

*Work in progress as of 5/20/2015*

**WORK ON YOURSELF**  
**Selected Poems**

**1969-2015**

**By**

**Richard L. Rose**

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**Selected Poems**  
**1969 to 2035 or less**  
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*Frank Lyons Rose and Jo Evelyn Rose set the example of continuing to work on themselves throughout their lives. As Robert Henri advised, one must first be a master of oneself. I have tried to follow their example and take his advice, doing the detailing from the inside out.*

## **Selected Poems**

**1965-2035**

**By**

**Richard L. Rose**

Born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1945 to a military family which traveled extensively, Richard Rose was educated at Lafayette College, George Washington University, and George Mason University (B.A., M.S., Biology, Ph.D. Science Education). By vocation a science teacher, he was by avocation a composer, writer, and poet since an encounter with Portia in the seventh grade and earlier encounters with Lincoln, Henley, Housman, and Burns. His first wife, Susan Bruch Rose, also a teacher, passed away in 2008. His sons, William and Robert, work in Richmond and San Diego. Richard and Kathleen Mary Rose retired in Richmond.

### **Comments on the poems by the poet**

Poems have been taken from numerous sources. A few footnotes, dates, and end notes are also included. This is a work of folk art, which Roger Butterfield called work done "below the level of historical scrutiny." The selection includes lyrics, occasional verse, narrative poems, several sequences and libretti, and a book-length poem, *The Profit of Doom*, a part of a larger work, *Frameshifts* (2011). 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 the Marginal Notes website (<http://marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org>), another version of the text with end notes is available. Also see the blog site, [frameshifts.com](http://frameshifts.com). Specific references are made to Robert Frost's poem "The Gift Outright," William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow," Ezra Pound's canto on the "green world" and other works. The poem *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. Expect to find some poems repeated in different works.

--R.R. 2015

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## **Early Poems**

*Early arrivals have to pass the time.*

## Utgard

Now Thor, mighty of the Aesir  
treads in the imprint of a Giant's heel.  
Now Donar-thor of thunder-lightning  
is silent, with his hand-grip tightening  
on the shortened haft of Miölner.  
His restless fingers press his belt of steel.

His fiery eyes are downcast darkened,  
as he follows, apace of Skrymir,  
Frost Giant, son of Rime. From Utgard  
silently along the hill and westward  
brushing through dark-hid pines they wind.

They said, "Come, Toddler Thor, drink deeper."

In thought he overturns the line.

"Eastward to the other land,  
I, hewer in sunder of the nine heads of Thrivaldi;  
I, Vingnir, the Hurler, the Noisy One, Hlorr'thi,  
the slayer of Geirrod: my design  
and wont were just: to slay ill working giants."

In Utgard hall the common horn  
 was brought to Thor, Great Drinker, mighty one  
 of gods:

“One draught to drain, small one,  
 as we do, thirsty son of Jord.”

He tried to drain it, had his fill.  
 The horn was full when he was done.

Guffaws and jeers from maws of giants  
 rose around the board, mountains laughing:

“Hah! Is this great Thor?”

The knot-scar near his eye burned sore—  
 sharp whetstone-flek flung in defiance  
 by a dying foe.

“The cat!” they roared.

“Lift if you can that curled, sleek she-cat  
 with sea-gray coat and eyes gall-green.”

His hands around the quiet chest  
 pressed and pulled but barely wrest  
 one trembling paw; while so unmoved,  
 the creature yawned.

“A cat more lean  
 would better suit the little god,

the Wide-Wanderer.”

His forehead burned.

“I am the Sire of Might, who lifted  
high the hulk of Hrungrir, shifted  
that great carcass when it bore  
down on my chest.”

“Those praises were unearned.  
for Hrungrir turned himself in dreams.  
But these tasks were too small for mighty Thor.  
Your boasts were three: of drink, of might,  
and warfare strength. Fight in our sight.  
Great though your power to small ones seems,  
all word-wind boast is your man-treasured lore.”

Then Elli, toothless, bowed gray crone  
with dully shining, dark and sunken eyes,  
alone, wrapped in black winding, wheezing,  
shuffled through the hall.

“Now, spring!”

they cried. “Lock with her, bone to bone,  
you mighty giant-killer of the skies!”

Her stagnant breath from twenty paces off  
enshrouded, stalled, and stilled him.  
Her hands squeezed his leaden arms,  
frozen to his sides. He sank; fell back,  
rose on one knee, and was released.

“What? So soon fallen, mighty Thor?  
Midgard’s Warder, protector of right?”

Rumbling like a summer storm  
That grips the clouds and fills the fjords  
And twists the sky and slashes bright  
Scars across the plots of men,  
He said, “I am a god of little might.”

In failure, he, self-questioning, wondered,  
Treading the footprints of the giants’ king.  
“Am I not, then, Asgard’s lord,  
not Friend of Man, the ploughman’s Sword,  
neither he who gives just word,  
who ever sits at Council of the Thing?”

The giants in Utgard’s horned feast-hall  
watch silent moving shadows on the hills,  
where king and god now stand alone:  
and winds rise, and the larches moan.

“Hear, Thor. You are a warrior tall.  
Your powers cowering souls bestill.  
The secret now, Utgard behind us,  
because we feared your wrath below.  
First, understand: The mead you drank,  
it was the sea. Three ells it sank  
around the Earth.”

The breeze cut chill.

“The cat whose paw you wrested free  
was the Midgard serpent, bright coiled  
Earth’s-band beneath the sea.

“The ancient crone you matched, withstood,  
and even rose beneath  
caves all of us to bones,  
for she is Death, whom men and giants flee.

“The city’s warm red feasting-fires—  
look; see. The shivering aspens, pines,  
high-beamed halls, are eye-illusions all,  
shadows unforming at our call,  
for we had heard he never tires  
who Power and Justice is, and works  
great signs among the sons of men.  
What heard, sad-bound were we to know.”

The murder-thirsty Might-hammer  
within Thor’s hands begins to stir.  
Whirling winds he breathes and plunges  
fire-bolts at the giant melting like snow.

The lifted hammer unready slips down.  
Rain and forehead-pain now blur his sight.  
Rain streams like wine down his red beard.

“Where is the giant king I neared  
To work my might? Into his town  
I’ll go. Those foes shall test my might.”

He turns to descend the hill  
But all around is gravel plain  
where raindrops fall few alone.

“Illusions?

Do I not boast aright? Delusions

By a foe? With what spoils

Do I cross the rainbow bridge again?”

(This and the following poem were completed in June, 1965 shown to William Watt , Professor Fick, and Edward Brown at Lafayette College, and revised, August, 2011, for the collection *Runes and Tunes*)

### Sursam corda

“**H**eave up your hearts!” The chieftain-priest  
sings on the moon-patched burial mound.

A hundred carles are warclad met  
and crowded in the mossy glade.  
Same shouts lifted their war-roar  
sing *Habemus ad Dominum*.

Frost-deep, one buried there upright,  
a heavy broadsword on his lap,  
breathing left to other chests,  
his black hands fast to helm and bill,  
lips uncracked in slughorn, cry, or prayer,  
burns slowly, far from sea.

*Et in personis proprietas.*

Great his fame, avenging Svein  
on twenty men with singing bill,  
he swept among us as we fought,  
flayed, and flensed the heathen,  
winning vengeance, fame, bright spoils,  
and our good fortune, spirit-met.  
This christsblood mingles victory.

## **Sequence of Courting Poems**

### **1**

#### **That a Beginning or an End is a convenience**

“Began” is a cruel word to the parents  
of a changeling moment, since its birth  
is separation at the same time  
from the conjunctive influences  
that gave it an identity.

The relation is tangential.

At a point beginning, end.

Each moment is a changeling.

Associations in them,

Whether love or justice

trail the latest shift

in parenthood.

## 2

**That causeless demonstrations need conversation**

When did we begin our conversation?  
I guess the time we looked across a cheese dip  
I'd re-found after refusing to equip  
my silent fear was our first demonstration  
for no cause but our being together.  
A demonstration with its cause or reasons  
not easily displayed is like a people  
silent overlong that throngs the booths  
Election Day to clamor down injustice,  
unremembered wrongs passed into hatreds,  
childhood diseases, and infectious plagues  
carried on tongues and books and lunch counters,  
all in a simple shout of testimony  
like coming forward in a tent revival.  
More demonstrations followed then,  
whenever cause the like of cheese dip took a turn  
as intermediary: a patch of blue,  
ham and French tries, and broken bread for two.

## 3

**That Growth is the American Answer to a Border Problem**

But listen, thou art my cause for demonstration,  
lest the excuses we've allowed confuse thee.  
Though we made contingencies to free  
our will from thought, our love needs conversation  
A silent cautious nod to toleration  
knows a borderline but no frontier.  
We must overgrow all regional fear  
and boast expanding love in celebration.  
Lily, canst thou behold thyself beloved,  
as the black earth sucked to thy roots beholds thee,  
or as close droplets clinging in thy veins?  
Dost thou know I name thee my beloved  
secretly? Like them, my growth requires thee  
binding our settled borders to the plains  
where frontier begins, a mutual hope  
encourages declaring separations  
passing with the past, our destinies  
unseparate, impending.

1967 Susie wrote after this: "senior year"

## 4

**That a bypath may be above a buried highway**

We wander bordering a bypass  
through colonial white-rowed streets;  
press down the dark historic grass

with pondering steps, trespass a glance  
that mutually meets a pausing stare,  
as passers-by might trade by chance,

then warily talk, though not as planned,  
and byways indirectly make  
across our doubtful borderland.

For guides we take up lanthorne lights  
or flickerings in kindling eyes.

To realize uncertain rights  
We wander bordering a bypass,  
but wear our furrow thoroughfare  
deep, plowing season, in dark grass.

June 1967

## 5

**The distance we must travel**

There is a distance we must travel  
 when we finally meet—  
 when I have closed the miles,  
 when you have drawn up time from memory  
 and we are close together once again.  
 Time drawing us by close degrees,  
 memory ever meeting the eye, sees;  
 joined incrementally—what break,  
 what distance have we travel in?  
 A separation we have never met,  
 a meeting we have spared finality,  
 a crossing-over we have feared,  
 a closed interval.  
 Time drawn up in unstopped degrees—  
 neglect its measure, let it please you  
 come, the while uncertainly,  
 and we will close the miles.

What strikes me about this sequence and all of these love poems is that the emotion was stronger than the command of language. Glib I wasn't. I've modified many lines so that they make sense. Often I would use an adjective rather than adverb simply to preserve meter. And all of the poems were released prematurely. Both my circumstances and my emotions elbowed the censor off the page. I wanted these messages in Susie's hands as fast as possible—no matter how awful they were.

**Memoir**

When we began our conversation  
as sight-seers caught in a gaze  
the season Christ becomes a child  
we made of each other a tour  
and every day a holy day  
down to the last hour.

A Christmas party was the random  
and casual reason we met  
but in the meeting, when you smiled,  
a pilgrimage opened ahead;  
the path, the road, the thoroughfare  
straight to this hour led,

or such is my interpretation,  
invention, or whim, with the loss  
of you a daily, hourly trek  
unguided, unnarrated, dry  
as ring of stones where you and I  
looked in the sun's eye.

This poem, written 6/28/2012, follows on the earlier poem on our conversation.

**On a picture of a child feeding ducks**

We'll feed the ducks, Gibber would say  
on many a cold September day  
and make a cake of crumbs and seeds  
and wear a clover string.

Soft white heads scooped and swayed  
under Gibber's swinging hands that played  
with dangling leaves from where she lay  
watching...

The picture hung in the Bruches' dining room.

Another version: *What Gibber Said*

“We’ll feed the ducks,” Gibber did say  
Once, on a cold September day.  
“A cake we’ll make of crumbs and seeds  
and lettuce leaves and bits of weeds.

“for they *are* ducks. A clover string  
I’ll wear upon my head and bring  
You a red-ribboned straw hat.  
What if you are a grey-white cat?”

What if the tops of trees were blue  
and higher, where the wild birds flew  
the speechless winds moved clouds around  
and hid the sun without a sound?

“They’re past the tables, where I found  
the rope-swing and the merry-go-round.  
Come up on the bridge. See, by those trees—  
none swimming yet until I please.”

Easter guests, as it turned out,  
two dozen ducks at table taught  
to love a plastic bag. One, *Greed*,  
aimed for the bridge, another, *Bill*, the lead,

scrambled to the corn-stocked stream,  
broad bottoms yellow butter-cream,  
scouted down their muddy trough.  
Leaves and feathers floated off.

Soft white heads scooped and swayed  
under Gibber’s swinging hands that played  
with dangling crumbs from where he lay  
and watched the wheels the water made.

Written in October, 1968, this aimed for the whimsical effect of one of Milne’s poems  
but missed.

**To venture a principle sometimes**

A witness in our jury trials is bound  
to tell what he has seen or heard.

The law will make a man recall himself  
hearing some careless word spoken in spite.

Perhaps this lawful duty of a witness  
is a small instance of a principle:

*Let us make memories always fearing judgment  
of truth they bear or fail to bear our senses.*

Does truth become a way of giving justice  
while we live . . .

**Another fragment**

Living beneath the speechless sky  
in thoughtless yearning  
comes chance the sacred butterfly  
carelessly turning . . .

**“The entropy of the world is on the increase.”**

What is most like my love as life,  
binding when she binds me by release  
by an extravagant expense  
by bonds most dense  
when most condensing strength,  
their workpiece bond  
and conception of her love, my life. . .

### Three Folds

In love's first glance our talking seeks some grounds,  
 however frail or banal, to sustain  
 its life, and we begin as fluttering sounds  
 that pause or softly brush the window pane.  
 It is a window of no house we know,  
 a pink reflected from no hills we've seen,  
 a garden of such gifts as never grow  
 unless we make a claim we may not mean.  
 At first, the meaning snags upon a word  
 And days drag past before we take it back—  
 Encumbered by a sense we had not heard  
 until we saw our helpfulness attack  
 and disappointment in the other's eyes  
 and, dagger-sweet, felt growth beyond our size.

With growth of love we take on spacious grounds,  
 as music fills with voices to sustain  
 its parts and presses on the narrow sounds  
 of spite and blame and self-inflicted pain  
 with windows to a world we did not know  
 with double suns we'd never seen  
 and gardens where the plants speak as they grow  
 and search for words to tell us what they mean.  
 Love's early task, in deed and cautious word,  
 was to imagine worlds and never back  
 away from probing what we thought we'd heard:  
 "*Frontiers belong to love.*" Where claims attack  
 on every side, love grows new eyes  
 to see the means to claims beyond our size.

Why "three folds"? I had in mind a triptych portraying love's developmental stages. Seems rather obscure now.

**The Angel Drummer**

Gold, incense, and medicinal myrrh—  
the sweetest myrrh—  
infant love in swaddling  
'swound the crusted wounds  
the earth around—expansive love—  
with power to bind  
and healing air  
and myrrhsweet lure  
to lure a soul  
away.

Nov 1968

### **Dancing Snow**

I looked up and saw the dancing snow,  
 each snowflake in another's leaden tow  
 like sparkling members of a glassy fabric  
 gently crumpling to the earth in fold so fair.  
 And all the earth was fair.

I stood entranced, possessing such a joy  
 to tell my Love, my fair Possessor,  
 if she were only close enough to hear.  
 I looked up and saw the dancing snow,  
 each snowflake in another's leaden tow,  
 like sparkling members of a glassy fabric.

Then joy I'd seemed within a word to hold  
 so well I doubted I should ever know  
 apart from listening well to Susan hearing me.  
 Fair Hearer, if she heard the dancing snow,  
 would all the earth be fair?

But far from her, this deep snowfall below  
 the fitting-places where those high clouds mold  
 their crystals on the slightest particles,  
 I wondered, could my silent writing tell her where  
 all of the earth was fair?  
 I looked up and saw the dancing snow,  
 each snowflake in another's leaden tow  
 like sparkling members of a glassy fabric  
 gently crumpling to the earth in folds so fair  
 but all the earth was bare.

### Evensong

Black swans are gliding in the lake Klawir.

Sinuous phantoms over depths they graze

on mucid algal nets and tangled sprays.

Five sons of Oslyn softly wander near

along the shallow fringe, untying days.

Black swans come gliding in the lake Klawir.

Dark evening phantoms over depths they graze.

Five brothers singing languid songs you hear.

The coiling weed across them lays

in gentle strands and throats' sweet fibers plays.

Black swans are gliding in the lake Klawir.

Sinuous phantoms over depths they graze

on mucid algal nets and tangled sprays.

1968

Swans=suans=susan, Oslyn=Lyons=R. Lyons Rose

Five= 1965-1970. Interpretation form 5/17/1975: I was in army till 1970. I did not in 1968 believe that we could be together until 1970. I suspected that I would go to VietNam before 1970. A modified version of this appears in FS, as do the swans. The swans of Tuonela were the original thought—not the swans of Coole or the swans of Airlie or Anderson's duckling-swan or the later Black Swan of later ill repute.

**Lake Klawir in November**

Black swans are gliding over Lake Klawir.  
Sinuous phantoms over depths they graze  
on mucid algal nets and tangled sprays.

Eine kleine nachtmusik spills from speakers,  
town players chosen from a continent  
(not for Electors but me in my apartment).

In my kitchen, I slice strawberries  
with Palestinian guerrillas, pull  
off sepals, am relieved when the pan is full

and I can eat the rest. In gratitude  
I sugar them. The grounds of Schwetzingen  
red with geraniums and uneven

scarlet sage were never red as these  
the swans missed and police could not discover,  
the tunes and berries frozen till November.

### **A Return Home**

I have sat waiting now outside her door,  
closed since she left, for now four hours or more  
with nothing in my drumming hands to read.

It's like the wide blank spaces poems set in  
in thin calf books that fit within the margin  
of a publisher's year's negligible risks.

This time, waiting for her—to be so near,  
after nine months long time! Her face unclear  
remembered's like erasing to find out a line.

Listen, printers, my sweet love's Return  
can all your blocked white spaces poets earn  
by baiting loss to learn their mind  
ever frame us in a balanced line?

July 1968

**Song**

A ring and toy music box  
I set me out to buy.  
Accordion and a diamond--  
the one have I the other none  
and I am wondering why.

Oh mother's child, tell, can you see  
the wintering bird up in the tree?  
She's looking on the ground below  
where she may nest and nothing grow.

I set off in the morning green  
with silver in my hand.  
As fast I saw the buttoned thing,  
its keys a gleam did squeal and sing,  
I took it from the stand.

Oh mother's child, be still and wait.  
The bird will flutter down to eat  
And we will watch it land.  
A diamond was next to buy.  
I tried the seller's all.  
I wanted one would show a troth  
is quickly on and quickly off,  
but they were all too small.

Oh mother's child, we two must wait.  
The spindle bird soon song shall take.  
But it must look far and surmise  
the thicket where its nest will lie.  
And love will let it be.  
And love will let it be.

(Lyrics to a recorded song sent to Susie, April 1968)

**Contrast****1**

Hers is an unvoiced care;  
 Mine all the contentions of design.  
 With summer leaves she shares  
 what reedless wind assigns.  
 With promises to gain on time  
 I would repair the breeze.  
 She's unpreoccupied as trees  
 Winds spare to stand on steep inclines.

**2**

He: "You are, as wave's node,  
 center of a branch burst into flower,  
 or reef's edge where intersections meet,  
 still. Still  
 center of our lives, you hold  
 our pitch, seed home's gray shell  
 with geode flowers."

She: "You are an island.  
 Separate, complete unto yourself.  
 Your connection to the land is buried  
 deep, deep.  
 I was a peninsula --  
 alone on many sides  
 but connected."

12/25/1969 The second stanza was written by Susan Bruch Rose.

*Several poems for my sons***Irregular Maintenance**

The bumping retread, after all,  
will disclose its own condition.  
No tradition of care is needed  
for inanimate things.  
My apologies to mechanics:  
I let things go.

No care for monolithic sons  
in the blood-blind rage of denial  
behind walls of their music wailing  
"Not this! Not that!"  
can shriek above their souls:  
I let things go.

**Terra Cognita**

Acorns hard under our feet  
we ran back from the woodpile  
while crickets scratched their last tunes  
and the cool evening seeped into our ears.

Acorns hard under our feet  
we saw him waiting on the porch,  
gazing between us, asking  
why we hadn't brought the wood.

Among fallen oaks we remain undelivered,  
resisting his plans, but are relieved  
when sudden high squealing like an ancient Pump  
becomes a skein of geese.

