover reflective insights. The vision of Crawley is a discovery like this (p.129). We depend upon others for the context of our meaning; each part is a microcosm of the whole. This medieval idea is also the principle of “scale invariance.” Such “others” include other humans and organisms whose values so arbitrarily wax and wane within us:

How carelessly love drifts from praise to slight
How little cause needs power’s vain display—
How needle drifts, and bearings never stay—
How tender speech has surfacew cinder-white—
(p.138)

Knowing this about ourselves, we must be careful not to allow a narrow conception of what is “significant” to displace our capacity to conceive of the reality experienced by others—all others. We must exercise this capacity more than we typically do. Practice of this kind of “visionary experience” improves faith and demonstrates that the “environment” is within us and of us: “a material world beholding itself” (p.133), a “fluid surface (bending) upon itself,” life with respect to life (p.123) and a “procession of feelings” (p.51). Just as a swarm of birds can suddenly turn together (p.131 and p.148) and as cellular membranes maintain a boundary across which the environment reflects upon itself, so we maintain surfaces, boundaries, forms, ceremonies, visions; so we make choices (p. 132, 137), based upon our informed perception of the whole, varying surface of events. To inform our perception, we must use all our powers and not abstain from inhaling menaces and messengers alike; nor should we fail to inhale capaciously because we are looking for “within-ness” where there are only surfaces, forms, boundaries, models, and constructs. Within-ness and individuality are more a matter of infolding and inclusion, like origami, than of solipsist uniqueness and exclusivity.

We become idolaters whenever our inventions, ideas and conceptions begin to “replay their own significance until admiration becomes reverence (p.50) or when we truly become “men theories convince” (p.107), as Goethe said of some of the philosophers of his age. Not only the great ideas but also the “dreams of weakness/too real to be unbeliev’d” (p.5) are overvalued. They wield influence over decades of our short lives before we discover how to wake up. Tom therefore distrusts models of all

kinds whenever they become too complete. This includes his own inventions, his verse and himself.

Tom's view of poetic form and of his audience. Perhaps it is not surprising that in a book about mistakes, flaws, and accidents Tom would also make self-deprecatory comments. The Prologue suggests that the whole work's a failure and the final Coda is still talking about fumbling and failure—if on a more divine scale. Braided throughout the work, self-critical or self-reflective passages comment negatively on the poetry: poets are “crackling like leaves”—leaves perhaps that are “unsevered . . . no more tip-edge of reach” that “seem to sleep in postures of belief” (p.92). The lines in a sestina, like windrows or a severed arm, make “uneven ranks.” They are not precise, not like the absolutist ants “wholly certain of their ranks . . .” (p.9). (In *FRAMESHIFTS*, Hank also worries about the community becoming like an ant colony. Professor Wilson might consider that it could be an improvement in some ways.)

Tom compares writing poetry to making “scratches” and fitting together odd shards (p.17), criticizes his poor memory (p.11), comments that poem may have the smell of the lamp for being “ten legged lines from ever-fingering touch” (p.180. He pokes at himself even in serious sections or in places where one would prefer a more sustained mood: “. . . I hid in bramble with spiny hide . . .” (p.137), “and forward row, where North or care (or rhyme) is” (p.93). Outcrops of the ridiculous appear in the most serious places (such as “Family matters.” Jay Parini remarked that, although the writing was sincere, few readers would have patience with lines about the “desperate chicken,” etc.).

Tom is continually uneasy about poetic forms because of his uneasiness about all inventions. Forms present unique opportunities for structural organization and meaning; he uses and tosses away many kinds of forms—sestinas, *terza rima*, sonnets, ballad, prose poems, dramatic monologues and dialogues, *droeg-kvaets*, and unique constructions like “Anomalies,” (p.54). (This is both *terza rima* and sestina. The sestina is composed within the lines upon the words: all, may, from, be, the, and sun. A grotesque anomaly, the poem is about a meteorological anomaly.) He enjoys making a poem appear to follow one set of rules when it is really following another. Sometimes it almost seems as if he changes a pattern just when you thought you'd gotten it. The passages about genetic and literary frameshifts make this point explicitly (p.123). He suggests that one may have such a frameshift or vision in the re-reading of his short book—provided that one has the time to read it reflectively (p.5) and not with a lazy, unlistening ear that measures what is heard for less than its true value (p.44). I wish that I could say as much for my own lengthy critical comments.

