

**Poems by Richard Rose read at the Festival of Poetry Society of Virginia  
Williamsburg, May 15-16, 2015**

**A truth**

Immense in a tiny back yard  
the oak with its terrifying crown  
a frozen dance of dryad arms  
slowly shakes everything in reach.  
What is this tangle, this individual?  
A record of its own life in splay  
of paths, spray of leaves  
thrown out in all directions,  
raking the sky, here is proof  
being centered is untroubled travel,  
unlike the pinched face beneath it  
of the house with stained roof  
which suffers from the idea  
it is alone and cannot move.

## A prophet

. . .While Youth makes good its escape,  
Age blazes its return.  
So it was with Avery Crawley,  
called from snipping chromosomes.

Once, at his bench in Bethesda,  
he saw things differently.  
From centers that surround—from cells—a  
a beacon signaled him, he says.

"In a simple cell division  
captured by a vision:  
on one page my life completed  
embracing dragons I defeated."

All that he was he left behind.  
(Logic, too, it would seem—  
for the logic of a dream.)  
A vision swallowed up his life.

But he left a path to follow,  
the pattern of the whole  
eternal cycle of return—a  
probing past speech to find speech.

Unlike cloud busters, healers, quacks,  
spoon benders, fortune tellers,  
Crawley neither sought true belief  
nor sold orgone, ankhs, or angst.

He seemed amused by those who did.  
Sometimes he'd lift his ball cap,  
look at you with cloudy eyes  
and tell his vision like a wisecrack.

"All things on earth shall pass away," he'd say.  
"Of course, many should.  
Your wastes are curdling in the seas.  
They seep from aquifers and drains.

"They tangle fur and beaks and brains  
yet you feel none of this.  
Your middens fill with goods unsold,  
your streets with sleepers in the cold.

"All things on earth shall pass away  
and none of you will notice—a  
feelings and dreamings die together  
while you eat seed corn in warm weather . . ."

(See the book *Frameshifts* for the complete poem. It is available from Amazon.com and the pdf manuscript is on <http://marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org> .)

*Love's old refrain*

Love's light, last light, least light shining,  
some take love's rarity the famine sign  
of general despair. It is a false disparity,  
whereas love surrounds us beyond all bounds,  
and grounds, feeds, and bears us in the air;  
waters us; cares to lift our leaves; stings the Earth  
with roots and probing minds that sink and rise,  
think and surmise; drifts into dreams, thick with the dead,  
and streams off daybreak from our minds' lake in ropes of fog;  
scatters light in the blue domes that pass us cup to cup  
until the last least cup remains.  
And drinking it to nothing, we are rarity  
enough, and least enough, and all enough, and lasting.

For "A bid beyond the Id," see the right panel on the <http://www.frameshifts.com> website.