**Poems for Shrovetide****1**

Our world we would have made  
to show ourselves displayed  
as all-attentive hosts  
but we are wispy ghosts  
that move between the given  
and the made, unshriven --  
circling without rest:  
not host but always guest.

The mapmakers in pride  
this seamless world divide  
and interrupt the sea --  
in this, corruptibly,  
does every new projection  
become on the inspection  
of terrorist or fool  
another way to rule.

Given seas or seeds  
or stars or genes: what leads  
the scholars to collect  
a brittle star, detect  
another spectral line  
or break and recombine  
untied nucleotides  
leads others to choose sides.

The spirit -- self or soul --  
however slight or whole,  
in curiosity  
extends and wants to see  
and never rests from reaching,  
never shies from breaching  
etiquette, but tests  
the rules that make us guests.

Faint star, to catch you I must look away.  
 Such indirection you would have me learn,  
 perhaps, because to near you is to burn  
 and yet I want to know what you convey.  
 Would staring breach some stellar etiquette?  
 Do indiscretions make you fade away?  
 May you not speak to one you've never met?  
 You sidle off from every look you get.

Sweet Earth, you beckon yet you bind and prod.  
 In hissing sleet on bogs that shine and sour  
 your ferns raise fiddleheads and sundews flower  
 but bones like mine will sink where lilies nod  
 and eyes be steeped like thatching reeds to ret  
 and float like lily seeds within their pod.  
 What sees and thinks and sinks you've never met.  
 My thoughts are stars too low to rise or set.

My Soul, like Sol, if I avert my gaze  
 because you blaze with incandescent glare  
 and if I interpose this weft of air  
 that moves contrarily by jumps, and plays  
 bulging between us like a parsing net  
 determined to enclose you in a phrase  
 and bring you up that I may not forget:  
 Will you with stings not blind me closer yet?

Faint star, to see you I must look away  
 and yet look back again, accommodate  
 to your frail light by swinging on the gate  
 between us –to and fro, move and stay,  
 part and whole, unfettered dream and fret—  
 and hold you by release –by must and may  
 by stand and sway, contentment and regret:  
 Still far and dim, you gain upon my debt.

**3**  
**Original Sins**

My sons, reflection of my distant face,  
who shall shrive us, who shall leech disgrace  
or conjure up some witless power to drive us  
past conditions foolishly conceived?  
To cancel lines no pardoners remain—  
the spoken lines, the floating lines, the lines of strain.

Great Peter of the fishing-nets and sea  
has lost more bones than in his greatest catch  
absolving scoundrels we could never match  
because, at last disabled, they believed.  
As veils may cloud a crystal grown too fast  
their eyes will cloud who save belief for last.

More perfect faces are more slowly grown.  
Hard, steady surfaces are not achieved  
through ready willingness to be deceived.  
Conceptions flawed in the original  
will only alter through divine ablution  
when –analyzed—they enter the solution.

Lines there are on water and in blood  
that parcel up the world and mind for good;  
the wrapping helps us till with raven beak  
we pick apart bright ribbons ill-conceived,  
thin paper, search for another good  
in what we once believed—at least, we should

4  
**The Potter**

When off the hero strode with a brave look  
she did not know the form that evil took,  
that space so empty and destructive  
could seem so gracious and instructive  
and with a sinuous flexibility  
invade its host. She took it for a snake.

That space should bask there and be dreaming  
of whether it should bring her into being  
she could not abide, and rushed upon it,  
grabbed its drooping tail and quickly spun it,  
looped it end to end and coiled a shape  
around its nothingness, a slender vase.

Then every jar and cruse and pot she filled  
with seeds or oil, or flour she'd milled  
and every hour became a thing to lose  
and timing space and spacing time a ruse  
to hinder waste, with clocks and dials and births;  
last, she held formlessness itself –in glaze.

Then she could gather faces up again—  
discarded images of gods and men,  
of hates and hopes, of simpering distrust  
that lies with faith, both simmering in the dust.  
She picked all of them up again and blessed them  
and fired them in the shine we cast through space.

The last two poems in this series are also in *Floaters and Sinkers*. and other collections.

**Wooly Bears**

Nature also has its fasts and feast days,  
its Shrovetides and somber passion plays,  
its seasons of contrition and confessions,  
its invitations and its grave processions,  
its Jubilee years, coming after plague  
and pilgrimages holy, long and vague.

With pinching steps and bristly flourishes  
the wooly bears, for leaves or low October,  
or whatever nourishes a great endeavor,  
drop to the highway at midday and die  
in quiet thousands; in this dolorous way  
they leave behind no trail but themselves –  
no slimy ribbon of mycelia,  
no stained glass or slaggy heap of tailings.  
No sunken bridge or termitary tunnels  
crumble after them. No wake of pillage  
trails their pageant, but some of them grow wings.

Over the years, the Lenten season has prompted many poems. See "Holy Week, 2015" for example.

### **Bonds**

What is most like my love as life,  
binding when she binds me by release,  
by an extravagant expense,  
by bonds most dense  
when most condensing strength, their workpiece  
bond and conception of her love, my life.

September 2, 1967 I still like this poem and have used part of it. It is better than the others from 1967-1969.

### **Hawks**

A pair of buteos  
lob cries between them.  
Rising over stubble  
dozens join them.  
Panic below--  
But they fly north.

*Rock Springs, 1970*

**Lullaby**

WLR

White leaf-mold, brittle  
ironweed erect,  
low self-heal,  
limp, black-specked  
icy sedge  
and winter's burr  
merge in sun-stir;  
late November,  
rest. Be still.

*11/22/1972*

**New Guard**

RAR

Rattle and daddle  
and Bob is to battle  
and dress silks and sabers  
and skewing-sick labors.

Rattle and daddle  
and Bob is to battle  
and gravelly shaking  
of playthings on waking.

Rattle and daddle  
and Bob is to battle  
and stench of black stubble  
and sleeping in rubble.

Rattle and daddle  
and Bob is to battle  
and green tatters wearing,  
not feeling, not caring.

Maybe this fearful incantation on 12/1/1975 worked; Rob was never in the military, unlike his father, grandfather, uncle, and cousins.

**A singularity,**

than which there is no whicher,  
from nothing special,  
performing exactly  
as never imagined,  
in a burst of revealing  
obscuration,  
reminds us  
of the individual.

"Than which there is no whicher" was a favorite phrase of Paige Turner, French teacher at Fauquier High School in the 1970s.

**Who wants what they have when**

Too tantalizing,  
 the ever-rising, twitching  
 drives to scarf up what you can,  
 time a-lying on'  
 and other Carpe Diem nonsense--  
 hands down the scenes to be seen in.  
 Quickly now, make it now:  
 Make the call.  
 Oh, oh, but now--  
 the knowing, gnawing now:  
 Does no one see us now?  
 Gritty coltan, diamonds in sand,  
 greasy naphtha pools,  
 ideas in the rough:  
 we see them soon enough.

Note also the frame-shifts or portmanteau: time a-lying on in both senses and echoing Marvell, also time lying on hands, as well as hands down in both senses. These links are intentional. Columbite & Tantalite mined by children in Zaire portion of the Congo, 2001; diamonds, source of mutilation of Sierra Leone; naphtha, source of perfidy in MidEast. Too editorial to be a good poem but retained nonetheless.

**Draughts**

In mem. T.E. Bruch, 1913-2000

Next  
and no more,  
Next  
and no plan,  
Next  
only, plan for.  
Next  
know no more than.  
Next  
to this ought,  
know naught.

## Hagiography

## 1

Saints are worthy of regard  
because their intercessions bridged  
divides, spanned chasms, spoke  
when banned. They broke with form.

That there were miracles, and are,  
is not the point. To be a saint,  
however great or slight,  
one simply stops and sees.

Pause to let a vision grow.  
Trust that you can work it out.  
Step onto the bridge  
you build by stepping out.

## 2

We need a tune for the unknown,  
some ancient air or sacred dance  
for chippers, flakers, speakers,  
molders, and spark makers,

a tune from reeds they wedged in clay,  
from birds they learned to catch and coop,  
string they drew from sinews,  
or hollow bones made flutes.

Let it simply be the drum  
of expectation and delight  
when, thoughts too full for sleep,  
we work into the night.



**Limping about**

If one glories in equivocation,  
drains down belief  
to some factitious granule,  
sidesteps commentary on the unknown,  
eludes faction and style,  
finds pleasure in the provisional,  
incomplete, imperfect, even inept  
results of incombustible conception,  
then one may favor hesitation  
as one comes to favor a bum knee.  
Divine wrestling slows you down.



## **Middle Poems**

*Floats and Sinkers*

*Finding a purchase*

*Marking Time*

*Uncollected poems*

***FLOATS AND SINKERS***

**A question of waiting**

What should I expect to catch  
or resurrect  
if I sit out this unwatched game  
with time to touch and miss my aim?

Should I throw out the line  
or wait until the bobbing sign  
can dive deeper than I see—  
are my chances one in three?

**Some say**

we'll greet him in the air.  
Others, who never got the hang  
of proof but never err,  
describe faces like ours  
at a homestead  
with rockers on the porch,  
a quilt drying on the rail,  
and an elderly couple  
welcoming us to dinner  
somewhere past the attic  
but not quite in the air.

**Progress**

from ineffable  
to unavoidable  
and back again;  
from Chief Smiter  
to holy pal--  
loving insider--  
and then again,  
flaming antiheretical,  
to Blaming Levitical,  
and from this  
to Great Bystander  
as piles of shoes and hair,  
sheets of skin,  
tangled eyeglasses,  
meals of bone, meals of villages  
then, meals of young men  
bursting with fervor  
are served. Such an appetite  
makes a Huge Consumer,  
and us retail.

**Erysichthon's Old Hundredth**

“All people that do smell of Earth  
reek of the dues for death and birth,  
the musty debts and sour invoices  
all must pay by making choices  
even in dreams lest they catch hell  
(like a cold that robs their smell)  
for duty unpaid and compounded  
(like contagion brown unbounded)  
upon souls they brought across  
unbonded from inner banks of darkness  
deep as the shady uselessness  
of consuming holiness.”

**The Potter**

When off the hero strode with a brave look  
she did not know the form that evil took,  
that space so empty and destructive  
could seem so gracious and instructive  
and with a sinuous flexibility  
invade its host. She took it for a snake.

That space should bask there and be dreaming  
of whether it should bring her into being  
she could not abide, and rushed upon it,  
grabbed its drooping tail and quickly spun it,  
looped it end to end and coiled a shape  
around its nothingness, a slender vase.

Then every jar and cruse and pot she filled  
with seeds or oil, or flour she'd milled  
and every hour became a thing to lose  
and timing space and spacing time a ruse  
to hinder waste, with clocks and dials and births;  
last, she held formlessness itself -- in glaze.

Then she could gather faces up again --  
discarded images of gods and men,  
of hates and hopes, of simpering distrust  
that lies with faith, both simmering in the dust.  
She picked all of them up again and blessed them  
and fired them in the shine we cast through space.

### **Holy Space**

doesn't give you much to work with:  
a lean mixture whose ignition  
hollows stars creates unease.  
Allowing room for argument,  
perhaps, gives space enough; yet more  
is wished for, prayed for, waited for.  
Time and shape, out of absence  
construed or dreamed, or realized  
in works, like a hand of cards  
are finally played, reshuffled, dealt  
to other hands. Perhaps space waits,  
hoping, perhaps, for form or tense.  
Perhaps holiness is in the hand-off.

**Tailgaters**

No speed that I could go would be enough.  
Anticipation overtakes the chase.  
The prize precedes the game; the goal, the race;  
the mystery, the search; the smooth, the rough;  
the thought, the slow peripatetic pace.  
The struggling steps between are left behind,  
the hardships undertaken for a cause  
and yes, also the last sweet clinging pause  
delaying grief or parting.

This does not find,  
as lawyers say. For those who wait on laws  
within themselves and make a thorough search  
before capturing the obvious:  
In their defense (and mine) I say, "For us  
the obvious is mystery enough.  
No race will make it more mysterious."

### Cruise Control

Cruise control is a state of mind.  
Lock the speed in. Insert a pause.  
Find within any urgent drive  
cause to hesitate. After using  
live explosives--each charged with shock--  
taking pressures till power exhausts--  
detonating precious plans to costs  
day by day; after watching what  
jam why to gassy nought: Why then,  
shut down, drift in a cloudy thought;  
cruise and troll in a lake of mind;  
drift past deadlines and then notice Death  
slam his brake in the other lane.  
Cruise control is a state to mind  
borders of--a long dotted line  
showing history where to cut.

**Drive Through**

This has been your life. Let me clear away  
inconveniences. Am I in your way?  
Pay or reckoning automatically  
In a single stop: Key your number in.  
Ever there to serve. Feeling queasy yet?  
Everybody does. As they will explain,  
rollovers occur at a higher rate  
nowhere better than --given there's a where  
one of us could stay rather than drive through;  
by the way, come Spring, you've already won  
flights to anywhere you can ride on moths.  
Beatitude depends upon your attitude.

### Woolly Bears

Nature also has its fasts and feast days,  
its Shrovetides and somber passion plays,  
its seasons of contrition and confessions,  
its invitations and its grave processions,  
its Jubilee years, coming after plague  
and pilgrimages holy, long and vague.

With pinching steps and bristly flourishes  
the woolly bears, for leaves or low October,  
or whatever nourishes a great endeavor,  
drop to the highway at midday and die  
in quiet thousands; in this dolorous way  
they leave behind no trail but themselves --  
no slimy ribbon of mycelia,  
no stained glass or slaggy heap of tailings.  
No sunken bridge or termitary tunnels  
crumble after them. No wake of pillage  
trails their pageant, but some of them grow wings.

**Trees**

To old men's beards and cypress knees  
and stubby bristlecones that grip  
forever over unpacific seas,  
and giant arbor vitae, live oaks  
in a bluebell sea, pecans  
shading woodsheds and swings,  
to heaps of brittle scrub  
replaced by installment plans;  
to all the sacred litter, holy mould  
and jewels of decay in delicious darkness,  
between the toes of mockernuts  
and shaggy oaks and sidling dogwoods;  
to all whose ancient shoulders  
gave comfort and rest,  
from whose arms we swung out  
and returned old men:  
Farewell, and be blest.

## ***Finding a purchase***

*Explorations in understanding*

By

*Irene Brooks, Ph.D.*

*“...no theoretic refinement has been allowed to modify the skeme, if it wud detract from usefulness or ad to cost.”—Melvil Dewey, Introduction to the Decimal Classification and Relative Index*

*“...allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey, satisfy them of it’s (sic) innocence.”—Thomas Jefferson, 1803*

*“I doubt if any winter counts, the Indian calendars recording the most important events of the year, even recorded the arrival of the expedition.”  
—Vine Deloria, in Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes (Alvin Josephy, ed.)*

*Note: This book was expanded from the last section of **Frameshifts**. It included illustrations and end notes about the poems. Only the poems are given below. An annotated version of this collection is at the end of this document.*

### **Confidence limits**

Of my sliver of what's known,  
half is error,  
another third is supposition,  
the proud remainder  
confidence.

Snowfall's white scatter,  
burring edges,  
lining tendrils, buds, spires,  
becomes, where it lands,  
apparent trees.

So many thoughts adrift,  
heel and yaw,  
push and draw us  
into cool but temporary states.  
Mind where you settle.

We need poetry because it embodies experience in compressed form. Unlike program code or anecdotes, but like dreams, it captures the energy of experience in concise and memorable expressions. So I like the opportunity to coil energy and meaning under the surface. In this poem, the title refers both to a statistical concept and to what happens to us when we are most certain of ourselves. The last line has one obvious meaning and two less obvious meanings. It warns us about what we settle on or settle for. It also recommends that we take care of all the settled, comfortable areas of our lives. Finally, it equates mind with "where we settle." Despite the dangers of our confidence, we can act only from mental confidence, so we must do what we can to nourish it properly. 4/25/2015

**The Betta Version**

What could be more natural  
than artifice?

Hexagons of wax  
and spittle;

lines of code;

polygons of bricks;

a quarter

housing poets, colorful

as Betta fish.

Each is squaring off his lines

against someone,

anyone like him,

in challenge-mode,

puffed with craft and tricks

that mirror every fix the other makes on life

between gulps for air.

### **The Mortgage Button**

Wielding influence, my penknife,  
I ascertain what we contain,  
what of this life, sure and uncertain,  
we can claim for satisfaction,  
for the glory of God,  
or morning glories on a newel post  
finally ours.

It's less and more than you suppose:  
these flowers.

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

**Makeshifts**

On bones or hieroglyphs—  
Bricolage of shelters,  
Hedge annuities, monoliths  
And multiple holdings—  
Scaffoldings  
Secure for now—  
Make no mistake.  
They are provisional.  
So much meant to last  
At best will simply hold.

**Artefact**

Greasing the antler after scratching on it  
snakes, sea-lions, lavender and barley,  
the changing quarry of the sea and land,  
put a yellow shine on the raked surface.  
But all that glitters is not ornament.  
This gloss becalmed the struggle with a hook  
snagged in a bristled mouth that dragged away  
a foot, and broke this handle on display.  
This shine, like thought, is calm above much trembling

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. The original prologue began, "The poet's song, an ornamental glitter, say?..." For the picture of the artefact, see *National Geographic* 3/1/2000.

## ***FINDING A PURCHASE***

*This is the collection as it appeared in the "second deposition" which came at the end of Frameshifts. Later, the poems were used again in a separate book of the same title and with illustrations.*

### **Push off the Perogues (100)**

1

Now I will speak of understandings  
and of how things are:  
to expose and tell  
what knowing is  
and what is known.

Of many before  
and many to follow  
I am but one, no more—  
two eyes, two ears,  
and a thicket past the brow.

We live within our magnitudes,  
tell tales, tend right and left,  
behold no more than is revealed  
and yet we imagine other scales  
and other latitudes,

2

other worlds –upstream  
and down into the grain of things.

68

Other worlds, our theme  
to work and realize,  
are found in our imaginings  
but understood by reckonings  
that map both thoughts and prize.

Oh that we could gather wisdom up  
not as a yarn,  
covered by retellings,  
or a tale cut from chatterings against silence;  
wild caws and chittediddles' saws,  
but as radiance in a cup.

3

As we two settle in this place  
my aims are but to understand experience,  
and show such understandings as I may,  
and claim that knowers and the known  
suffice; save dreaming, there's no more:

no take-off without landing,  
no pulse without breath,  
no life without death.

Nothing's known –however much we're fond—  
nothing's known of myst'ry, the beyond,  
or understanding beyond understanding.

4

I am but one, no more,  
and if I tell how things are  
it is for now, no more,  
and if I find ways to tell  
that stay close to the bone  
without becoming ossified,  
it is to depart this skull,  
to pull off and look back,  
the principle applied  
being that to go outside  
requires free passage  
from a thousand tribes,  
the agencies of thought,  
the native peoples who create what is.

**Good Medicine (200)**

1

What was, and is, and is to come  
is not beyond understanding  
but sitting across the room.  
Given any two, it is the constant third,  
special but not spectral:

The *between*

70

that beckons from another's eyes,  
not thing or being  
but relationship,  
a domain whose variables  
rise from interactions  
and fall when we slip  
in betrayals.

This passage lies  
through others' eyes.

2

This passage is a tunnel  
with ancient trails to other rooms  
where by trials and ordeals  
we try out our ideals  
such as they are:  
*A great catch,*  
*A sharing of bread,*  
*A send-off for the dead.*

Above, the martins throng the Spirit Mound—  
not souls, but birds  
who know where insects can be found.  
so are creeds—  
the high aerobatic acts  
made of deftly soldered speculations:  
the flux of words.

## 3

Worship defines the object of devotion;  
then canon follows revelation.

Given the ritual or rationale,  
we choose tradition or reformation.

Either names the nameless;

this is not a person, place or thing,  
only the *between*

summoning us to action

that ties and re-ties us to the given,

for we are gifts of the survivors

by whom and from whom we rise.

## 4

You are the gift,

the gift of survivors,

the *gift outright*

of land and family and culture.

Despite your wishes,

you are the gift.

*Attend. Learn what was given.*

*Give and respond and listen.*

You are the gift,

lifted from the human and animal,

the beautiful and terrible.

Despite their wishes,  
you are the gift.

*Hear then the holy message:  
there is no easier passage.*

### **Ubuntu (300)**

All who cross the continent,  
meet every human tribe,  
climb the great divide  
to look behind our human history,  
and make the thousand portages  
across the wide cerebrum  
learn to see.

Sometimes in a rush,  
sometimes a thready course  
of bottlenecks and self-deceptions,  
we make but one river.  
One mind, one people,  
one living and one cosmos  
made of many,  
we learn to see.