Cordially,

Dick

For notes on *Finding a Purchase*, see the other section of the *Frameshifts* website.

Miscellaneous notes on FRAMESHIFTS. *Sorry that this is a jumble. It is narrative debris, usually wisely discarded, here saved for a final poke-through.*

1. **Many early versions of stories, characters, and intentions.** Titles, in order: *Layerings*, *Poems and Passages*, *Profit of Doom*. Then I wrote *Three may keep a secret* and *Spearpoints bright*. After returning to Alexandria in 1999 and reading some M.C. Beaton stories, I wrote *Death wears a tricorn*. I then wrote most of *Death wears a hand-lens* and linked the four stories under the title *Problems with authority*. The two Hank Randall stories and *Finding a Purchase* grew from my experiences at Marymount, Susie's experiences growing up in Delray, our life together in the last days at the Fountains, and my realization of the connection to previous writings. AC was originally Rintner, a Skinner-like character, as in *Walden II*. Jencks Enterprises, both a corporate and guild-like organization, played a more important role in earlier versions. Indians lived along Lake Klawir. Foxglove was to be a Twin-Oaks type utopian community on property like Airlie in Fauquier County. Morgantown was the site of an Inquisition. The SIMON project was a simian-Artificial Intelligence project associated with the utopian community. Timothy Baker, who's mentioned in one of the nursing home poems and who is similar to the resident of the homeless shelter in DWAHL, was based on Pat Georger, from Warrenton. Little of this level of detail matters to anyone but me; it is only of interest to me as an exercise in recall and reflection. I am now sufficiently removed to enjoy the perspective. What follows are some of the fragmented, occasionally lucid notes that are my way of thinking-out the project. I have also added a few comments from my current perspective.
2. I considered a double sestina on "order versus disorder" entitled *Housedirt*. Cleanliness, order, straight rows, masculine, Paleolithic, military, neat drawers, clean floors things put away, always know where to find it. VERSUS messy but manageable: the point being not neatness of physical surroundings, which are always degrading or transforming but rather clear purposes, thought out in a tranquility and solitude possible only in sloth. Is this an excuse? Even our bodies are degrading/transforming, as is our shelter against night. Almost all of us are mad. All possessions and dwelling places are tentative. Steps in process/progress of humanity/culture. Grab a log and cling to it. Even ourselves. Fragmentary compositions. Dissolution is not to be feared. It is customary.
3. See 19Jan73 *Science* "On Being Sane in Insane Places" p. 250. Cf. John Clare. Un-sane, not whole/all of us are incomplete/not whole/mismatched/emotions do not fit roles/roles do not fit abilities. See also Grace Robinson's Abolition of involuntary incarceration: psychiatric predictions are 95% wrong. The incidence of violence is greater in the general populace than among inmates.
4. Interrogating the poet. The interrogation scenes, both in *POD* and the first Randall story, were originally set as an interrogation "of Crawly *et al.* by the reader." What have you been up to? Or are they? Is this a test? By whom? Multiple choice included. And forms like registration and tax forms to submit. Why are you putting poetry into dialog? Who are these characters? Why aren't they more further developed? What is the plot? What's going on?