**The Interpreter (400)**

How can we trust her?

She could call a strike on our position

and we would never know.

Captive of one people,

bought by another—

like words, stolen on pretext

of being loaned--

she finds us artichokes

by poking sticks in trails of meadow-mice.

Is it in fact her gift or something *she* would never eat,

some joke to see *us* eat it out of season?

Yet only by looking through her eyes can we see.

**Conceptions (500)**

Concepts always betray the facts.  
The notions of a bear  
from paw prints left in barren tracts  
or stories natives share  
  
of vengeful giants snapping necks  
like beans; or drawings scaled  
to the micron; or muskeg specks  
from tundra cores detailed  
  
to prove an ancestral beast  
stopped for halibut;  
or image showing the least—  
a follicle of hair, cross-cut—  
  
miss the black maw  
of oblivion.

**Contraptions (600)**

With hinges, bridges, booms,  
sockets, needles, ropy sinews,  
rib-vaulted rooms, gliding puzzle-joints  
musky remedies, perfumes, knives, inks  
bloody drinks, fabric of hide,  
and necklaces of teeth and claws  
worked out from the slaughtered beast,  
we wipe the ochre from our faces,  
speak to the departing spirit;  
rub out faint lines of construction  
and other bloody traces  
of how we learn technique.

**Counterpoint (700)**

Art, always confrontational,  
shows all knowledge is relational.  
Crawlers creeping on all fours,  
we make our way on metaphors.  
Assault both from the rear and frontal  
compels us to be contrapuntal.

There are no town limits here.  
We anchor our craft from fear  
the churning swells of voices  
will tip out our devices.  
Guiding art or how we think  
we use images or sink.

**Props (800)**

## 1

Supporting action are the qualities of things,  
 five sets in a second changed on a stage  
 that is the world, whose openings--  
 all played within, there being no without--  
 present reality, arriving all the rage,  
 leaving at the side door, bundled with provisions.  
 As for the red wheelbarrow,  
 and Experience --wide or narrow—  
 in matters of this sort  
 what we know is by report.

## 2

Self-knowledge, perfect form or beauty,  
 like alchemy, eternity, and equity;  
 the Grail, and checks forever payable,  
 though neither real nor achievable  
 are worthy in that what we learn  
 along the way is a true prize to earn:  
 that it's better to inquire;  
 that oxygen feeds fire;  
 that deeds remembered are immortal  
 and liberty's a holy portal.  
*Accept that what we take  
 for things is what we make.*

**Partners (900)**

## 1

What's given simply is too vast  
for us to take more than we make.  
The universe has us outclassed.  
A witness wants to be believed,  
but in passage to the report  
intention frames what is conceived;  
though truth may always be our aim,  
it is embedded in belief.  
Someone must work to clear its name,  
a partner for the passage through the dark:  
a Krishna, Enkidu, Nestor, or Clark.

## 2

The only partner I have had in this  
to wait, to listen, and to see me through,  
unknown, yet inches from this line, is you;  
yet I might know you well enough to kiss--  
with each always purchase of the other,  
with each a continent to understand,  
with each a hidden people, hidden land  
sharing all lines and the quilted cover  
of the Earth, now surveyed;  
waiting to be remade.

***MARKING TIME***

This collection of memoirs originally came with notes and photographs, here omitted.

## **New Mexico, 2012**

I was here before,  
fifty years ago,  
my delight in words  
camouflaged.

When the Free World stakes  
blood on vigilance,  
a quatrain's distraction  
you keep to yourself.

*Sangre de Cristo*

The mountain profile, like the face  
of someone on his back asleep  
from watching clouds pass overhead,  
as I watch what can only pass  
for mountains—what can only pass  
by, seeming distant, cold, and green—  
has changed already. Now like blood,  
the face in pain, the story old,  
the end foreseen in every pew  
but told again since those who pass  
on stories know the telling acts  
to hold the shape. The mountain shifts  
again; becomes the fingertips  
and plutons of the moody Earth.

Profiled in facts and image-wrapped,  
the mountain has become a force  
like some old king whose tributes pass  
from hand to hand—a force appeased,  
or so we think, denatured, and  
by understanding, measurement,  
and smart display, controlled. Not so.  
It shifts again. The moon above  
limns cedars, ironwood, rough flanks  
of swift and hungry bird of prey,  
its massive arc of craggy wings  
across horizon; pulling hills  
and mesas, chola-dotted fields,  
and where I stand on rippling ground.

## Cropping

Not having other than  
for the life of me  
this idea, I sit, unwatched,  
unhurried, but nailed  
fast down to find my way  
through the life of me.  
Here, with pen, hook, and knife to pare  
and catch what was once  
filmed, flimsy, even teased  
like a thread of nerve,  
dipped, enlarged, and revealed, I crop  
the corners once missed  
when, holding fast to just—  
for the life of me—  
just the life of me that was,  
I flamed without thought.

### **Midshipman**

My mother loved his prissy walk,  
the snap of a line of plebes  
passing in review.

Later, the saber on the wall,  
he showed how with only one  
leg he could do a knee-bend  
easily; then the other leg.

Later still, beside him,  
trying to match my steps so short  
compared to his easy stride,  
left and right, I watched him.

Watching him still, I count his steps,  
mark his pace, and stretch to reach.

### **Making a Mark**

Making a mark has less a ring  
than earlier in my wandering  
when, setting out, the Right ahead,  
meant struggle for overpowering  
Cause to by me alone be led.

Now when I mark the way, ahead  
of me and the powers myriad  
that one must meet in name of Cause,  
I see only chasms, overfed  
griefs, and the awkward speech of laws.

## A Soul's Geometry

A lifetime short of breath,  
missing what was said,  
and leaning to one side

forced a tilted gaze  
of blue-eyed scrutiny,  
sharp and more scalene

than equilateral.  
Mother's deafness, lung lost  
to thoracoplasty,

and slow twist to the left  
for sixty years as ribcage  
turned had squinched her outlook.

Appealing appearances,  
narrowly subtended,  
watching Powell and Keeler

sing and dance—later  
replaying all the parts  
with Betty on the porch

and in Wherry housing reading  
*Better Homes and Gardens*—  
made surfaces fundamental.

Distrusting explanations,  
she read faces: the angle  
of the eye, the tic,

tug of a forced smile,  
glance away, the frown.  
You did not look down

or talk to the bad ear,  
or squint, or roll your eyes,  
or hint you didn't care

about appearances,  
what others said or thought,  
or making an impression.

She only knew plain speech,  
on every issue landing  
normal to the lines

of pious utterance,  
abstractions, and excuses  
wonderfully contrived.

The right angle always  
was the average—  
what most people thought.

She knew this without pollsters'  
distributions, surveys,  
comments, or predictions.

Once read, you were plotted—  
the shape of your life-path,  
the weights that swing your views,

surfaces, and make-up, style,  
winning smile and manner,  
all the social greases,

the walls in pastel hues,  
the evening news, napkins  
folded to the right—

no reason not to be  
a Star—unless I wouldn't  
climb onto a stage.

The silver-surfaced Stars  
on eternal loops—  
any would want to be

after being passed  
between her father's sisters,  
poisoned by her cousins

in beautiful Miami,  
and saved from orphanage  
by Monte, her mother's sister.

Stars any'd want to be  
after her banker father  
found work at the combine

counting bales of cotton—  
disgraced—and her mother,  
tubercular, traveled the circuit

of sanitariums and spas  
in southwestern high spots,  
ever cheerful dying.

A lifetime short of breath,  
ever reminded of death,  
she searched through our faces for Stars—

a Stewart, Parton, Sinatra—  
and, never accepting denials,  
saw fame at the end of her trials.

### **Guaranteed three step life plan**

*Protect yourself.* Much as one hopes  
for comity and mutual concern,  
brutality is last to learn.

*Do little harm.* It's not so easy  
when life entails injustice  
and history provides the basis.

*Try doing good*—always surprising  
when it works. And when it doesn't  
a whiff remains that wasn't.

**1967**

War is on. Satisfying no one,  
 I enlist. Medicine defer.  
 Poetry too. Simply make  
 calculations: better to join—  
 willing, dutiful. But only so far.  
 Unconvinced by Dad's thesis  
 Nam threatens kitchen, car-port,  
 Mom and Sister like a prowler  
 climbing the trellis, nonetheless,  
 not for his reasons, but for him—  
 diamond virtue—for him, I go.

Reasons only go so far.  
 His war he missed, making his case—  
 young cadet ; new Pentagon:  
 “Bad eyes should not hold me back!”  
 REQUEST DENIED. Down in the Trench,  
 down in the Coral Sea, down  
 flaming in fuel, floating for days—  
 beyond suburbs, plastic, credit,  
 growth, transistors, washers, blenders;  
 beyond progress—down went his class,  
 Men of Forty-Two. His war he missed.

War is on. Satisfying no one,  
 I enlist because of him.

Reasons only go so far,  
 so he tried again—not water,  
 fire, earth, but air's purity,  
 like his own, lifted him up.  
 Handling details, he managed numbers,  
 Flying Fortresses, island runways,  
 two-ton atomic payloads hoisted

gingerly—icy skids detaching—  
midnight flights to Turkey, a crash  
taking off once; explaining fission,  
Pentagonic logic, fusion, and  
Gap's illusion to the Chief Politician.

War always on: *Rehearse. Prepare.*  
All words are watch words. Make duty  
always a fixture of restraint.  
Pressure withhold. Empire requires  
men quietly managing madness.

### **Desert Study**

Visible only because it is vertical,  
high on a crooked branch twisted and lichenous  
perched for a moment:  
hummingbird stops.

Under chamisa, its tail flicking once only,  
scraping and skittering over the leaves, dried out,  
yellow and scaly,  
skink comes to bask

Dry as arroyos, as crosswords one finishes,  
binds to collect and then saves for no obvious  
reason but habit,  
poet writes on.

**Edna**

A wringer washer in the corner,  
the tub beside it  
she carried weekly to the wash house,  
she washed now only once a week.

The children gone, she stacked the saucers  
she used to keep us  
from spilling milky coffee  
made sweeter than her Cajun drip.

Awake, she rose as if she had him  
to do for, and he  
would come to sit beside her,  
and she would smell his shaving soap.

**1969**

Ruins, walls pocked  
by mortar rounds,  
flower stalls, bottle-glass  
*Stube* windows  
I pass quickly,  
onion towers ahead.

Here's the black gate,  
the *Kaserne* dark,  
green parade, empty mess—  
every morning  
the same sergeant  
looking for a loan.

Take a fresh smock;  
then go upstairs,  
sort the tubes. Wait for blood—  
every morning  
the same process.  
War, it seems, is this.

Three o'clock comes,  
the testing done.  
Blood is packed and sent away.  
Men who came here  
with clap burning  
leave and take their meds.

Pass the shell-pocks,  
call out I'm home,  
love embrace, linger long,  
touch, and wonder  
at each other—  
just this much, no more.

**Marking Time**

Do they still wait? Still  
silently count off, none  
calling them, none  
witnessing, none  
after mail call  
seeing the letters  
tapped and feathered  
into place? Still  
in their place, wait, count,  
marking the time? Still come  
silently here,  
where the last long line  
forms at the rear? Still wait,  
stones in the sun?

**1968**

telling what I did or deferred,  
how a friend lost an eye in Paris,  
another went to Khe Sanh  
instead of me, or how  
many became scholars  
who didn't want to be,  
how my only conflict  
was a barracks brawl,  
how one rode for freedom,  
another cycled Vermont,  
how the thick melon  
of cells false to self  
began to nudge his spine  
as Dad's grandsons grew,  
or how I married, wrote songs,  
rode trains, and set my mind  
on Miltonic aims—  
These details I confess  
not to give craquelure,  
distress, or provenance  
to factitious memoirs,  
but to escort fact, sham,  
and prickly aftertastes  
of rows and silences  
far from these premises.

The personal effects  
once emptied from my pockets  
become public facts,  
though anyone's escapes

the more artfully  
they're told, become exploits.

Empty all of it.  
Empty pockets. Go,  
with loss in empty pockets—  
grief's denomination.

Read the dimpled bed  
of the arroyo. Read  
the monsoon's sweep and gouge,  
quickly full of body,  
become all it covers—  
how it dropped and sank and dried,  
leaving empty pockets.

## **Rabbit Bushes**

Gray berries  
beak wands  
make warbling.

Green silver  
heads turn,  
hair flying.

Clumps crowd  
dry banks,  
springs dousing.

***Sipapu at Pecos Pueblo***

On the ledge, your hand  
before your face  
covers the mesa.

The cave's porch,  
though facing the sun,  
is lit from within.

So also the portal  
the People pass through,  
eyes shut, to a vista.

## Light fingers

Fakes I deplore—  
how with a snap  
flattening out  
innocent cloth,  
dropping the crumbs  
damp with intrigue,  
passing for wise,  
they, with a deft  
motion untwist  
knots and appear  
sweetly beyond  
common disputes,  
stumbles, and spills:  
legerdemain,  
mostly the night  
work of my fears.  
Given a shake,  
I am brought round.

## **Potsherds**

Witness, tell what you see.

Crazed surfaces,

potted fakery.

Hunter, lay down your prey.

Thunder unearned,

bright bowl of day.

Maker, tell what you know.

Words come unsure,

slipping, and slow.

**Unmarked**

Once we were wanderers, following springboks,  
Wildebeests, crossing the Rift,  
wading through reeds.

Questions beset us, though seldom we ask them.  
Comfort we seek and to drift  
quietly—feed,

gathering under a tree or a Great Seal.  
Groups of us grind out and sift  
growls from needs.

## **Pecos Pueblo**

Buried in middens  
left under bone flutes,  
husks, red broken  
shards, and the gut spent  
boring and kindling,  
here, with their faces  
covered and spines bent,  
curled in their walled pits,  
the builders remain.

### **Picking Outfits**

No one asked me to do this.  
Payments never were mentioned.  
Dig about in the black fill  
under weedy presumptions,  
not so easily finding  
hooks for eyelets left hanging  
still from flattering costumes  
unexhumed till I tug them  
back with delicate forceps,  
pluck the crumbling swatches—  
see them shine!—from the dense mass  
living makes of our raiments.

### **Post-enlightenment blues**

Surpass the self—many say they do.  
Surpass the self—many say they do.  
But they still talk about it  
and it kinda makes me blue.

Buddy's in the garden waiting for the moon.  
Buddy's in the garden waiting for the moon.  
Say's he'll need no worldly income  
but to me it seems jejune.

Those who are enlightened—they say they just know.  
Those who are enlightened—they say they just know.  
My monkey-mind may chatter  
but I'd hate to see it go.

**Assembly needed**

Seeing this come together  
out of nowhere  
should be no surprise  
since finding nowhere  
narrows down my choices,  
leaving me  
somewhere; something to do.

Customarily  
I prefer  
to let surprise arise  
from long stares,  
dull walks, evening sits—  
not the shock  
of earwigs in a drawer.

What comes together, however,  
passes through me—  
often easily led;  
more often daring  
me to put my hand in  
tree stumps, bee hives,  
or other people's business.

**2°, 575 gT, 2795 gT, 350ppm**

(after Bill McKibben)

Some businesses you have to mind,  
like those near Cow Town,  
where I came from.  
Now us they lead to slaughter.

Not all of us, of course.  
Not all at once.  
The top execs  
expect some to survive.

An islander pulls out, moves on,  
lives on roots,  
builds oxcarts.

So shift your assets to oxen.

**Wildfire**

(Oklahoma, August 2012)

A propane tank popped  
twenty feet to crater  
bedroom and kitchen, leap  
the berm and railroad track  
sending swords of flame  
dancing on end and falling  
like straight pins into a cushion.

Someone saw a stranger  
tossing burning newspapers  
from a van. No straying  
mustang race of sparks,  
this wildfire had a mind  
behind it—mostly human.

Less accidental, wild,  
and uncontrollable than  
unforeseen, the heat  
we feel these days raced free  
since Coronado, wheeled west  
and east in conquest, scorched  
coasts; tipped pack-ice, drowning  
equally all the views  
on what or whom to blame.

**The empty pueblo behind us**

*And in conclusion—*

But wait.

*As no one goes there any more—*

I have met Bluestem.

*The paths being covered now—*

Findings lie around us.

*Having considered all the outcomes—*

The dumb stones withhold comment.

*Given empty claims of emptiness—*

Who makes claims already lies.

*What we include in the proffer—*

Rebuked, they drank Blue Trumpet tea.

### **Invocation**

Heart of the flower,  
Heart of the stone,  
Heart of the river,  
driven and riving,  
beat on our doors,  
morning and evening.

Head of the gopher,  
chin-troweled soil  
crumbling ahead of you,  
turning and quivering:  
gnaw at our bases,  
find in our spaces  
openings and leveling.

**Openings and leveling**

Once more as if never before  
braced on each other  
arms stretched, hands clasped,  
mouths open, souls patent,  
both push, both feed.

Flesh salt on our tongues and a breeze  
brushing so lightly  
limbs spread, spines dipped,  
hearts racing, selves buried,  
both rise; both fall.

Here hollowing, hallowing, we  
rising and falling,  
take, eat, rise, go—  
filled, empty; whole, yearning—  
burn, slake; heal all.

**Before breakfast in Santa Fe**

tink, spoon to cup,  
shaking roar  
of whirring traffic,  
slam of drawer,  
tapping knife,  
radio hisses,  
muffled vocables,  
spoon sweeping bowl,  
click and chink  
of an insistent bird,  
knife tapping the counter,  
plates' clatter,  
breath's high whine,  
buzz of rosy finch,  
cowbell and rumbling  
train at crossing,  
plump of knife  
dropped like a jaw,  
traffic spurred  
to swish and scrape—  
All this evidence of solidity  
might only be the larval stretch  
of a new world before flight.

## **Uncollected Poems**

**Vigilantes**

Twenty thousand years after  
taking the law into our own hands  
we can no longer hole up  
for the long winter,  
having run winter out  
on a radiant heater; can no longer  
hunt down the puma  
as claimed our cache, him being  
treed up a redwood sinking  
in the great divide  
between "pity and indig  
nation." Come on boys,  
get the rope: Head for the hills--  
or a hill of heads.

No, summer came too often--  
summer and the whir of cicadas  
like wire souging through pipe;  
we swelled too often,  
dense and opaque, sank  
and took on  
more of the same maturity,  
drowned in a tun  
or atonement:  
even-handed, though--  
we never meant no harm, Ma'am.  
And heat crackled in the night sky  
like arthritic calenders  
twirling and reckoning.

Sheepmen, mostly--  
such as enclose  
(Guess we showed you, Bion)--  
then out of nowhere came this god:  
High in the saddle,  
Big as the Tetons,  
Wide as the sunset;  
allowed as how we'd best be  
moving on--water rights or not--  
The West not big enough for both  
So we hit the trail again,  
camped in a grove of highrise  
and lay on our bedrolls out under  
less than the time it takes  
to torch an armored limousine.



## **Late Poems**

*Sorry for getting to you late on this.*

*It couldn't be avoided.*

**Uncollected poems**

**Poetry Society of Virginia Submissions**

**Automatoma**

**More uncollected poems**

**End Notes**

**Lady L.**

Signifying awe  
rather than  
nothing,  
a fullness  
too much to be felt  
at once;  
and us, trumped,  
poor players,  
with hands empty  
before they're dealt,  
the deck is stacked  
to steerage with hope  
that borrows on tomorrows,  
risking everything  
to mean  
something.

August 6, 2010

**A triolet**

Passing from radiance into the night,  
stepping down gradients shallow and slight  
like stars so distant they cast the same light  
passing from radiance into the night,  
so I, in mis-cueing myself with a sleight  
of hand, am transformed to behold such a sight  
passing from radiance into the night,  
stepping down gradients shallow and slight.

July 2010

**The Escort**

Finally, tired of poling  
across the oily river  
he stepped onto the far bank  
for the first time  
and pushed the skiff away.

March 17, 2010

**The blue sky**

and other unmentionables  
like clouds through branches,  
sunlight through red maple leaves,  
a bright cardinal in the yew,  
are visible to the pure in heart,  
unlike those Mazarins,  
those cardinals of a different hue  
invisible to you.

To Susie, 2002

**Deflections**

Making shifts continually,  
riding bubbles to surmise our lot  
within a multiverse where the demise  
of time's arrow, like as not,  
with other certainties,  
makes us a drifting snow,  
a scattering of selves,  
we inspect the scene  
for some perch to hold it captive  
in landscape, story, score  
or string of formulas,  
but finally, seeing the hour,  
genuflect, rise, leave the service  
as the fauxbourdon swells behind us,  
and again approach the day  
with its deflections.

### Sunday Afternoon

I organize my life around no Cause.  
Perhaps this should be cause for some regret  
because a Daily Office fills the time  
that would be ordinary otherwise.  
Stations are provided, places marked,  
rubrics followed and events announced.  
Whether Prayer or Trees come first or Guns  
or Better Schools or Gender Equity,  
Deterring Crime or Saving Market Share,  
or Marginalization of the Arts,  
these Causes help to fill an afternoon  
that seems to be about some grief in joy  
or joy in grief I cannot recognize.

The robins have returned to fill the gutter  
with their sticks. Forsythia retires  
to the background for another year.  
A late frost takes some casualties but comes  
as no surprise, since months of freezing rain  
and sleet and snow so hard our tracks don't sink,  
and ice polyps made of Laurel buds  
have made me wary of the ordinary;  
uneasy with the afternoon, the warmth,  
bees in holly, and steady pulse of clicks  
the ratcheting horizon makes past noon:  
the light that sinters memories to bone.

**Emma Strawbridge**

Emma Strawbridge lived on this corner.  
Autumn evenings we would sometimes watch her  
lowering bags of soil or garden flowers  
into her storm cellar.

    This bush was hers.

She planted it when land across the road  
went for an airport and the road  
became an eight-lane highway  
where faces blur past gardens.

    This pyrocantha never was allowed  
as now, to reach the porch or crowd  
her violets aside. She had a gift  
for keeping things alive: she could lift  
a coreopsis free as if she found  
its blazing roots and bargained with the ground.

### **The Knife Switch**

The stumps where his legs were before he stepped  
on an oil circuit breaker in the rain  
didn't feel like stumps. He had to look  
so as not to think his legs were crossed.  
He looked above the rail at the wire fence  
he'd strung around the yard, wheeling himself  
from post to post --the Western Union wire  
he'd kept when they retired him, a fine wire  
you could hardly see, on Bakelite spools.  
Waiting on the porch beat sitting there.

The ancient cow and children knew by now--  
the boys when they'd brushed by on bicycles.  
Sometimes a rabbit or a dog would serve.  
Lena knew better than to take the knife  
from his lap while he waited on the porch.  
Visitors came slowly up the drive  
so as not to raise much dust, and leaned  
against the gate --him waiting-- greeted him  
for the greeting back he never gave  
before Lena came and welcomed them,  
excusing him for and from everything;  
they'd quickly go inside and he would wait.

One time it was the Ladies Garden Club,  
rearranging flowers and neighbors' lives  
three hours or more before they finally left,  
carrying little sprigs and sprays outside;  
lining the drive with billowy floral prints  
and opening the doors to cool the cars--  
one leaning on the fence. Lena saw it.  
The knife closed, and he had his little dance.

### **The Fate Function**

A compounded probability  
 whose dwindling denominators  
 specify one path nuanced  
 and contingent on the instance--  
 self-referential self--  
 once spindled, only once unwinds.

11/20/2014

### **Under Cover of Light**

Always mistaking light  
 for understanding,  
 almost I missed the face  
 revealed in darkness--  
 one whom I sought to please  
 (though I had made it).  
 Often, in dreams where half  
 or more is hidden,  
 images (golden calf?)  
 arrive unbidden,  
 pushing their darkness forth--  
 motley, mis-taken,  
 underexposed, half-lit,  
 grief-speckled. Must I  
 please them? Adore? Daylight:  
 they fade to nothing.

11/21/2014

**Last Wreath**

Lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

Living only forward,  
circular rewards  
signify the hope  
turning never stops  
lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

Rings of stone, reactions  
driving leaf to grow,  
cyclical engine,  
steaming lava flows--  
lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

Living only forward,  
forward in a line,  
then past ending corded,  
cyclically entwined  
lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

Mazes mazes circle,  
circles in a line,  
labyrinths of myrtles,  
thoughts by thoughts defined  
lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

Lines and rings,  
paths and circles.

**Another little flyting**

Granted to be.

--Granted by whom?

Best to assume.

--Nothing is free.

As a man thinks.

--Other men act.

Inward's the key.

--Leave me intact.

Short is our lease.

--In comes. Out blinks.

Time to attend.

--Or thoughts amend.

**Arts Foundation**

Exquisite feelings

follow plunder.

Headless opponents

nod approval:

certified value

comes from valor.

Vigilant Guidance

leads the people.

Screw down dominion

then sing sweet songs.

12/13/2014

**Two poems on finding the heart where the home isn't****The Uncordial Lodger**

Gulping and swallowing  
outside my throat  
you swell and collapse, thrust  
your colicky swish past me.  
Outside me, you cavort,  
hump, and spew yourself  
without restraint.  
Without me, you go on  
pummeling, stretching, testing,  
skewing every bony barrier  
I hoped would hold.

**On Not Buying a House**

Murphy, caught between the wall  
and the need for sleep--  
double-squeezed, a sowbug-ball--  
drew a door and crawled out  
unlisted, not unhoused  
but moved to stay  
home-free in rent.  
Not in the lists of those  
in arms against a sea  
of owner's troubles,  
he unclasped his heart--  
released again to stray.

12/14/2014

**Residues**

Sneers, bleeding sentences cut  
short, and gimlet twists,  
and cracks made quickly  
without thought of shell--  
slights, barbs, wags  
of head and finger--  
linger as residues, trouble  
sleep, lag into morning:  
a time for omelet.

**Kings' Day**

(January 6, 2015)

We'd like to think that someone would arrive  
to verify, audit, or at least  
pronounce, at last, independently,  
our certainties have not been misplaced.  
Then they arrive, climb off awkward beasts.  
They look at us. We're the ones who know.

**Lost Luohan**

Incredibly  
under all the volumes,  
their marbled  
frontispieces  
creased, their rows  
and columns  
quick-marched  
without pieces  
of artful commentary  
roaring behind them  
but only untagged toes  
and indelibly  
scribed, momentary  
utterances; dog-eared  
paperbacks; weird  
block-print of monk  
whose misshapen head  
squeezed through  
too many birth canals,  
there: under it all,  
sunken where all was said,  
a sage writes--and still's not done.

12/26/2014

**In Early Day**  
(for some son's IED)

I will need no more razor blades, thanks,  
in my life. After that, if you like,  
bring a few--Eversharp, like the ones  
in my cup. Your first sip from the same  
shallow cup of the sharp, breastless world  
and the cut of a word or a glance  
opened the lines you have walked since.  
Finding your way where the road ends,  
softly you prod in the road bed.  
Death may be hiding an inch down.  
Watch with me dawn's thin line.

**On watch**

Once set,  
the threshold for sensation  
being what it is,  
only a surge beyond  
will trip delight.  
Hence, cranking gain  
of speakers  
wailing pain  
of singers,  
chugging iced beer  
or whiskey by the pint  
or loading up on fear  
by B&E or wave  
of guns as we fly by  
proves that we're alive.

Thus the insistence  
that I should only believe  
this or that and no more  
to prove worthy  
sets me against  
any trance,  
and for vigilance.

**Being, Nonbeing, and Other**  
*A caution*

The sacred,  
scared away--  
your pinches  
inching off  
the wavelengths  
you would go  
by skipping  
round the track  
to place or  
show your mark  
and space and  
thereby frame  
all you know--  
stays hidden.

Later, though,  
unbidden,  
bright beams blaze.

Lit up, you're  
scared to find  
you're truly  
only space?  
Hang on a  
bit. Let's ask  
who's saying.

Like lovers  
truly this  
and only  
that, the fans  
of bits, or  
space, or flame,  
pure thought, or  
change, all frame  
Beloveds.

Cherish space?  
Then solids  
fade away.  
The length your  
frame is cut,  
like custom  
finery,  
makes beauties  
of flea's legs,  
tyrant's bones,  
a poison  
alkaloid,  
star's demise,  
a perfect  
paragraph,  
recession  
causing war,  
or real time  
massacre  
in Dolby  
sound. You see?

Were you to  
disrespect  
the frames whose  
unit lengths  
make beauties  
of flies' eyes,  
vacuum life  
from art, or  
empty hope  
from action,  
the beauties  
would simply  
disappear.

Frame and love  
what's framed but  
don't believe  
Beloved Ones  
are truly one  
and onlies.

**Rushes have the floor**

Inland, the rushes give way without trying.  
Beaches here--dune grass--surround us and beyond us  
poems and other reversible distortions  
twist at the ply of our biases by bending  
backwards our lovely old comfortable creases.  
Beloveds live there. None of them itches to know freedom.  
Freedom, in fact, is a versatile self-starter  
better to leave on her own. How could you brand her?  
Easier catching the shimmering patina  
waves over waves weave in reflecting the tidal  
rhythm that stitches the layerings' distorted  
ever-unending clear cloth. Chasing this raiment  
covering shoreline and continental shelf--depths,  
multitudes--make your way. Dive over new thresholds.  
Rushes hold sway without trying, always give in;  
boundaries, settled in words and soft habits, give  
way to their roots and grow inland without trying.

4/21/2015

**From the Ontology Nurse's Handbook**

Wait for eye contact.  
Things being what they are,  
slap the eye.  
The phosphene flash will pass;  
the shuddering shutter open.

**Another comment on poetry**

I don't like dumb, shapeless poems  
that die in the ear  
or fail to teach  
or must insist on being clear  
or rhyme too predictably  
or inextricably inhabit a deception.  
Appalled?  
Sorry, Archibald.

**Narcissus**

The enantiomorph

Nodding over water,  
perhaps the second look--  
snapping back the easy  
adoring gaze, a look  
past image, past  
the mirrored thought,  
the hinged surface,  
face over face--  
so superimposed  
it seemed like an opening.

**Cabinet Work**

The bookshelf is finished,  
shimmed plumb and upright,  
unlike authors and readers,  
students and lovers skid-  
-ding to an endstop.

3/31/2015

## **The Docket**

Eight thousandths of Earth's bore  
thick, like gray must on a fruit:  
breathe in and out.

Dirt can kill  
it seems.  
Stay in. Be still  
and dream  
of the bright  
muddy Spring.

Appealed all the way  
to the Mundane Court,  
the cases backed  
up with loam.

3/21/2015

## Abstractions

like twelve gauge shot splintering the wall  
that hides the runaway, or Tom, the man  
who was a thing, or lesson Epictetus  
gave the master twisting leg from hip,  
or Constitution automatically  
assuring reason, are our very selves  
reconstituted, meant to carry on  
calmly and impartially without us.

Step aside to find a name or image  
easier to clasp than vanished sob  
or stripped heart banished to the dream  
that will not stop. At a remove, a code  
transforms or mechanism supplants rage.  
The winding scream becomes a channeled race  
flowing indifferently to turn a stone  
that grinds down grief and sweeps the passage clean.

Step inside the passage we are making.  
Proceed by grasps and dwelling on each step  
and turn; by slipstreams pulling us along;  
by finding terms to turn aside the movement  
that will not stop. Each level of remove  
imagined well transfers us into things  
moving on without us--arrows, flames,  
pumps, books, lines of code, and names of names.

3/21/2015

## **The Snows Are Here**

Yesterday's snows are here.  
They never left.  
Gritty with gravel, salt,  
and asphalt, grip  
slipping from roof and eaves  
as winter leaves.

Shapes return. Not the south  
side--steps sink there,  
twisting the heel aside--  
enough to give  
notice. The icy bone  
smiles as it says adieu.

The snows are here--  
yesterday's many drifts,  
pellucid isles,  
archipelagos, frieze  
of lost domain  
buried with fallen walls  
unearthed, dug out;  
buried in snow again.  
The snows are here.  
They never left.

2/15/2015

## **A Clean Sweep**

Most heroes had a gift  
for sweeping vermin out.  
Was it a calling, rage,  
or holy disposition  
to smash the infant heads  
of sullen opposition?

Ages upon ages  
wealth and wisdom went  
to cure the innocent  
like fresh-flayed meat.

An evil agency,  
perhaps, its distant seat  
a star, intends this hurt,  
these wounds, this carefree strafing;  
gangs cornering young girls,  
their lawful prey and safe  
to use and throw away.

Come, welcome all the heroes  
in our name. Welcome!  
Ever be the same!

All who decimate  
for an abstraction  
never underestimate.  
Their purity of action  
is simply a subtraction  
of what offends the mind.  
Look on no distant star.  
The Evil Agency  
is easier to find.

## Submissions to the Poetry Society of Virginia, 2014

"South Boston Man" won in category. Other poems won second place and honorable mention. The \$70 received for first place was the only payment I received for a poem in 70 years.

### Detail work

It would be too easy  
to say that Abel,  
whose shutters do not match  
and whose brushes curl  
in mineral spirits,  
shows himself more kind  
than Cain, his colleague,  
whose checkered bathroom  
shining with stolen tiles  
is a temple to taking pains,  
but genial nature links  
no more to imprecision  
than venality to detail.

### Taking Sides

So when she told me I could take a walk,  
I mean, she is so full of it, I said,  
"Girl, I am past you and a mile ahead  
and all you say is just your mother's talk,  
like I'm a lesson on her board in chalk  
you should erase, or sentence slashed with red,  
or dirty thing in books she's never read.  
I'll leave so she can watch you like a hawk."

"Move in?" I said. "You need to walk it off!"  
Like just because you had him once in class  
he thinks he knows us. Well, now I've had enough.  
From you a C. From me he gets no pass.  
He's like some mouse who thinks the owl won't see  
him raid her nest--like Dad with you and me.

## Down Time

Untended gardens all began with plans.  
Circles were peonies and lines, paths.  
Pears were to be espaliered on crossed laths.  
First came camellias, jonquils; japonica.  
In turns, nandina, rose, and coxcomb fans.  
Wasp-heavy vines threaded arching trellis.  
Oh, I would like for you to stay a while.  
Oxeyes watch for you and a bench waits.

But gates are down, the paths mole-heaved, and this—  
this tipped, blackberry-overtaken sundial  
leaning on a standpipe, remnant of hours  
no flowers will toll, this tells the time too well.

## Farm Auction

A rusty adze, a dibble—  
Who'll take this old wheel hoe?  
Give me a bite or nibble.  
I'll let the whole box go.

If it were worth your trouble,  
To come a rainy day,  
To park and walk through stubble,  
And sink in wet red clay,

Then take this adze and dibble,  
Come take this old wheel hoe.  
Give me a bite or nibble.  
I'll let the whole box go.

A rusty adze, a dibble—  
And now the land must go.  
Give me a bite or nibble.  
I'll let the whole place go.

You took the adze and dibble.  
You took the old wheel hoe.  
You took my time and trouble.  
Where did the old place go?

Give me your bid for failure.  
Give me your bid for fear

And for the tumbling tractors  
Bringing these auctions here.

Long after crops plowed under,  
Long after bones were set,  
Then came the rain and thunder,  
The loss, and mud, and wet.

Give me the price in acres.  
Give me the cost in years.  
Give dust to banks and bakers  
And see if bread appears.  
Give me your bid for honor.  
I'll pay it back with tears.

A rusty adze, a dibble.  
Who'll take the old wheel hoe?  
Give me a bite or nibble.  
I'll let the whole box go.

I'll let the whole place go.

### **The Potter**

When off the hero strode with a brave look  
she did not know the form that evil took,  
that space so empty and destructive  
could seem so gracious and instructive  
and with a sinuous flexibility  
invade its host. She took it for a snake.

That space should bask there and be dreaming  
of whether it should bring her into being  
she could not abide, and rushed upon it,  
grabbed its drooping tail and quickly spun it,  
looped it end to end and coiled a shape  
around its nothingness, a slender vase.

Then every jar and cruse and pot she filled  
with seeds or oil, or flour she'd milled  
and every hour became a thing to lose  
and timing space and spacing time a ruse  
to hinder waste, with clocks and dials and births;  
last, she held formlessness itself –in glaze.

Then she could gather faces up again—  
discarded images of gods and men,  
of hates and hopes, of simpering distrust  
that lies with faith, both simmering in the dust.  
She picked all of them up again and blessed them  
and fired them in the shine we cast through space.

### **Omaha, Dog Red**

June 6, 1944

Down darkening, starless  
deeps, none keeps safe, dropping  
rounds, rifles, and bibles.  
Wrenched, tipped, slipped and falling,  
none knowing, once wading  
near shore through Bangalore-  
punched passage, scraps; barbed wire,  
plinth or fame his name bore.

### **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.

### **Out of the Woods**

(and past quibbling about the *summum bonum*)

Fever down, she returns again.  
Another close escape. Door left open.

Lost and found, dumb, bewildered, tamed  
by truths I could not fell, I sang and dreamed,  
learning from her what I was suited for.

Old Bach was no Gluck and Henry Moore  
no Praxiteles; no William Faulkner,  
Shakespeare. Nor is she, my dying mother,  
Saint Sophia, nor any of these trees  
all wisdom. Each rooted tower rises  
taking the shape light gives. From woods we come  
and truths become, each good its own sum.

### **Limerick #2**

Young McIlvain went to South Riding  
to garner his fortune in siding,  
but hard though he tried  
to show his good side,  
a front without backing ends sliding.

### **Morning Find**

Going to nowhere  
faster than usual—  
only a day since  
grackle departed  
feathers (as usual,  
left on the doorstep),  
gone to the where none  
fares any well from—  
still among breathers,  
sweeping the carnage,  
I wake in plumage.

### **A morning shave**

In a minor role I would have asked  
Mr. Skeffington to fill in facts  
covered over by cartouches flipping  
year to year, nineteen-oh-six to nine  
then to twenty-nine and forty. Bette  
filled the screen but it was Claude I thought of—  
wandering to what's left out or missing.  
So this item in the news, a column  
telling how a city clerk embezzled  
contract funds—which passes over telling  
why—is like a glint where even shallow  
pools reflect eternity. What's meant  
has no truck with roles or screens or mirrors.

### **Two birds**

The mockingbird  
who cannot get  
enough of spring  
spots purple poop  
on walk and fence  
beneath the tree  
with mitten leaves  
and dives at death  
with his red tail,  
rough shoulders, feet  
hooked neatly, clenched.  
Immobile. Shrieks  
against it fail.  
Impassive, moved  
in no way songs  
assail, it counts  
the hours. It waits.  
You blink. It soars.

*(In memoriam V.I.B. 1921-2012)*

*South Boston Man*  
*June 6, 1944*

With eighteen pounds of cyclonite I sank  
when I came off the ramp up to my chin,  
the oily water in my nose and flares  
ahead to show the beach too far away  
because the boat had stuck on railroad ties  
the krauts had laid with mines. The churn and shove  
rough water gave the bobbing landing craft  
made others heave but fishing with my Dad  
off Deltaville I had sea legs. A roar  
around us like a screaming ballgame crowd,  
a steady bullet-river overhead,  
poured out once we had come in range. I fell  
into a crater underfoot and dropped  
and grabbed my gun. My section sergeant kneeled  
like at confession on the sand ahead.  
A shell sliced through him and the mortar rounds  
he carried burst and bloomed around his stump.

**That Last Rites are a Lift Off**

Exhale.  
Set meters to aught.  
Let sorrows depart.  
Exhale.

Let go.  
Instruments, zero.  
Forget what you know.  
Let go.

Pierce eyes.  
Fly with your heart.  
Let sorrows depart.  
*Pierce eyes.*

**Edgewater Clinic, May, 1944**  
for K.C.

The latest leftover wonders from the pile  
applied in microrems where the blemish rose,  
a rounded strawberry plaque or fingerprint  
attending angels had missed before her birth,  
seemed placed so daintily in the circle field  
of snowy linens, like ephods bright and sure,  
that over weeks as the spot diminished, fell  
and blanched, a miracle saved the baby's neck.

But later, crumpling cities melted, streets  
dissolved with certainties, heights made low, the path  
made straight--so straight--by the triumphs science wrought  
and war made plain, an ablated thyroid gone  
and Mother's mother, she asked if such a rose  
beneath her ear would have seemed impure or hexed  
her more than radium pellets bright as jade.

And fear is always the answer. Other piles  
were made of leftover flakes of phyllite, flint,  
and dark obsidian. Someone noticed them  
and soon, outdistancing fear, the arrows flew.  
So wonders, handily left from shaping querns  
or gods, were fitted onto a wooden shaft and thrown.  
And we, projectiles in flight from fear, have thrown  
*ourselves ahead of our cures to save our necks.*

**In that Hour**  
F Company, 116th Regiment  
June 6, 1944

Behind they left South Boston and the past.  
With them, we enter water, lasting war,  
and empires in the fight to hold and last,

necks and lines cut, emplacements in a blast  
buried, Viers in rubble and no more.  
Behind they left South Boston and the past,

and as they were, we are: we, the Kurds gassed;  
we the women stoned; the bombed-out store,  
and empires in the fight to hold and last.