5. Captivity. From the Fred Fisk radio program of 3/5/1980: Anthropologist Mary L. Lasano spent & wrote about 7 months in Mexican prisons, beginning 1965 Islas Marias, the penal colony in the Pacific, controlled by Navy. Confined in a working society. Not punishment. 55% homicides, 45% theft and drugs, 95% rural Freedom to live on the island. Must report to work. No recidivism. Free enterprise. Learn working habits. Live with families. Have side businesses. See *Amer. Correctional Assn.* article, pub. 1980. Quakers said “confinement is punishment”. An American idea. Previously, prisons were considered holding areas where criminals were confined until authorities decided their fates.
6. Consider incorporating the 542163 pattern of the sestinas into the crown of sonnets. (Considered but didn't)
7. See *Inventing America*. The place sought for, the place the “others go. 8/22/78. Re T. Jefferson.
8. Captivity. Are they confined as a kind of censorship?
9. Interrogating the poet: It is in book II that the question arises about why or when narrative poetry is appropriate. How does it come up? This question was finally considered in Randall's first story.
10. Situation: the group is imprisoned again. The keeper tells them a detective story. Of course, instead of making this situation, I decided to give several mystery stories serve a larger narrative role.
11. Mass produced poetry: *Automatik*. The tendency to view poetry as commodity. Mass production masks the particularity in things and persons. Nor do we see specialty in even all our specialties. Is this “distraction” or “absence of heart”? Presence vs. absence. Distraction & putting off vs. presence close to the numinous. Lignin nape /of poets made under trees /in the neck notches of leaning elms/of neck-knots gaily flying(fluttering)/Of conditions stellar dynasties or globular realms/ may append onto our dying/ Thus we degrade to clarity. We target since last /dart was thrown/ Carter, Gin, and Pigiron cast to wheel, card, telephone . . . Shrine and holy place vs. commercial place/ neck-hollow/ What one regards as numinous depends upon one's preparation. Surfeit with approval, so released from interference. What to do in the interval before arriving at one's intention. Delaying to write. To wait in the dry place for buses in the rain. The victory elms near Federal Reserve.
12. The bureaucracy of the Board of Faith and Practice. Small state, Black holes, tremendous gravitation. Tremendous regulation. Both hold, confine, pull in more tightly, grow smaller, denser.
13. Call Book I “Layerings” End it with Cicero's (i.e. Grady's) poem. Dependence on and awe of God vs. prideful independence. As Ayer notes, science diminishes awe. And Andrew White notes the excessive damage wrought by belief that “man's help is vain.” The terrain: a theocratic, governmentally controlled town—Rectortown. A cutthroat free enterprise zone?
14. Tyranny. India's US ambassador. July 1, 1975. Under article 352 we may imprison the minority—only 1000 in a population of 600 million—not many—if their means are unconstitutional. Students are frustrated by the oppositions ability to stand in the way of Mrs. Gandhi's progressive legislation . After the temporary emergency is over, the minority will be released and they will have learned their

lesson. Censorship of press and foreign press: “Your papers print only rumors, not truth” India still is a democracy, still the India of M. Gandhi, but we must govern and that means police and armed force to back our government and protect our constitution. Mrs. G still faces charges on an indictment and conviction of corruption for using officials to help her election. Years later, in *The Life of Pi*, Yann Martel describes how a zoo director and his family decided that this was the time to emigrate to Winnipeg.

TO BE CONTINUED AS THE PILE SHRINKS

General Notes on the Collected Poems:

Some poetry in the notes is being collected separately. Something may come from this effort.

The poetry collection includes lyrics, occasional verse, narrative poems, several sequences and libretti, and a book-length poem, *The Profit of Doom*. The inspiration, support and encouragement for the work from 1969 to 2008 came from my first wife, Susan Irene Rose. The newness of life that gave me the energy to complete my work and write new works after 2008 come from my wife, Kathleen Mary Rose.

General references to other works are not noted in this version of the text. On my website (marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org), another version of the text with endnotes is available.

Specific references are made to Robert Frost's poem "The Gift Outright" (p. 50), William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow" (p. 57), Ezra Pound's canto on the "green world" (p. 19). The last set of poems, *Finding a Purchase*, is organized according to the Dewey Decimal System used in small libraries and draws upon the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Some poems are intentionally repeated in different contexts. Clive James has written (in *Cultural Amnesia*, p. xx) that a poem is "any piece of writing that could not be quoted from *except* out of context." This is why I prepared a collection. In my previous efforts to compile selections, I could not show contextual relationships between poems, such as the *ars poetica* poems presented both separately and within *The Profit of Doom* in this collection.