Past every enmity and cause and caste;  
past wanting theirs, past hope, past wanting more,  
behind they left South Boston and the past;

made compact in that hour, contrived to live  
as one connected force and nothing more.  
And empires in the fight to hold and last

still rage, still fear such force, once wise and massed  
may pour out peace, not right some score.  
Behind they left South Boston and the past,  
*and empires in the fight to hold and last.*

## A love that flares

(1)

As long as I have known you  
I have never said it  
and you never asked till now.  
Though often you would start to,  
I said we'd regret it  
and you backed away till now.

But now you can't take  
heartbreak—somehow.

So I will tell you  
just what's to be done,  
since I won't let you  
speed up what we've begun:

*Take a walk in the forest.  
Write a poem.  
Read a book.  
A love that flares  
with just one look  
is soon cold stares  
like a fish's  
on a hook.*

(2)

You couldn't live without me.  
Is this to my credit?  
You ask me where you stand right now.  
Though what there is about me  
That led you to have said it  
I miss—unless a chat's a vow.

So I will tell you  
just what's to be done,  
since I won't let you  
speed up what we've begun:

*Take a walk in the forest.  
Write a poem.  
Read a book.  
A love that flares*

*with just one look  
is soon cold stares  
like a fish's  
on a hook*

### **On improved methods for training snipers**

His trainer's aroused with elation  
as tingling with brain stimulation  
and cutting the gain on negation  
buzzing with sharp peroration  
from critical nags and prefrontal  
tendencies less fundamental  
than focus decisive and spinal,  
the student of sniping transcranial  
takes aim without any compunction  
and fires with mechanical function.

### **You've time.**

After raging awhile against the darkness  
you might think about what you've been doing,  
which, in the scheme of things, is not much.

Live again. Increase your sample set.  
Become the stooped ash you just passed.  
It has an emerald borer on its mind.

Exchange faces with the sunken stream  
under your feet, its clarity from mud  
and gravity revealed as you drink.

Become the dragon-wing in anthracite  
or sooty miner finding it, or child  
watching warring ants clear the dead.

Wear other masks. Live other lives. You've time.  
Another mask or Age or stage or face  
beckons, clears your space of death and rage.

### **Tack the headers**

At odds with ends, to make my me  
more than our we, or else make we  
predominate, and liberate  
muscular mobs to topple sweet  
Reason (sipping ichor neat  
behind the hedge of doubt), I edge  
along the alternation. Choice  
seems indicated as I zig-  
zag, working angles close enough  
to tack along and never luff,  
but choosing sides, like setting verse  
in fours, pretends that life's a game  
with scores kept by approving gods,  
instead of work against the odds  
we'll lean too much to self or mob  
and sink past all acclaim.

### **Midshipman**

My mother loved his prissy walk,  
the snap of a line of plebes  
passing in review.  
Later, the saber on the wall,  
he showed how with only one  
leg he could do a knee-bend  
easily; then the other leg.  
Later still, beside him,  
trying to match my steps so short  
compared to his easy stride,  
left and right, I watched him.  
Watching him still, I count his steps,  
mark his pace, and stretch to reach.

*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.

**Storm Track, Moore, OK**

Punched into the marquee  
of the multiplex: **Red Pick-Up**,  
neither coming attraction  
nor suspended disbelief,  
posed as evidence of Order  
Un-human and strangely  
attracted to tract houses,  
malls, and trailer parks.  
Posed and poised—we do well  
to remember—ourselves,  
what is most strange  
is our thinking things settled.

Whirling disk made of blades  
of a ceiling fan above me:  
such an object of motions  
I am—vibrational flesh  
firm as cooling amber honey.  
The swarm curls and tangles  
in and out of forms. Solids  
from the cooling whirl  
of motions congregate.  
Such is our state: firm facts;  
yet a flowing  
breathy track of words hurling.

## **A Killing Team**

By no means discernible,  
the latch lifted  
and the eyes like hooks,  
the ten men gone sauntering  
through high grasses  
have become a team

as well shed of principle  
as snow drifted  
onto the fence looks  
like pure purpose gathering  
its white blankness  
to make killing clean.

## Voices on Turkey Day

Families are those you have still  
Even when you've had it with them.  
    You remember Uncle Edward  
    Came to visit us in Jersey.  
You were three, he brought his daughter,  
Fifty-eight now—never married.  
    When are all the children coming?

    Noon today, I told you, Father.

Deviled eggs, potato salad,  
Ham and turkey on the table,  
Women humming in the kitchen,  
Children hiding in the attic—

    All the men are pitching horseshoes—  
    All but me—I watch and listen.  
    You remember Edward's Gladys  
Came to see us in Biloxi.  
Silver eels were all you caught then.  
You were thirteen. She was ten.

    Will Gladys come today at ten?

Prying, fumbling, they have found it—  
Locked, in cobwebs, in the attic—  
Edward's daughter's hidden trousseau.  
Families are those you have still  
Even when you've had it with them.

# AUTOMATOMA

## Selected Poems

by  
Richard L. Rose

*“ . . . What boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely slighted Shepherd’s trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?”*  
—John Milton, *Lycidas*

This selection was submitted to the AWP competition in 2015. Subsequently, I added the "Holy Week, 2015" sequence to it.

### Foreword

The poems are selected from other collections and from current work. Without prizes or notice, I have happily composed poems and music for more than fifty years. The urgency in the poems comes therefore not from advanced age but from a concern about our feelings and imagination being contracted out at the very moment the earth requires our labor-intensive efforts. Peace,

Richard L. Rose

**Automatoma**

Of our first disobedience now the fruit  
has ripened in a thing against our nature,  
a growth that rules us we have bred from rules,  
a coded being, supreme appliance, image  
and appendage overgrown: a cyst  
like an ovarian anomaly  
with true eyes, hair, eleven misplaced teeth,  
and six or twenty fingers on a hand—or more—  
made to assist.

### Offload

So in those days did keepers of the codes  
 receive each one the stacks to own and give  
 successors—lines like tea-streams from a sieve.  
 None kept the whole nor knew another's loads.  
 And so we lived on geode-perfect lines,  
 laid planes on planes so lovingly aligned  
 by rules; thus separated, none would find  
 behind this crystal clarity designs  
 or meanings, questions, knowing or desire  
 to know. All had been done, offload complete  
 and, all in care of all, lest one should ask  
 for more within our crystal cage; inquire  
 of sacred artifices, and unseat  
 the rules which give each safety, place, and task.

We were done for by our artifices  
 doing for us what we need not, must not  
 do and, given all we asked, should not,  
 in courtesy, decline. So if one says  
 that we were yearning for a better life  
 before the system failed, consider, please:  
 from governance to working on your knees;  
 from butcher's cleaver to the surgeon's knife;  
 from office memo to the railway switch;  
 from deftly plying words to bending pipe;  
 from making cells to towers of any size;  
 from drilling down to data or to ditch,  
 our automatic comforters could wipe  
 our tears, delight our hearts, and fill our eyes.

The wide-spread crowd also provided votes  
 revealing what we thought, compiled our lives,  
 counted births and deaths, husbands and wives:  
 a cloud to guide us made of data-motes.

So all in care of all, the crowd dispersed,  
 the public places cleared, the element  
 inclined to anarchy or to foment  
 unrestful musings compiled from its first  
 deflection; filed and held for questioning  
 in endless loops by algorithmic troops.  
 We could not but be at peace. You say  
 an undercurrent of distrust was stirring?  
 You are forgiven. So must drowsy dupes  
 of ease be gently wakened to the day.

We were so glad and settled being served!  
 We loved our things at hand. Convenience  
 became us. Credit swept away expenses.

Taste every form! The Haida mask, the curved  
 Etruscan leaf, the pansy petal's flavor!  
 Such treasures suited us as we became  
 royals, sea-men, hunters, any name,  
 role, desire or feeling we would savor.  
 Imagine all of us roped eye to eye  
 in cabled unity that never sleeps,  
 in automated oneness, seeing all,  
 breathing an animated, wireless sigh,  
 throbbing with simulated pulse that beeps,

crowd-surrounded. All in care of all.

All in care for all, imagine us,  
and, if you can, forgive our vigilance,  
our violence, and—yes—omnipotence.  
Forgive the self-affirming god in us  
who made that world and saw that it was good  
to let the Outer Mind of all displace  
the heart's rehearsals, cultivated grace,  
enacted wisdom and embodied good,  
engagement with our lives and with the Earth.

The promise of reverberant connection  
with heady thoughts had filled a puffed confection.  
Ascending with our profits and self-worth,  
having offloaded sense for delectation,  
we floated on delight without direction . . .

### **The Installation**

"Fixtures become us."

(Here he mentions plumbing,  
jointed conduits, and sinks.)

"Inners make outers."

(Nodding, finger pointed.)

"It's topology," he says.

"Outwards the inward—"

then he lingers, pauses—

"folds, bends, twists, pulls, or absorbs."

"We in our beings

are effects and causes.

You are fixtures like us."

Closing his sloped face,

he then slides; connects us;

seats us deeply into our work.

**Patch this to his midbrain.**

In a six foot line that one must read as five  
by somewhere stealing stress, more briefly to arrive,  
the Morphemic Operator designated  
contrived (uneasily) to write a pattern slated  
for another operator from the pool.

Tedium, praise for the end of the shift, or the Rule  
itself a challenge (confining duty to directives):  
though she was only to abbreviate connectives—  
for whatever reason—she had tired of this  
and pulled up a readout problem none would miss.

It came from the bench of a Particle Counter  
like a meditation upon emptiness.

This Scintillator on his early morning stints  
(shift same as hers; as tedious, on evidence)  
was wasting costly beta cocktails on restarts;

his overruns required excuses and new parts.

The screen's left margin stealing a space each line,  
zero untrue and shifting, he could not assign  
corrections fast enough to track the slight advances  
and declines; the rubato robot ruined chances  
of his ever keeping error five percent:

Just the problem for subvocal management.

She produced a ponder program to improve his dwell  
on noise and static and give him peace with the erratic:

***Come, Oh come, Oh sweet and careless feast of lips and hands  
and breasts and tongues and catching, spilling,  
wasting, reaching, tasting, drinking, stretching;***

*Come and come again, droop and rise increased; dwindle,  
dally, strum the belly of desire; swim the medley—mound  
and cave, brook and pyre, reach within reach settling  
only to reach higher, slowing to heaviness and subtler,  
bluer fire;*

*Come, blue-green and slippery from slumbering eddies: lie  
slyly on my thoughts, you fingering, shallow roots;  
drench me, seize my gentle flowers, crush my shoots with  
swelling softness, salt me in your shuddering breeze.*

This the Morphemic Operator for the Counter  
whose quench curve flagged and error rose unsated,  
prepared: a sutra, subvocal and subzero,  
to conduct him, as a pilgrim on a saunter  
through emptiness and cool expanses of unstated  
uselessness, to dwell in secret warmths of snow.

**The News We Never Missed**

Rockets eyeless and aimless from Gaza  
drop and pound on the hardened and buried.  
Rockets answer them, flattening Gaza.  
Four and twenty young blackbirds not singing—  
baked—are carried in green coffin wrappers.  
North of Baghdad and nestled in bunkers  
waiting union, the kisses of missiles  
spreading Sarin are captured in thousands.  
Sinai's pharmacist, selling his thousands,  
dozes painlessly. Flown from the Maldives,  
Roman Seleznev runs out of credit.  
Smallpox is found in a drawer like a pencil  
never missed, like Ebola in Guinea,  
or like Eagle Tail, choked on a hot dog.

### Seeing Regis and Kathie Lee on a Bus in Richmond

For man's convenience but for women more—  
 because a man will tend to go without  
 and let a finger freeze or be the last  
 to notice the disease that turned his feet  
 to yams, and spend instead of save excess—  
 come such movers and appliances.

Some from acres surmountably intact  
 scrape floors, while others pave the foliage smooth  
 as commentary; sometimes *we* are moved,  
 as by this broadcast to a bus  
 of drowsy riders settling on no thoughts  
 going down Carey Street to Shockoe Slip—  
 a street that only goes one way—who slip  
 from rides to drives as unaccountably  
 as little gusts throw sand along the curb;  
 who watch cold bucket jaws drool masonry  
 and, waiting turns, apply the images  
 chattering in our eyes to some defect  
 that these appliances repair or ease—

all these appliances: the shuttle bus,  
 the crane tipping to set a mixer neat  
 on scaffolding as twirls in petitpoint;  
 the Hosts of Muddled Flight who justify  
 themselves by being namebrands nationwide,

identifiable and talkative  
as once Amana, Waring, Bendix were,  
speaking from exhibits of The Home  
To Come (whose kitchen's so convenient  
we no longer use it).

But women, used  
to transformed versions of reality,  
to these devices men put first or last,  
always prefer incarnate evidence  
of what some wish became, or even how  
obedience to an internal code  
could be inferred from placement of the hands.

They muse upon the application less  
than context, such as Meaning of a Touch,  
of corn that grew from what we didn't eat,  
of baby's feet that curled without commands  
to show them light; of smudge of painful color  
in a crystal blur of raging fact.

They find secreted these original,  
these germinal and ever incomplete,  
imperfect meanings even in the Show  
that lets its image chatter slow enough  
for us to see, and in the Talk that stool  
to stool somehow restores to us the Word.

**Landmark Shopping Center**

Landmark will survive my mention  
I assume -- the shopping  
Pickups, Hardtops, Coupes ingress,  
the nibbling Backhoe leer,

Shored and guard-railed, Shirley Highway  
like a fault-line thunder,  
gliding fenderlings shoal  
in the parking lot,

surround Sears Automotive,  
sniff the slake-lime halls,  
gabble in the slack currents  
between tides,  
desires founder.

### 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 . . ."

### **Crooked E's and Other Swell Ideas**

Many were the elaberrations,  
 the buffaloes and buffalos  
 massing in corridors,  
 their whistles bristling,  
 racing from stage to exits.

#### **Makeshifts**

of bones and hieroglyphs—  
 bricolage of shelters,  
 hedge annuities, monoliths  
 and multiple holdings—  
 scaffoldings  
 secure for now—  
 do not mistake:  
 they are provisional.

So much meant to last  
 at best will simply hold.  
 Pardon, but have you noticed,  
 mean time,  
 how the tables turned  
 not only for Greenwich  
 but for the “green world”?  
 And how usury is small potatoes  
 compared to derivatives  
 and gas bubbles like drunks  
 guessing their way upstairs  
 on a delicate spiral path  
 Of prices and pizzazz?  
 No AC for CA, but Surf’s up.

How piquant.

Nothing was more natural  
than to set the standard  
by the center of the Empire,  
having finally made it not  
Spain or Seven Netherlands  
Or France, but closer  
to Aldersgate and Cheapside,  
where the gin distillery exploded,  
showering the thankful mob.

Nothing is more natural  
than looking in the mirror  
to be centered, Mr. Fox,  
whether we're talking poles or souls.  
What becomes of discarded centers?  
Do they roll away like doughnut holes  
or rust out like unvisited strip malls?  
"Position yourself,"  
the advisors remarked,  
singing another tune, but descant,  
as they left us holding the tulips,  
junk bonds, and swollen ergo sums.

Summing up, it would appear  
that appearances are what they seem  
and that unseemliness  
is what we have to work with.

**Deflections**

Making shifts continually,  
riding bubbles to surmise our lot  
within a multiverse where the demise  
of time's arrow, like as not,  
with other certainties,  
makes us a drifting snow,  
a scattering of selves,  
we inspect the scene  
for some perch to hold it captive  
in landscape, story, score  
or string of formulas,  
but finally, seeing the hour,  
genuflect, rise, leave the service  
as the fauxbourdon swells behind us,  
and again approach the day  
with its deflections.

**Wooly Bears**

Nature also has its fasts and feast days,  
its Shrovetides and somber passion plays,  
its seasons of contrition and confessions,  
its invitations and its grave processions,  
its Jubilee years, coming after plague  
and pilgrimages holy, long and vague.

With pinching steps and bristly flourishes  
the wooly bears, for leaves or low October,  
or whatever nourishes a great endeavor,  
drop to the highway at midday and die  
in quiet thousands; in this dolorous way  
they leave behind no trail but themselves—  
no slimy ribbon of mycelia,  
no stained glass or slaggy heap of tailings.

No sunken bridge or termitary tunnels  
crumble after them. No wake of pillage  
trails their pageant, but some of them grow wings.

**Morning Find**

Going to nowhere  
faster than usual—  
only a day since  
grackle departed  
feathers (as usual,  
left on the doorstep),  
gone to the where none  
fares any well from—  
still among breathers,  
sweeping the carnage,  
I wake in plumage.

**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.

**Morning horizon**

Temporary states,  
less loquacious,  
less densely and intensely  
outrageous than us  
pass us with solemn restraint,  
spacious sweep, incurious steps.

Able to become whatever  
they may seem while being  
what, do you think? Angels?  
Shades, vaporous particles  
crackling past us on their ways  
in and out of entities? Or  
is that red plum-flesh  
alive with pain and desire?

### Sunday Afternoon

I organize my life around no Cause.  
 Perhaps this should be cause for some regret  
 because a Daily Office fills the time  
 that would be ordinary otherwise.  
 Stations are provided, places marked,  
 rubrics followed and events announced.  
 Whether Prayer or Trees come first or Guns  
 or Better Schools or Gender Equity,  
 Deterring Crime or Saving Market Share,  
 or Marginalization of the Arts,  
 these causes help to fill an afternoon  
 that seems to be about some grief in joy  
 or joy in grief I cannot recognize.

The robins have returned to fill the gutter  
 with their sticks. Forsythia retires  
 to the background for another year.  
 A late frost takes some casualties but comes  
 as no surprise, since months of freezing rain  
 and sleet and snow so hard our tracks don't sink,  
 and ice polyps made of laurel buds  
 have made me wary of the ordinary;  
 uneasy with the afternoon, the warmth,  
 bees in holly, and steady pulse of clicks  
 the ratcheting horizon makes past noon,  
 the light that sinters memories to bone.

### **Spared**

Metered by heart-beat, rise  
 and fall of chest, the plod  
 of pondering, while elsewhere  
 in this tea or hand  
 lifting the cup, or sky  
 all is scintillas perishing,  
 I only see the dawn.

### **A necessary bias**

One can only take so much—  
 clank of tailgate,  
 ooze of verse,  
 pails of clinkers  
 left from squeezed proceeds  
 of pteropsids and titanotheres.

What coheres, adumbrative  
 though it is—  
 the marred, glassy,  
 matted, inert  
 fixture of a mind—  
 narrows, skews, but thereby warms the heart.

How to see out from this hard,  
 knowing crystal,  
 face to face  
 with your angles?  
 It takes a kind of squint  
 finally to make out the distant hurt.

**Lucretius**

So, did the costume of that gospel we are bit  
players battered, blown, and always losing something  
that we may later need become a creed too tight  
fitting, like all uniforms, though, fear of hell  
dispelled, the gods and death itself were shown the exit?

You, who portrayed your holy book, interpreted  
stagecraft, lined out scenes, and wrapped the universe  
in one scheme, cutting even into love's sloughed image,  
you could not take poison, potion, or position  
conditioned on delusion. You had too clear a head.

This stage, this world's the pattern we inhabit, so  
careless in our play of wills that we've forgotten  
the plotting has been done, ourselves the consequence.  
Dissolution waits. We try on hope, convince  
ourselves, and relish, if we're wise, that we can know.

## Teak Walker

### *Act I*

His pace his own, it only happened  
 she was keeping up with him.  
 In her string-bag she carried things  
 he wouldn't eat without a fight.  
 The streets were rivers; he could dive,  
 come up in shattered glass and screams,  
 drive, trailing cheers, and break away  
 in squealing turn and nitrous haze  
 low as a shadow to the road—  
 or he could simply roll and glide.

She waited while he got a trim,  
 pulled her socks and held her purse.  
 His barber smelled of talc and chaw,  
 chanted the Racing Form, and wheezed  
 when he had to reach across  
 Eric Walker, smooth the cloth  
 and crank the chair down to the floor.  
 "This boy has grown. Why, thank you, Ma'am."  
 She kept ahead of him, so close  
 they could hold hands. No, better not.

Passing the Dollar Store, the bar  
 that he could tell you all about  
 although he'd never been, her friends  
 on every stoop, they paused to lean  
 into the Preacher's car and nod  
 regarding how the world had slid,

weaving from car to car in twilight  
 motionless in amber talk,  
 drivers sitting on their hoods  
 and willows tipping down to hear.

They reached their porch as thieves ran out--  
 banging the door--someone he knew  
 struck her where her gray hair thinned  
 along the crown--some kind of pipe.  
 She shuddered like a bat he'd poked  
 once in a tree; her arms fell down.

Tomatoes leaped off down the steps--  
 down, down--and she talked to him or God.  
 "Abide with me," she said  
 and smiled at him and closed her wings.

*Act II*

Her name was Myra—Rudy's cousin  
 from Mobile. Rudy later said  
 she brought him lunch because of Teak—  
 Eric Walker—Teak, they called him.  
 "Black Teak, only wood that sinks.  
 He drinks it in but doesn't speak:  
 too dark inside to be too close  
 to anyone, he live alone,  
 eat alone and work alone—  
 a tree so big and dense takes space,"  
 She said, first leaving sandwiches

where he could find them; later, soft  
 as bedspread his mother cast  
 like a fishnet over him,  
 Myra James knelt down to him—  
 her hazel eyes on him alone;  
 she settled over him like grace—  
 the kind of grace his mother said  
 was greater than our sin but not,  
 till this, a thing to be believed.

He'd filled his head with program code—  
 not what you showed to anyone  
 or talked about, except sometimes  
 he told his mother—if she heard.  
 Myra would smile and bring him drinks.  
 One day he didn't go to work—  
 Rudy had no lunch, they laughed.  
 "Download anytime you want,  
 Teak, honey. I will serve your file."  
 With Rudy Program Manager,  
 gone every other week on calls;  
 two salesmen and a clerk in front,  
 Teak was the only research staff.  
 He had four clones he rolled between  
 tying their memories in knots.  
 Sometimes after they had raced  
 together he would talk to them  
 like a boy who walks the hots  
 around the track another turn.

Myra didn't interfere.  
 Just to be near him was enough.  
 She came midmornings; stayed past lunch.  
 Teak could palm a coconut,  
 his hands so big; and when he stood  
 was nothing that he couldn't reach.  
 One day she watched him change a light  
 without the ladder or the help  
 another man would need. He knew  
 she watched –and changed the ballast too.  
 She watched him and the way he lived  
 so close in on himself he'd crowd  
 her out if ever she allowed  
 herself to seem to want him more.

They knew how it had been and why  
 since Zula Walker passed from Can  
 to Can't. The darkness left behind  
 grew deeper, like an abscess, sore  
 and cavitating everything  
 he did. She meant for this to change.

He would not play ball in school  
 or Navy. He would not hang out.  
 He had one goal —and object code  
 was only part of it —one pole  
 worth discovering —one aim  
 worth uncovering in time—  
 in due time. Nothing could be scant  
 in preparation: Master code,  
 crypto, and make some rank.

He did all this and bought the store  
 with Rudy, who grew up with him;  
 Rudy who hustled, made cold calls,  
 pumped up sales, played the track;  
 Rudy, gone every other week,  
 leaving him with Cousin Myra,  
 who knew that if she got too close  
 he'd bolt and spin and break away;  
 Rudy, the one friend who made good—  
 but always left the books to Teak.

*Act III*

The plums and arbor were Teak's age;  
 pink Liatris and nodding Phlox  
 grew under them with sage and chives;  
 tomatoes of all colors, staked  
 with red peppers, grew beside.  
 He'd kept up Zula's garden beds  
 but mostly, working on her knees,  
 tough as roots that wouldn't come,  
 and hands spotted with age like leaves  
 begun to mottle, Zula kept them.

Myra arched her back and yawned,  
 pointing her toes, and turned to him.  
 He counted freckles on her nose  
 and traced their sprinkling on her cheek.  
 He held her down. "It's time to walk,"

she said, kissing him, pushing back,  
 sucking her teeth, "and this must change—"  
 But Rudy pulled her down again.  
 "You sure these back-ups worked for him?"  
 "Poor dense old Teak, I'm telling you,"  
 she said, "he let me see the files.  
 Didn't know a thing I did."  
 "Cousin, he's got code for brains.  
 His precious store he doesn't own.  
 And the bid we get for this  
 will set us up in Cozumel.  
 Good old Navy buddy Teak—  
 I'm the only one he trusts."

Rudy didn't know he'd seen  
 the night he swung the pipe and ran.  
 Three years passed before they met  
 in Pensacola, bound for school—  
 tough training Big Teak helped him through.  
 Teak had a goal.

The plane would land.  
 The LOAD command would arm the file,  
 crash both drives and print these lines:

*"Teak don't swallow all he drinks,  
 and it's ebony that sinks."*

The Prosecutor had Teak's books—  
the real ones he had kept, and tapes  
of Myra, faithful to her friend.

His mother never loved him less  
for failing her, though she was mute  
and something from her mind was God's:  
the angels took it, Preacher said.

But every shoot she set grew tall  
and strong like him and bore good fruit.

"Your hand," he said. Now it could end.

### Cruise Control

Cruise control is a state of mind.  
 Lock the speed in. Insert a pause.  
 Find within any urgent drive  
 cause to hesitate. After using  
 live explosives—each charged with shock—  
 taking pressures till power exhausts—  
 detonating precious plans to costs  
 day by day; after watching what  
 jam why to gassy nought: Why, then,  
 shut down, drift in a cloudy thought;  
 cruise and troll in a lake of mind;  
 drift past deadlines and then notice Death  
 slam his brake in the other lane.  
 Cruise control is a state to mind  
 borders of—a long dotted line  
 showing history where to cut.

**Drive Through**

This has been your life. Let me clear away  
inconveniences. Am I in your way?  
Pay or reckoning automatically  
in a single stop: Key your number in.  
Ever there to serve. Feeling queasy yet?  
Everybody does. As they will explain,  
Rollovers occur at a higher rate  
nowhere better than –given there's a where  
one of us could stay rather than drive through.  
By the way, come Spring, you've already won  
flights to anywhere you can ride on moths.  
Beatitude depends upon your attitude.

**Drive-Through Teller**

Convenience cannot be denied;  
therefore draw alongside—whoosh—  
pneumatic spiriting away  
any needs you bring here: checks,  
deposits, fees too dear to name.  
Through-put care. Give it a code  
to rout your anguish, grief and doubts.  
Draw near. Take, and sign. Be saved.

**None comes more quickly;**  
goes more contentiously  
than Firm Opinion.  
None.

## Palliative Care

*Cloak the eyes.  
This trance though  
incurable  
can be made  
bearable  
salved by words'  
holy spit.<sup>1</sup>*

Cloak the eyes. This trance though incurable can be made bearable salved by words' holy spit.

Now to Dub. Try to keep from doing what was done to you. You can't. The crazy rite you endured goes on. Nothing going, you spin in place. Take Dub Wishard. So short of names, Lou picked Duvier, her Cajun uncle's. Called Duveer, Dovey, and Douche, his freshman year he made it Dub; joined the Gams. Spinning in place, his son's Duvier.

Dub Two's a Gam. His freshman year he made it Del—throwing up vodka, Corona, and a possum behind the House. Dub was thrilled Del was a Gam. Gastric lavage done, so was Del. The spin cycle might have wrung another Dub, male or female, but a year's drunk weekends later Del dropped out and had a wreck catching the truck who cut him off. An ER nurse named Tracie remembered him from Foster High playing drums. Two weeks later they lived together.

Spin in place like the Earth. Granted, it shifts position—who's tracking it? We search our dreams. We dream our searches.

Lena Lawrence the Director died. Rochester-trained, aspiring to make Dumont Choir a Shaw Chorale, she lost to Del. Trace said the altos and Dawn could stand Del's voice absent Lena's vocalise. The free-will help pleased Pastor Mills. (Lena'd been paid.)

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1

For readers' relief, this work is set as a prose poem rather than as the two-foot lines in which it was composed.

Were they surprised when Del arrived with speakers, drums, bassist, girl singer and keyboard charts riddles to Dawn Mills. Choir rehearsals Del called *sessions* two weeks until the Pastor sat in because Dawn made him. And Del returned to Dub's rec-room. The episode discouraged Del for seven years.

Dub would have worried but for Lou, Arla, and the Siamese. Cornering the cat at last—string-garrotted—his eye-brow bleeding for the last time, Dub couldn't say where Sweetie'd got to. That left Arla and Lou, his mom who wheezed at night across the hall as the live-in took her to the pot.

*—Sixteen of us, eight facing eight, me and Lois, fifteen years boxed Models; taped the boxes. Near as you now, she died. I'd like it that way—quick as a snip. Lucky Strikes slip off wheels to packs and hand to hand. None knows it. None feels the going. Where's my smoke? That Arla's hid it. My house she waits for, Lorena, as I for this BM. Nothing you've done can make it pass.*

Lorena screamed. Del hid his phone. Arla woke Dub. He held his pants up, elastic gone; stared at Lou's hand on his new tile floor. Arla called. She was the one waiting to call all this time. He guessed this while the orange-vested driver spoke.

*—So often when we get the call they're on the toilet. Maybe you know it's death. You rush to bear down, maybe to expel it.*

After that, Del left off calling Trace. That kind of talk she said upset her life with Mike—that dirty talk. From the Bahama cruise Arla owed herself without Dub, Ciguatera sent her home itching and sleepless. So the reefs blanching from touch and commerce reached into Dub's life. Arla insisted Lou woke her nightly. Later she saw Lou afloat in daylight, puffing over coffee, which burned like ice. As her cells' gates flew open, she stalled in dingy smoke. Where does this system end—skinsedge; chair-railed surround of supper table where Dub's sister Sis ladled soup after Grave-side; the wide-spread plans of Uncle Mick who followed Del into the bathroom smoking and talking so Del couldn't sit; or mycelium of enterprise infesting Mick, whose investments in micronils ran to millions; or blue film of gasps, wheezes, whistles, shrieks, fulminations, roars and whispers far and near—the Troposphere—or where trance ends?

Mick took Del on, showed him extruders; how loose gel hardened as it whipped and cooled. Grignard and cross-linked resins beyond him, Del preferred the show room: micronils cool to touch, silver, some jeweled for Asian markets, some jet black, others opal, intricately whorled within. Twelve women milled the edges smooth; inserted wire flowers for the line of Bagatelles, and custom-wrapped. Mick's division made Standards, Bagatelles, Economies, and Smoothgrips; employed hundreds. Del found his place.

So, on that day, left behind not by Rapture but by selves streaming off unsnagged from duties, Dub was alone. Coming home from shifting rows and columns, he knew they'd been there—a glass in the sink, a drawer ajar. They watched; recorded twenty-four seven; put itching powder in his bed; turned his stools black with warfarin; flooded his crawl space; called and hung up; wired his home; wanted all he knew so they could scrub his mind, impair his power to think through their far-reaching, sordid, festering schemes—pustulant issues which took away his mother, wife and son. And now they wanted his house to stop him talking.

Here is the issue: incommensurables, incompatibles, an antinomy—the one in many; the many, one; protean; the appetite for savagery yet able to trace the beautiful line of a forehead, to slice out a shoulder of cow or a man for butcher or bodymerchant—transactions equal in value, all the same to restless creatures who can do anything.

Try loving others as yourself. It can be done but be prepared. Things will not change or go your way. Cut with the grain.

Pray simply *Our Father*, all from one source called Parent—a kind one—wanting all our best. Sis believed this. Her Papa, Lou's Bill, was why. Touchet Parish, where Bill came from was tallow trees, rice, scum-sheen inlets, giggling frogs mud mushing moonlit nights, and herons. You could shout. No one would hear. Green bottle flies hopped—or changed coordinates—to reappear a yard away.

So Bill and Lou appeared in Richmond, shivarees sung, lace curtains packed, and saints appeased, to roll tobacco and lay lead pipe. The city stretched past Ginter's Hill, past burley fields around Marse Robert, past Jordan's Branch, and sprouted taps to every house. *Like roots*, Bill said, the pipe he laid—cradled down, ropes pulled back up, Finch showing off standing on it, like a boat's hull overturned in the ditch a spring had filled—spread west and north. Its runners watered shacks and mansions all from one source. *Sis girl*, he told her, *we seem to know things but it's the bayou feeds our roots. All of us tap it. We're only how it makes new life.*

Plumbing supply was Bill's new life for forty years. He passed in sleep. Lou heard him say *The anchor bolt has broken clean*. To Papa she was *ma gentille*. Lou called her Sis. *Take care your brother. Be sure you change him while I'm gone*. Now both were gone. And behind the faucets in his office Dub heard chattering, churring, scraping—like men's low talk, crickets, and patting a grave with shovels. How could she change him? Cover his eyes? An ermine cloak of water turkeys lifts off the bayou past moss-hung live oaks. Fills the sky. He sees so much he's blind, entranced. Try to see. You can't. Blue ibis, *poule d'eau*, the cape-winged crow in tupelo sing one refrain. Cut with the grain.

***Cut with the grain.***

Who can name it? Not a person, place, or thing, *Hallowed be*, but who can name it? Sis wrote down what Father Jim had said. *We want an understanding that does not exceed our comprehension. More than this is pride, denial, waking dream. The Holy Name's a space for breath alone, where words cannot take root*. Sis was eldest of eight children. Two died at birth. Two died from smoking. Two over-ate. Dub went to college, grew Wishard & Son. Here's the truth Sis comprehended: she was the last.

Mick told her Del would have to go for calling Roxanne late at night. She knew his voice. The girls in Shipping all knew his voice. Mick had moved him twice. No more. Del had to go. Sis called Old Finch. *Cher, crois-les pas. He's not chaviré*. Her Papa said Finch was not nuts; only twanging his *bombarde* made him seem so. His mother's family,

the Abouettes near Petite Anse, was glad Bill took him East to Richmond. Without Old Finch, Dub would be lost. He took her call.

—*Onri ci.*

—*Henri, it's Sis. For Del again.*

—*Ma gentille Sis. I'm achalé—fichu, you know?*

—*You're not worn out—just ornery.*

—*May kingdom come! How do I please you?*

—*Find him something.*

—*Nothing comes without looking. Del expects the fish to whistle and drop in his pocket, like my Looey keeping the orders Captain gave us. Finally shot for it. Did Captain mean to hold this hill forever? I said as his head blew off. In our retreat I found the Captain in a ditch. Del don't know to leave the hill no more than Dub, shut in his office. But I will see what I can do.*

So kingdom comes. So Sis gave Mick the name Finch found. And Del then drove for Lavabo's whose PVC replaced the pipes Papa had laid. And Dub heard voices explaining what he had to do. *Thy will, Sis prayed, be done with us.* Unstuck from fate, we have choices. *Don't listen to them, Dub,* she said. Later that day, as she was told, Dub gave the keys to Finch, packed up, and drove away. In actions, in mind; on Earth, in heaven: *Go where we send you,* said the voices. Dub passed through Staunton, Paris, Wando, Fairall, and Fairborn. Finally he heard them say, *Stop here.*

Sis got the call. She shouldn't worry. He had enough to live on, to have some days to grow. Said his mind was a ferment, a yeast-pocked, frothy, brooding, bready mass stealing sleep. But in Chicago he ate quietly, found a two-flat, met a wholesaler of Tygon tubing at an expo. And *no, as far as Del, well, he's on his own.* Sis wrote the address. Vanua Levu sank, she read, while off Gwadar another island rose, caul steaming, crusted with clams. So debts are cancelled.

So in autumn, as Mick's plant released the latest SP-Micronils and locusts left their slit bodies to live with roots, Sis prayed for Dub's delivery, Del's restraint, and Mick's return. Mick's Master's was in scrambling olefins. He therefore knew the coming roll-out of Micronil's Scented Product line did not target Special People but SP-ganglia. Like a dead thing this secret lay between them. Sis prayed Mick could return as she watched him descend into roots. So few knew or understood—would ever know or understand—his life with roots. Sagging demand meant fewer jobs processing, packaging, pimping, promoting, lobbying, betting, marketing, banking, distributing—all rooted in a product multicolored, multitextured, rolled and sucked by infants and matrons, obsessively collected, sniffed by connoisseurs, sung about in ads. Lovers shared them. Heritage models in estate sales brought fortunes. All rooted in Micronils, the global brand of thimble-sized beads in signature packets uniquely etched, kept as hedges of intrinsic value. When demand sagged a tenth percent, another tenth, then four, then five, the SP line was introduced. Its neural hook through the noses of consumers pulled demand so high that Micronil became the market. As in the times when tusk-shells, butterfly-beads, crinoids, stamp-seals, and quartz bowed down to Lapis pendants treasured in Uruk, Micronil prevailed. The roots held.

Ancient history. You need to know the five events which made Mick change—five fingers pointing, pinching, tickling, promising, spanning Mick's underworld. You need to know how he returned, disentangled from roots, trance-emerged, ready for the bonfire.

First, Dub's Rescue. Sis had to see the way he lived. Mick drove. Backed up, the Dan Ryan did not release them until noon. Near Addison and Lincoln, Dub lived by tank-topped Lolla hot-damning in the hall her Lollo, a remora who gazed at traffic and his hairy legs with equal wonder. Their child, Wiinara, conceived playing Wii after marinara, said look for Dub downtown in Grant Park. Mick turned around. In the forest of biped pachyderms without heads or torsos Dub could sleep shielded from signals by metal legs—the only place the voices left him. A tiny girl in a red sari danced on the slippery slates under the arcing fountain spat from the Giant's Face. Sis called it Dub's Siloam. But

for Mick, trying to see around Dub's rocking head to change lanes, Millenium Park was only a marker to find Lake Street. Lollapalooza behind, the van sped south with Dub crying and drooling on the armrest. Back in Richmond, doctors, guessing Arla's toxin passed to Dub, gave IV mannitol and mood-molding mortar rounds flattening feeling, muting the voices, and calming Sis enough to leave Dub with an aide. Mick drove her home, stopping as always for the corner vagrant Sis gave her change.

The Altar Guild kept Sis while Mick opened the backlog on the roll-out. "Coca" every other message. The Secret out. Claims and payouts, rueful confessions, long litigation—all for a bead to finger and sniff. Mick knew how to avert it. Distraction was needed. Here is a city where half of the residents traded in counters worthless in themselves but standing for labor, love, trust, craft, and power—the roots that last as long as the trance goes unchallenged. Mick was pinched between the dream and how things were. The company line would be: Stonewall. Insist coca leaves are inert ingredients, claims unproven, cases unrelated. *Thank you for your query, but no interviews now.* Or ever. Mick knew this was coming. But Sis, always caring for hopeless cases and causes, did not know. The thought that she would soon know him differently burned. Soured his breath. *Reflux, Mick?* She said. *Did you take your pill?* He took off watch and ring, lay down beside her unsleeping, unable to fit back into their circle. He dozed.

His phone rang. Finch.

*—Ici Dub's room. Out of his head. Fou raide. Bill gone, now Dub. Me manque mes copains. He can't last. He already smells.*

*—But he's only sixty.*

*—We all only something when we go, you know. Tell gentille Sis.*

So wild on Benadryl, Dub had been dosed calm to a hypoxic end. In the hall with Mick while Sis sat with Dub, Finch frowned and said,

*—While you were gone, Del wrecked his truck on the Powhite. Lavabo's fired him.*

—*Where is he?*

—*Back in Dub's rec-room.*

—*Too much for Sis.*

—*Ma gentile Sis says charred meat and cigs will do me in. We're all foqué you know. I'm eighty. But I tell you about Sis. I knew her since petite. She's a gombo woman. Studies on you. Makes the soup to bring you round. A healer—a sad thing in this world to be.*

Dub did not come round. Paroxetine, the last of many speculations why voices screamed, shut the remainder of his liver down. Cloak their eyes. What we do is make bearable the trance they're in. Tickled by the thought, Mick found the Distraction needed by Micronil: The Annual Turnaround Awards and Exchange Sales Event. Matchlessly made by eating, food's demand was the model Mick discovered. Coupons the donors received discounted purchases of the next new line. All the old micronils melted in vats over bonfires circled by dancers and singers in civic festivals. Memo to managers:

*Only replace what was made. Think of a soup stock in one pot, serving all.*

### Look out

Mommy said Mr. Know-it-all  
 would not even notice me  
 so I slipped behind omni  
 science, presence, and potency—  
 all the big ideas—to a ledge  
 where I could sit on a flat rock  
 in the sky. A condor sailed  
 beside my rock wall.

The slowly prancing lizard, snake  
 basking, skitter falcon chicks  
 make waiting in their nest, clicks  
 and whining made shearing sticks  
 from downed firs, cedars, and lodge  
 pole pines centuries below sink  
 into my eyes and ears; find  
 where to live. I wake.