Notes on specific poems:

2/1/2008

The mortgage button, made of boxwood, is put onto the newel post when the mortgage is paid. Custom around Oatlands plantation, Loudoun County, VA. Notice the common theme in this poem, May Day, and Makeshifts

This poem began as a rewrite of the prologue to the Good Samaritan, a prologue which I wrote in 1968 and never liked. See Robert Hass's study of Frost, his reference to Peacock's 1820 *Four Ages of Poetry* that predicted that ornaments such as poetry would be replaced by more useful subjects. Poe and Wilde also relegated poetry to an ornamental role. Poets were popular entertainers, not serious interpreters of culture or clarifiers of ideas, as Frost wanted to be. My prologue began, "The poet's song, an ornamental glitter..." See also the picture of this artifact in *National Geographic*

3/1/2008:

Notes on musical works in the Marginal Notes Project.

The melody in one of my operas must have been taken from Provost's *Intermezzo* in the 1939 movie of the same name starring Ingrid Bergman. Note that I neither copied it nor used all of it. I certainly don't remember having heard it before writing my own composition. What does one do about such things?

AMBER

The myth behind Amber is concerned with duty "FOR GOD & COUNTRY." It's different from the biblical myths behind the other works and somewhat more autobiographical than the others.

THE PROFIT OF DOOM, A PROCESSION

The *Twilight Zone* by Rod Serling always referred to going to another dimension or a fifth dimension of the imagination. As I work through the ideas of scale and frames of reference in the musical version of *The Profit of Doom* I suppose that I have been influenced by Rod Serling and all those TZ episodes I've watched. The *Outer Limits*, a program very inferior to TZ, stuck to the "gimmick" of a fifth dimension or "outer limit" to hang onto the TZ audience. Another influence.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

This was the first work. It concerns the central problem: compassion. The music grew from a composition I wrote for Susie, "Sonnet for Pooh," at the Wurlitzer piano in her parents' house in 1968. Reading more about Schweitzer recently (060907) has made me reflect on the composition. The philosophy that counts is wisdom. The religion that counts is compassionate action. The message that counts is to accept the tasks that directly confront us. Not only will humans take "any expedient to avoid thinking," as someone once said, they will take any expedient to avoid compassionate behavior. In the parable, the man asks who is neighbor is and Jesus says, suppose you were robbed and left to die and several people bypassed you for religiously justifiable reasons but then a

religious heretic stopped and helped you. Which of them was your neighbor? Clearly, it was the one who showed mercy on him. How much easier it is to be compassionate in word, in principle or at a distance than it is to tend to the tasks that fall in front of us on the road. Schweitzer was a religious heretic, banned by the Paris Missionary Society from religious missionary work in Lambarene. He was so independent and stubborn about the views that he had developed from his studies that he could have spent decades arguing academically with other scholars. The task for him was obvious –as it was for Wilhelm Meister and Faust. He was to become part of the fellowship of those who bear the mark of suffering. His philosophy, musicology, theology and science had informed his wisdom; his wisdom had directed his decision making. What was more obvious for him than to use his talents to support himself in a medical mission to people who had no medical care? It was a matter of stewardship, ethics, and obligation; it was not a matter of romantic zeal. Clearly, he thought through every detail of what he was going to do – and not do. It was to be a mission of mercy, not of talking. The talking would come, but it was incidental to the deed. The author of *The Book of James* would have understood. Nothing could be more obvious than to see the task before him; what made it obvious was more than 30 years of scholarly inquiry, meditation and music.

Later operas include *The People's Voice*, *Annunciations*, *La Rinuncia*, and *Twelve Ensembles*.

For more information about the music and some personal history, Google: marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org.