Stony Man and other faces  
 imagined in mountainside  
 hidden in cliff or scarp, hide  
 the fear that I am being eyed  
 by some fair, eyeless, faceless judge.  
 A face makes it seem less blank.  
 Tames it. Ah, but it stays wild,  
 as air-breath-space-is.

**Not inside for long**

None goes so far to say  
that all our dart and scurry,  
machines and screens aside,  
are less high thought than worry,  
floor-plans failed, we'll be back outside.

Our nibbling urges cover  
ourselves and all we reach—  
even the passing clouds  
and restless sea with clutter,  
and holy time with jabbering speech.

**Gig**

Rising to the occasional  
glory, singing and wandering  
out on various melodies—  
songs that stuck in your throat like a  
pointed willow stick—something you  
sang has led to *grenouille au jus*.

## *Holy Week, 2015*

### **Palm Sunday**

The service of the serviceable  
 is to fulfill what was written--  
 the choice always the terms  
 to write but what fulfills.  
 So state and palpate both  
 plucking strings and feathers,  
 palming the path and coin,  
 the pupil wide and eager  
 for impalpable deceptions,  
 one word after another.  
 Their voluntary choice  
 involuntarily  
 prescribes the papillary  
 twitch, the ciliary  
 stall, the pluck of courage.  
 So palms wave today  
 and on a later day  
 another fluttering page,  
 the papered forest, flames  
 from sodium palmitate.

**Bethany**  
*Monday's Reading*

He flung the skiff back to the gale  
crazed sea shattering our hearts--  
bones his beams and flesh his sail--  
and after dinner with the dead  
and ointment poured upon his head  
he turned and pushed off.

Now all our meals are with the dead  
downed by dawn's unstoppable  
returns and all the dawns ahead,  
swells dropping us, salt on our burns  
paying out the lines; beneath us  
the sea's integrity.

**The Red Rose***Tuesday's Reading*

A seed works on itself till it expires  
 and so betrays the plant, as plant the seed;  
 the transformation the deformity;  
 the choice of terms the singularity.  
 Whatever seems inviolable  
 makes any different thought unviable.

The wrād of the reudh rose becomes a root  
 and this Rose disappears into his work  
 as seed leaf curls and swollen rose hips dry.  
 Work on yourself. Your medium will die,  
 the work itself become another lender,  
 and transformations branch from your surrender.

**April Fool***Wednesday's Reading*

With him complicit in his own denial  
I only serve. Like fate, I turn the wheel  
to quickly bring about the great reveal.

Small time till now, we'll leap ahead a mile  
in this campaign; consolidate, seize  
power, and outdo the Maccabbees.

Although, with him complicit in denial,  
the usual magic moves behind the curtain  
idle, I had to close for a fee certain--

maybe my take, though nothing certain's final.  
And as he denies himself through me  
he voids my sharp calls and certainty;

makes me complicit in his own denial;  
draws all together in a thorny brake;  
leaves a finality I can't unmake.

**Cuttings***Maundy Thursday's Reading*

Whatever leafy aims these cuttings had,  
now they work on roots--  
roots that push away from shoot and flower  
with redirected power.  
Their only mandate is to live and grow,  
so roots supplant the branch  
as auxins flood the wound.

When such object lessons were in vogue,  
the mandate was love's grounding  
for our work upon ourselves to lift  
each other into light;  
the roots were deeds of kindness and the Branch  
the stripped Tree of Life,  
forsaken but supreme.

Touchstones and emblems of eternity  
have left the natural world,  
authorities agree, and correspond  
to our projections.  
Yet misdirected power and cutting words,  
lofty mandates, hate  
and grief persist, and wounds.

**Good Friday and the Vigil**

The cup shared.

The feet washed.

The altar stripped.

The wheel turned.

The space opened.

**Easter**

Now I can come without gifts,  
without a diploma or praise,  
promising works with a fresh  
original twist, or a Name  
living from Age to dim Age.

Here with damp moss and the trees,  
the chattering sounds of the dawn  
rolling away the dark stone--  
the dawn that is throbbing away,  
boiling, revolving, soon spent--  
I take the light and revive  
what's meant by yet being alive.

### **Five Stations of the Resurrection**

First is the emptying of all amenities  
from pockets, shelves, accounts, and guarded attitudes.  
First, lose all the necessary amenities.

She who lost seven demons, false divinities;  
spent all she had on spikenard; on another Way,  
after he fell, was consoled, cannot touch, but sees.

Push past angels. Rush in. Pick up the very cloth,  
still damp. Search the shape of space, dark as it is true.  
Run past yourself. Deny nothing. Retrieve your path.

Caravaggio seats you opposite, where the dish  
teeters. The eyes cannot stare into being all  
that they want to see on the backdrop of dark mesh.

Once all's lost, one comes through locked doors bringing peace;  
guiding hands to touch, hearts to search on every side,  
and lives to be an unencumbered sweet release.

**Luna**

Beauty has no mouth,  
all of it in flight  
and rapture,  
its maroon eyes  
empty.

**Embrace All Accidents**

Shall all things coiled on the shaft of the world  
hurled listing toward rarer spaces  
racing despair and dispersion  
run out like a yanked top-string—  
dangling—shall living pass away?  
Weigh the ancient matters:  
Manners of form, fit and inclusion.  
None now chooses rightly: No, not one.

Egg, sphere and ellipse were forms of motions.

Such notions of our path, center, bounds,  
life-bonds and play come to enclose,  
as rose widens, from within:  
then in rosette to orbit us.

Compose thus: Mark events  
and intents. Be full of all movements  
and arguments. Embrace all accidents.

**2°, 575 gT, 2795 gT, 350ppm**  
*(after Bill McKibben)*

Some businesses you have to mind,  
like those near Cow Town,  
where I came from.  
Now *us* they lead to slaughter.

Not all of us, of course.  
Not all at once.  
The top execs  
expect some to survive.

An islander pulls out, moves on,  
lives on roots,  
builds oxcarts.

So shift your assets to oxen.

**Wildfire***(Oklahoma, August 2012)*

A propane tank popped  
twenty feet to crater  
bedroom and kitchen, leapt  
the berm and railroad track  
sending swords of flame  
dancing on end and falling  
like straight pins into a cushion.

Someone saw a stranger  
tossing burning newspapers  
from a van. No straying  
mustang race of sparks,  
this wildfire had a mind  
behind it—mostly human.

Less accidental, wild,  
and uncontrollable than  
unforeseen, the heat  
we feel these days raced free  
since Coronado, wheeled west  
and east in conquest, scorched  
coasts; tipped pack-ice, drowning  
equally all the views  
on what or whom to blame.

*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.

**You've time.**

After raging awhile against the darkness  
you might think about what you've been doing,  
which, in the scheme of things, is not much.

Live again. Increase your sample set.  
Become the stooped ash you just passed.  
It has an emerald borer on its mind.

Exchange faces with the sunken stream  
under your feet, its clarity from mud  
and gravity revealed as you drink.

Become the dragon-wing in anthracite  
or sooty miner finding it, or child  
watching warring ants clear the dead.

Wear other masks. Live other lives. You've time.  
Another mask or Age or stage or face  
beckons, clears your space of death and rage.

**Good Medicine****1**

What was, and is, and is to come  
 Is not beyond understanding  
 But sitting across the room.  
 Given any two, it is the constant third,  
 Special but not spectral:

*The between*  
 That beckons from another's eyes,  
 Not thing or being  
 But relationship,  
 A domain whose variables  
 Rise from interactions  
 And fall when we slip  
 In betrayals.

*This passage lies*  
*Through others' eyes.*

**2**

This passage is a tunnel  
 With ancient trails to other rooms  
 Where by trials and ordeals  
 We try out our ideals  
 Such as they are:  
*A great catch,*  
*A sharing of bread,*  
*A send-off for the dead.*

Above, the martins throng the Spirit Mound—  
 Not souls, but birds  
 Who know where insects can be found.  
 So are creeds—  
 The high aerobatic acts  
 Made of deftly soldered speculations,  
 The flux of words.

**3**

Worship defines the object of devotion;  
 Then canon follows revelation.  
 Given the ritual or rationale,  
 We choose tradition or reformation.  
 Either names the nameless.

This is not a person, place or thing,  
 Only the *between*  
 Summoning us to action  
 That ties and re-ties us to the given,  
 For we are gifts of the survivors  
 By whom and from whom we rise.

## 4

You are the gift,  
The gift of survivors,  
The *gift outright*  
Of land and family and culture.  
Despite your wishes,  
You are the gift.

*Attend. Learn what was given.  
Give and respond and listen.*

You are the gift,  
lifted from the human and animal,  
the beautiful and terrible.  
Despite their wishes,  
you are the gift.

*Hear then the holy message:  
there is no easier passage.*

## Partners

### 1

What's given simply is too vast  
 for us to take more than we make.  
 The universe has us outclassed.  
 A witness wants to be believed,  
 but in passage to the report  
 intention frames what is conceived;  
 though truth may always be our aim,  
 it is embedded in belief.  
 Someone must work to clear its name,  
 a partner for the passage through the dark:  
 a Krishna, Enkidu, Nestor, or Clark.

### 2

the only partner I have had in this  
 to wait, to listen, and to see me through,  
 unknown, yet inches from this line, is you;  
 yet I might know you well enough to kiss--  
 with each always purchase of the other,  
 with each a continent to understand,  
 with each a hidden people, hidden land  
 sharing all lines and the quilted cover  
 of the Earth, now surveyed;  
 waiting to be remade.

**Coda**

As in the dark,  
fumbling with a rib,  
by trial and omnipotent failure,  
be in us a clean heart, O God.

Complete, as the folded day,  
or sudden turns of circling birds  
in streaming swarms,  
a new spirit within us.

As the plumed mimosa closes,  
folding equally her fronds,  
hold, like leaf-green day,  
your presence within us.

*More Uncollected poems***Drawing a Face**

Unfinished face  
with lips still sealed  
or cheeks with eyes  
surprised, appalled  
me, waking sound  
and undeformed

But fear can twist  
a face or mind  
and ignorance  
contort the heart;  
dull, mindless work  
distort the will.

Reversible  
distortions, found  
in dreams--shifted,  
reframed--reveal  
the whole, intact  
though all be maimed.

**A procession, not a story**

One thing happens and then another. Stories are not what happens but what we make of relentless, bewildering events. Your divine walk passes along a torrential path of inexplicable happenings where stories finally dissolve. Such a walk--a procession--includes and exceeds all stories. Working continually on yourself, as Sivananda said, in "ceaseless, selfless service," you arrive. A displacement occurs. A step more and resistance gives way. You settle like leaves falling on water, falling to the sky, falling open in surrender. All processions pass through this release. No procession ends.

I think that the first line comes from Kurt Vonnegut but haven't found it yet. 4/22/2015

### **A Riverside Development**

Absurdly normal, trapped  
behind our own secure  
devices, locks, alarms  
and sensors, windows shut  
and curtained, time of day  
a digital display,  
our hundred hearts within  
their sacs and walls and fence  
and passwords, guarded gate,  
and drained lots, palpitate.

Cranes stab the lawn. The marsh  
engulfs us. Bobcat snaps  
the poodle's neck. Two toads  
get past the garage door  
to the lanai and mate.

4/11/2015 Tampa, FL

### **The Robot's Rebuke**

Your easy individuality  
excuses all excess.  
Your precious relativity  
makes Code a style of dress--

coats you're always changing, drink  
of varied custom brew--  
whatever lie you want to think  
is good enough for you.

Lay out a thousand housing plats.  
Express yourself in lines  
of pipes and cables. Marshy flats  
are hatches in designs.

In lined streets you can clarify  
the life you rearrange.  
You even claim to modify  
the Code which none can change.

In line with patterns you impose  
upon the sinking grass  
soggy with the overflows  
of driveways, overpass,

and catch-pools sour and swollen  
by redirected springs,  
are deeper water-courses, stolen  
by imaginings.

4/12/2015 Tampa, FL

In a dedication to tedium, here are annotations on some of the poems.

ANNOTATED VERSIONS

*Index to selected works*

*Finding a purchase<sup>i</sup>*

*Explorations in understanding*

*By Irene Brooks (See **Frameshifts**)*

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i

**END NOTES concerning *Finding A Purchase***

This is the expanded version of the poem with end notes, for those who want explanations.

## Notes with an indexed list of works

**Annunciations** 2009 The *Good Samaritan* and *Johanin* were first composed in 1968-1969, performed several times and revised since then. The *Missa brevis* was performed by the Warrenton Chorale in 1982 and again by Capitol Opera Richmond in 2015. The complete *Annunciations* was performed in 2009.

**Oyster paper Genetic Variation with respect to selected environmental variables in *Crassostrea virginica***

**Research on Keller Method**

**Research on proportional reasoning (dissertation)**

**Journal Article on The Perilous Per**

**Journal Article on coins**

**Another journal Article**

**The Books of Daniel** 2009

**Amber**

**The People's Voice**

**Shura**

**The Queen and the Crocodile**

**Frameshifts** 2012 The sections for this book began arriving in 1968 and finally settled into place in 2012. The kernel of the book is *The Profit of Doom*, which was printed earlier by Alan Poe at the *Fauquier Democrat* in Warrenton, VA.

**Review of Inspector O**

**La Rinuncia** was also performed by Capitol Opera Richmond in September 2015.

**On Giants** *Jack and the beings talk, The Selfish Giant, The Giants of Einhorn, Alien Journal*

**The School Year**

**Automatoma**

**Work on Yourself** Intended to be a collection of all poetry to date except for *The Profit of Doom*, which is in *Frameshifts*, the lyrics of songs, and the librettos to operas. I completed this in April 2015. But watch this space. More poems will follow.

## Comments on some works:

This explanation concerns the *Transects* section of *The School Year*.

### Format for the Approximations (used for the *Transects* in *The School Year*)

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The one hundred *Transects* are based on shifting temporal frames of reference. For A.D. and B.C. (After and Before Common Era), the index follows the last two digits of the year. For times measured in thousands (KYA), millions (MYA) or billions (BYA) of years ago, the index follows the first two digits. While “B.C.E” and “Ma” are now conventional units, I began this project before the conventions were generally used. Moreover, the magnitudes (K, M, B, etc.) separably frame events to provide an organizational scheme that provides the alternation between focused attention and global thinking which I value in devotional meditations.

Index numbers run from 00 to 99, the number of years in a long human life. Entries record *highly probable events at different scales of reference*, including physical, organic, cultural, historical, and individual data. Each has its own range of error. Of course, like all data, they are variously fictional, always being fingered. Detailed individual data refer to family history, associates and events in the life of Richard L. Rose (1945-2035), my student, selected because he is the fictional individual with whom I am most familiar.

Keywords are in boldface. Tense is generally simple past. Phrases or titles often substitute for sentences. Paragraph indentation and use of the words “On” and “Week” are sometimes used to break up multiple entries for a year or to divide long entries. Dates are abbreviated in different ways. Speech is in italics or within quotation marks. Occasionally more information is provided about a topic, usually in parentheses. Some sources are also cited parenthetically. Others are more generally cited in the reference list. Many sources were lost, but the names and keywords given will often suffice as leads for searches. Consistency was not the aim. Keep in mind, however, that this is not primarily a reference work. It is a **prompt**, consisting of facts intersecting at many adjoining levels of observation, and offered as a performance guide for your meditative walk on the divine path.

**Incomplete and no doubt in error, the *Transects* are offered for your edification. Walk the path. Make the approximations. Consider both what is given and what is missing. Walk the path.**

**Sorting Category**

**Sorting Rule: Show the:**

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<b>INDIVIDUAL DATES</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>last 2 digits</b>
<b>BYA Dates</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>first 2 digits</b>
<b>MYA Dates</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>first 2 digits</b>
<b>KYA Dates</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>12</b> (i.e. 10K B.C.)	<b>first 2 digits</b>
<b>BC Dates</b>	<b>9999</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>1001</b>	<b>first 2 digits</b>
<b>BC Dates</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>last 2 digits</b>
<b>AD Dates</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>last 2 digits</b>

# INDEX

An indexed but incomplete list of some of the writings of Richard L. Rose  
(Most of these have been rejected by various presses at one time or another, but I keep that list to myself.)

**Abbreviations:** Amber (**amb**), Annunciations (**annun**), Blog, including Runes & Tunes and Randall's notes and other writings (**blog**), Books of Daniel (**bod**), Early poems (**ep**), Extended Notes (**ext**), Finding a Purchase (**fap**), Fisher of the James (**fofj**), Floats and Sinkers (**fns**), Fragments and other incomplete and unsatisfactory works (**F**), Frameshifts (**fs**), Hidden Moves and Hidden Voices (**hidden**), Jo's Boys (**Jo**), Marking Time (**mt**), More poems (**mp**), Muddled Measures (**muddle**), Oyster paper (**Crassostrea**), Poems to Susie (**sir**), Profit of Doom (POD in **fs**), Randall's Notes (**Hank**), Runes and Tunes (**runes**), School papers (**school**), The People's Voice (**people**), The School Year (tsy became **ts**), The Selfish Giant Ballet(**selfish**), Transects (**ts**), Whitekill (became **ts**), La Rinuncia (**la rinun**), Palliative Care (**pc**). Note: *The School Year* contains *Transects*, *Palliative Care*, and *Whitekill*. The poems were collected in *Selected Poems* or *Work on Yourself*.

First Line	Begun	Finished	Notes
A brick well countersunk	20121025	20121025	Sanitary workers made our toilet cough as they worked outside on the line.. <b>mp</b>
A curtain lifts	20120906	20120906	<b>mp</b>
A lifetime short of breath	20120722	20120722	<b>mt</b>
A little sleeplessness is like a journey	19760624	19910227	Only slightly revised in 1991. Originally titled "Up late is out late," it describes my feelings when I stay up past bedtime. Recently, I came across Villier's comment, "je vivais de politesse." His life of visionary intensity sidelined sympathy and other connections with the outer world, with which he could be only forbearing and "polite." Something of this state of mind comes to me late at night.
A pitted landscape	19910719	20120922	This poem contains more allusions than I can easily list. Here are some of the explicit ones: readiness to act-Fromm, hope..flickers-Dickinson, ground of being-Tillich, rosy-fingered-Homer, Bloom of fresh beginnings i.e. Harold B., cedar wedges etc. Stevens, eyeless.. gazing-Milton, homeward-Wolfe, syntactic tapestry-Bloom, touching the hem-Book of Matthew, "liquid look of deer"-lost this one, "skate's heel"-Hopkins, no clean slates-Toulmin, concomitant-Moore, total glory-Auden, together or apart-Frost, these tropes-Bloom, breathe ourselves-Rilke, their worth-Shakespeare, our reach-Browning AND OTHERS.
A tickle raises two orange	20120907	20120907	Observation of caterpillars in our garden. <b>ts</b>
A witness in our jury trials	19680831	19910706	<b>F</b>
A wringer washer in the corner	20120724	20120724	<b>mt</b>
Accused, I serve my own	19930215	19930215	
After even the flood	ca. 1973		Sudley subdivision in Manassas, VA after a flood.
Against the muscular clouds	20081108	20081108	<b>fns</b>
All people that do smell of earth	19891107	19910518	Erysichthon, Tearer of Earth, destroyed trees in Demeter's sacred grove. (See Tuchman, p. 223) He finally devoured himself. So with humanity.
And I will take these elements back	19860901		I sent some poems to Peter Klappert and received a snide reply. This was my reply to him, in the voice of a scholarly silverfish who refers to Klappert's poem <i>Infectious scotoma</i> and to Klappert as a high priest. The "back...back" and similar phrases portray a limp in the line itself.
And in conclusion	20120801	20120801	<i>Luke 19:40</i>
Art begins with poses			<b>fns</b>
As heart by double motion		20110807	<b>sir, fs</b>
As if prizes were ahead	20121119	20121120	
As long as I have known you			From <i>The Books of Daniel</i> , it was also submitted for the "John Lennon" prize offered by the VA Poetry Soc.
At just the moment frangible	19930217	19930217	See note on <i>Black Swans are gliding</i>
At three forty three	20120920	20120920	The poem says it all. After reading Ammon's <i>Garbage</i> , I went to bed. When I awoke at 3:43 a.m., the poem was ready.
Back logs	August 1990		This was part of a series in "Beneath the Trees," since made separate poems.
Began is a cruel word	19670705	19670705	<b>sir</b>
Behold, the man exceeds	19940507	19940507	I was in Richmond to attend a conference. <b>fns</b> . See <i>I Kings 4:29-34</i>
Below the bottom/line is a	19980526	19980526	15:16
Black Swans are gliding on the	19670726	19940213	Several versions of this poem. sir, <b>F</b> I worked on this in 1975 and 1991. In 1994 I made "Lake Klawir in November." 1968 Swans=suans=susan, Oslyn=Lyons=R. Lyons Rose

			Five= 1965-1970. Interpretation form 5/17/1975: I was in army till 1970. I did not in 1968 believed that we could be together until 1970. I suspected that I would go to VietNam before 1970. A modified version of this appears in <b>fs</b> , as do the swans. The swans of Tuonela were the original thought—not the swans of Coole or the swans of Airlie, or Anderson’s duckling-swan or the later Black Swan of later ill repute. In 1994 I sent the second version to Alice Fulton after reading her “Heart to Heart with the Horizon”. She of course did not reply. In 1993 I sent her “Alice Meet Crawley” with a copy of POD after reading her “The Fractal Lanes” of 1990. No reply then either.
Blood on her hands	20130121	20130121	Kathleen said she couldn’t turn off the radio because she had blood on her hands from cutting liver for dinner. This line led to a poem about a meat packer, written in sentences of four syllables (2 legs, 2 wings) with a hinge joint in the 7 <sup>th</sup> line. Allusions to the roles of men and women in peace and war probably arose because I have become convinced that our human fate would be improved by putting women in control, even with blood on their hands. <b>mp</b>
Bronchitis slowed me to find	20120928	20120928	After reading an interview in Writers Chronicle. The poem was published in “Letters” to WC online. <b>mp</b>
Buried in middens	20120728	20120728	
By no means discernible	20130704	20130704	
Claws curl	19930718	20120902	First date uncertain
Cloak the eyes	20130906	20131021	See note below about <b>pc</b> .
Cruise control is a state of mind	19930608	19930608	
Dear gatekeeper, who made you prince and judge,	20040430	20040430	From a disbanded collection called “Makeshifts”. See <b>ext</b> below.
Death, the old windbag	20090223	20090223	<b>fns</b>
Discuss or touch the ice we see	19940119	19940119	Sent to W. Post re weather reports. <b>F</b>
Do they still wait? Still	20120718	20120718	
Dragons hid under the wash house	August 1990		This was part of a series, since made separate poems. This one is about chasing horn toads with my cousin Debbie behind my grandmother’s house in Ft. Worth.
Each of us Odysseus	19930910	19930910	See Cancer Poems note <b>F</b> . This was submitted to VA Poetry Soc for the Herndon Memorial Award. Not a winner. Susie’s cancer surgery was 9/10/93. She finished chemotherapy April 1994.
Every morning I take the pen	20130503	20130503	<b>mp</b>
Fakes I deplore	20120717	20120727	<b>mp</b>
Families are those you have still			<b>amb</b>
Fever down, she returns again	20130310	20130315	Another etymological poem /truth/=/tree/ and written during Mom’s bouts with pneumonia and urinary infections following the surgery to reduce femoral fracture. Also, it’s written in five foot lines with varied feet, including spondees. Trees surround us; truths confound us. Contests, comparisons, competitions, critical extravagance—not helpful. First one must know what one is now suited for, the situations varying over a lifetime. Then one must study how to do it. The trees are innumerable but only some of them must be thoroughly studied. That some trees are ancient giants, multi-branched in the canopy is not really what one needs to know. Love, and study to love more perfectly, this is what one needs. Don’t tell me (like Scheibe) that Bach’s leading voices are trapped in turgid harmonies or that Gluck is inadequate in polyphony. Rather, consider their own truths in their own right. How did they root and grow? What can be learned from them? Mom knew early on that I was a musician. Without her understanding this, I might not have learned about keyboards.
First born, first in line	20121019	20121019	First and only children are likely to show grandiosity; so does imagination, which disarms reality-testing with its passion and fluency. Some of the first artifacts are beads used as stamps to tally sheaves. Shakespeare was technically a horse-handler. Von Braun wanted to achieve what Oberth had only written about—the moon trip—although he worked instead on the V-1.
<b>First you survive</b>	20130131	20130131	Although this is one of the poems for Whitekill, it is also the result of reading about the fact that the flip in magnetic polarity is hundreds of thousands of years overdue while the strength of the magnetic field continues to decline, suggesting that the magnetic field of the earth may collapse within 500y. This would result in the disappearance of the magnetosphere which protects us from the lethal scouring solar cosmic radiation. However, we only recently missed a giant asteroid collision, and another one is coming even closer in the near future. With odds like these, the prospects of change due to global warming seem rosy.
Five months into middle age	19840101	19840101	See <b>ext</b> on “Disabling conditions”
For man’s convenience	19940201	19940201	See notes below. <b>fns</b>
Forager, sower, home-builder, protector	19710613	19900818	For the birthday of Frank L. Rose, Jr. in 1971.
Gray berries	20120728	20120728	<b>mt</b>

Greasing the antler after			See ext "Ornament"
Handle the day if you can't seize it	ca. 1970?		Memory is not an old thing retrieved but a new thing brought forward. It is an act of relating, connecting, growing and touching.
Headlights across the median	20130404	20130406	The title comes from Mary Douglass's <i>Purity and Danger</i> (1966) It is her definition of "dirt." <b>mp</b>
Heard news a cattle truck jack-	19680301	20110802	This happened at Ft. Leonard Wood. The first version of the poem was 52 lines & included "the pathologist recorded three men dead of suffocation" referring to Dr. Mihalakis. The version in <b>fs</b> was much condensed.
Heart of the flower	20120804	20120804	
Here are the deaf battalions	19930910	19930910	See Cancer Poems note. <b>F, ext</b>
Here, in this place	20130508	20130508	Sometimes I push to complete a poem quickly—plowing without looking back. Another such morning-starter poem is "Every morning I take the pen." <b>mp</b>
Hills like gentle heads	20040724	20040724	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
His feet no more touch orchard	19941219	19941219	<b>ep</b> Silly poem about the confederate widow of Lee's horse. On a lark I sent it for the contest of the VA Poetry Soc "poem on a Confederate Widow" called the Richard Leigh Stuart Walker Memorial. It didn't even place, of course.
His pace his own	19940901	19940901	Teak—in two selections, <b>fns</b> and <b>fap</b> , The poem originally began with a rumination. See <b>ext</b>
I am not my body	ca. 1988		Thinking about the groups one used to meet in airports and also Job 5:7.
I have gone weeks not	20130517-	20130518	<b>mp</b>
I long for thee as pilot for the	19670726		<b>F, sir,</b>
I missed what he said when	19720101	19720101	The only date I have for this is 1972.
I saved the neck bones	20121206	20121206	KMR is of course Kathleen, who makes good turkey soup for us.
I was here before	20120801	20120801	
I wish my verse were high and heady	19880201	19880201	From a selection of poems submitted to Light Year and rejected by Bits Press at Case W.R. U.
I wish my verse were high and heady.		19950107	Formerly used as the title poem for a selection, "Beneath the Trees," since abandoned for "Makeshifts," also abandoned. The first draft was written in the last year at Rock Springs.
I, quarter left our whole	19940704	19940704	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b> Perhaps this makes me done with Donne.
If I could dream with you	19930910	19930910	See Cancer Poems note. These words were later used in a song in the Books of Daniel. <b>F</b>
Immense in a tiny back yard	20120909	20120910	Vacant house across the street
Immobilization follows war	19940606	19940606	<b>fns</b>
In a minor role I would have asked	20131023	20131107	
In a narrow way to speak of	19721112	20120705	
In love's first glance our talking			Three folds: In love's . . . With growth . . . When settlements . . . All for <b>sir</b>
In love's first glance			A set of three sonnets reflecting on an earlier set of poems I had written to Susie. The meanings are too personal to break through the turgid lines. <b>F</b>
In praise of real imitations	20080103	20121206	This began as a line thrown out of the poem "What could be more natural". Later, after hearing an npr piece on a giant alligator to be pulled around a bay in Florida in memory of a Christo exhibit, I made another poem from the line.
In the land of the	20040330	20040330	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
In the midst of life	20131022	20131022	After Bishop Cranmer's version of the antiphon Media vita in morte sumus (origin 750 A.D. in France) in the burial service from the Book of Common Prayer.
In touch with dreams, before	19930206	19930206	<b>fns</b>
Insufficient to the day	19891013	19891013	Simultaneous levels of interpretation, i.e. After enough evil even evil isn't enough. We become sated with evils. As if Evil—gross injustice, holocaust, racism—were not enough we also have or are left with petty evils—intrigues, gossip, thefts. To entertain an evil idea without acting on it sometimes leads one to see its usefulness in a different setting. Such a realization is alarming. Do we feed on evil?
Is there a sum to which this	19930910	19930910	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
It is because I will not wallow	19930910	19930910	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
It pleases me that only words can	19930910	19930910	See Cancer Poems note. Fourth line changed in 2003. More than that needs changing. <b>F</b>

It would be too easy	20121111	20121113	
It's true, I suppose	19880201	19880201	From a selection of poems submitted to Light Year and rejected by Bits Press at Case W.R. U. Reply to Ewart, p. 48 Light Year
Kites sustained, alas, in air	August 1990		This was part of a series, since made separate poems. The USAF was also on my mind. See note on "Heroes" below.
Let's hear it for restraint	August 1990	19900826	This was part of a series, since made separate poems. Iraq was on my mind.
Like two jays caught in a shed	20121006	20121006	<b>ts</b>
Like wren in privet	20130510	20130511	<b>mp</b>
Living beneath the speechless	1968		<b>F</b>
Making a mark has less a ring	20120718	20120718	
Making shifts continually			From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
Making shifts continually			<b>fns</b>
Many ask me questions	19900828		<b>mp</b>
May I come in?	20121023	20121023	
Metered by heart-beat, rise	20121101	20121101	
Molting to rise	20040524	20040524	The month of the 17 year cicada emergence. From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
More of them than me	20130519	20130520	<b>mp</b>
Morning arrives. The trucks	20120917	20120918	It's a formal exercise because the form, another study in spondees, governed the contents.
Mostly not dead, but rather	20090313	20090313	<b>ext</b>
Mother said she was better today	19691101	19691101	After a last visit with Mary Hobson in Liberty, TN
Mr. Duck used to say to Mr.	19710101	20120901	The first date is uncertain. The idea and tune come from a forgotten source on a record or tape.
Music could not be hung in inner rooms	19960124	19960124	On watching people with Sony Walkmans. This was nothing compared to the later spectacle of i-people.
My mother loved his prissy	20120718	20120718	
My other selves, the ones	19930910	20120806	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
Near you I near a rarity	19691101	19691101	<b>sir</b>
Next / and no more			From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below. This was in memory of Truman E. Bruch, who always won at checkers.
No one asked me to do this	20120717	20120717	
No one came	20130509	20130509	Quoted in <b>ts</b> .
No speed that I could go would be	19930526	19930526	
Not having other than	20120718	20120718	
Not just the sunken roof	19940408	19940408	My commute went North from Warrenton to Leesburg on Route 15. <b>fns</b>
Nothing comes of it,	20121202	20121202	
Nothing came of it	20130719	20130720	<b>mp</b>
Old age, when even breathing	19940704	19940704	
On the ledge, your hand	20120727	20120727	
Once more as if never before`	20120725	20120725	
Once we were wanderers,	20120719	20120719	
One can only take so much	20121105	20121106	
one comes upon unnoticed	20121211	20121212	i.e. one comes a pun ... This is is another dream poem
One would always rather	20130606	20130606	<b>mp</b>
Our being out of sight	20090601	20090601	<b>mp</b>
Our world we would have made	19900617	19900617	From Shrovetide poems, ca. 19890211-19900617. See Pope's <i>Essay on Man</i> . This one to Bill Rose
Pith of bone or stem	20130818	20130818	<b>mp</b>
Prepare the finish first		20121120	Title came years earlier. I accidentally erased the poem and was unable to recall it exactly.
Promise lands are not the	19930910	20120806	Susie and I were married in the Wren chapel on 6/22/1969 See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
Protect yourself. Much as one	20120719	20120719	
Punched into the marquee	20130601	20130604	Meditation on the Moore tornado of 5/20/2013
Rhyme, though amateurs	20071007	20071007	A whimsical defense of rhyme dedicated to W.H. Auden
Ringer pulls the sally	20130110	20130111	Reading about Change ringing in Blythe's Akenfield (1968) helped me to put something into words about the statistics enthusiasts I have known. <b>mp</b>

Ruins, walls pocked	20120725	20120725	
Seeing this come together	20120718	20120718	
Silvered/ Black thin books	19950802	19950802	Dream sounds at 2:04 a.m.
So much will not come again.	20120901	20120901	D
So purpose is not given but	19930910	20120806	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
So you think you know	20130119	20130109	This was an exercise in writing 5 syllable sentence-lines. <b>mp</b>
So, did the costume of that	20121028	20121029	<b>F</b>
Some businesses you have to	20120719	20120719	
Some poems / Clap	19880201	19880201	From a selection of poems submitted to Light Year and rejected by Bits Press at Case W.R. U.
Something like a brittle flower	20020629	20020629	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
Soon, disregarding us	20120830	20120830	B
Stop looking for what can	20120921	20120921	
Such projectiles we are	20040430	20040430	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
Surpass the self	20120730	20120730	
Surrounded by the incomplete project	20130624	20130625	I continued to be surrounded by unfinished projects, like the Transects, the studio work at Holy Comforter, & the completion of Twelve Ensembles. <b>mp</b>
Swing your partners	19930307	20120901	
telling what I did or deferred	20120729	20120729	
Thanks for calling, Abcek			<b>bod</b>
That beauties go I can report	20030924	20031107	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
The blue sky and other unmentionables	20021205	20021205	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below. <b>sir</b>
The chemotherapy is over	19940403	19940403	See note on cancer poems. F Also submitted for the "Bess Gresham Memorial Prize" of the VA Poetry Soc.
The children were not taught	19940613	19940613	From a note to Betty Mar Little
<b>The delegates</b> arrived in an envelope	20110208	20110208	From a dream in Norman OK on Tuesday 2/28/2011
The dozen jackets of the cases	20130125	20130125	Reading Ronald Blythe's <i>Akenfield</i> led me to consider having Prakash to study the people of Whitekill <b>ts</b>
The enclosed subscription	19940223	19940223	<b>F</b> This was sent to editor Kendrick Frazier with my subscription to Skeptical Inquirer. The first part concerns the shortcomings and promise of poetry, the second part is an essay on faith, doubt and calibration, given these shortcomings. Somewhere in this turgid text there may be a poem, but I think that "Finding a Purchase" said it better.
The fragrance of the forest			<b>people</b>
The hills, like hips and knees	19941227	19941227	Written after watching the boys charge up the path ahead of us. Later submitted to VA Poetry Soc. For the Carleton Drewry Memorial prize. Not a winner.
The makeshift art	20020903	20020903	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
The mountain profile like the	20120718	20120718	
The secret of poetry	20131008	20131008	
The tubes are in their racks	19930124	19930127	Doggerel written to praise the efforts of Sally Rubal Cangiano at Seneca Ridge Middle School to outfit new labs.
The ultimate pop-top.	19880201	19880201	From a selection of poems submitted to Light Year and rejected by Bits Press at Case W.R. U.
The waddler, stumbling on her wings	19910103	19910224	Does <i>underlings</i> refer to <i>misfits</i> , etc.? No. The misfits are compared to the albatross, considered a bad-luck bird. Yet for all her ungainliness on land, she soars in her element as misfits do when in their element. This is Hofer's idea. Hence the dedication to him and his shimmering talk.
There once was girl named			This limerick won a fourth place prize in the VA Poetry contest, the "Handy Andy" category. My only glittering prize.
This box is meant to keep one safe.	19940505	19940505	
This has been your life. Let me	19930613	19930613	
Though you reach 48 ahead of	19930501	19930501	References in the poem are to Susie's birthday on May 1 and our 24 <sup>th</sup> anniversary on June 22 and my birthday on July 23. June is half because 24 is half of 48. Marriage is double each because by joining us it contains twice the 48 years of each of us, filled with both our lives.
Tidal Basin blooms	19690101	19941219	I'm not sure of the beginning date. I remember sending a copy to Gary Becker when he was in medical school. The word "as" is used in two ways, viz. "as green as tidal scum" and "as girls become bright flowers". It was

			about the atomic bombing of Japan. Rather obscure, however.
tink, spoon to cup,	20120727	20120727	<b>mt</b>
To Attract A Mass Audience / Try	20031118	20031118	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
To make it big, see,	19990609	19990609	
To old men's beards and cypress trees	20030923	20030923	From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
Try as you may	20120930	20121001	IE root of oblivion means slime and lace < snare French
Two speeds	19910207	19910207	This was part of a series, since made separate poems.
Unsevered leaves, still sunned	19691101	20110807	Alle Heiligen, <b>sir, fs</b>
Untended gardens all began with plans	20130315	20130315	Thought of the first line while walking. A few hours later, the rest of it poured out. <b>mp</b>
Visible only because it is	20120724	20120724	
War is on. Satisfying no one,	20120723	20120723	
Waste? Do you want numbers?	20120711	20120711	<b>mp</b>
We'll feed the ducks, Gibber			<b>F, ext</b>
We've been on a path since	20130827	20130828	<b>mp</b>
What are we we will be	19691201	19691201	<b>sir</b>
What can become of searching symbols	20130812	20130812	<b>mp</b>
What could be more natural	20080103	20080103	
What hasn't grown by now	19930910	19931002	The cancer poems are more of a diary and prayer than a work for general publication. They were written as I waited in Mary Washington Hospital, Fredericksburg, during Susie's operation. Numbers 1-10 were written 9/10/1993. <b>F</b>
What I am passing's	19930718	20120902	
What in delight times past	20121215	20121215	
What is most like my love as	19670902		<b>sir, F</b>
When I can lay out steps	1994?	20121212	<b>ts</b>
When settlements have reached	19930204		This should be deleted if it can't be improved. <b>F</b>
Who can want or need this tangle	20130718	20130718	<b>ts</b>
Who wants what they have when			From a disbanded collection called "Makeshifts". See <b>ext</b> below.
Whoever you aren't	20120213	20121213	
Why when wheeze	20120919	20120919	When my bronchitis ended.
Wielding influence like a pen-	20080103	20080201	The mortgage button, made of boxwood, which we raised, is put onto the newel post when the mortgage is paid. Custom around Oatlands plantation, Loudoun County.
With each completion	20120820	20120907	First of a series of 7 poems on the name Prakash, from <i>White Kill</i> . See also <i>A tickle ...ts</i>
Witness, tell what you see	20120728	20120728	
You are the condition	19930910	19930910	See note on cancer poems. <b>F</b>
You are there,	20121206	20121206	
You see a lone fat finger, olive	19940703	19940703	<b>ep</b> Observation probably made near the Wiederkehr winery in AR. Also the occasion for another observation. Also submitted for the "Poe Memorial Prize" of the VA Poetry Soc.
You took me into your confidence	20121230	20121231	Caroline's funeral was at Our Lady of Peace in Arlington on 12/29/2012. The other queens of peace who in welcoming me helped me to welcome the world were Monte Towles, Ina Miller, Kitty Parker, Mary Jane Bradford, Clelia LaMonica, Joan Broughton, Barbara Stinson, Carol Tomlinson, Beth Kramer, Ellie Sparks, and Kathleen Mary Rose. <b>mp</b>

### Extended notes on some of the works cited in the table above:

#### Disabling conditions (ca. 1984-1985)

This semi-autobiographical poem became the basis for an episode in the story *Three May Keep a Secret* in *FRAMESHIFTS*. Another version of it was called "Instructional Analysis":

## Instructional Analysis and other disabling conditions

Given an Alsatian childhood,  
mulling of languages,  
Lutheran *Orgelwerke*, obedience—  
even to giving Baby Sartre a stroll—  
I might be in *Lambaréné*  
instead of a courtroom  
trying to explain my expertise.

“Yes, I am a consultant,  
an Instructional Analyst.  
Well, it involves—  
it revolves around keeping clients  
and onlookers convinced  
of their own incompetence.”

There, Pinky—See it?  
A little knotted white line of spots  
Opposite the first and second molars—  
Koplik’s spots. But no fever!  
How could it be measles, Pinky?  
With no fever! Do you really see them?

Five months into middle age I got a rash.  
It started as small, evenly spaced Roman shields.  
Too late to consider reading the *Aeneid* in Latin.  
Not petechiae, not the glazed bubbles  
poison ivy raises around ankles,  
this was simply an itch on the back of my hand.

Scratching on my way to a lawsuit—  
well, a hearing—I looked down and noticed it.  
Had the plaintiff received  
“free and appropriate public education”?  
I pulled over and looked under my shirt.  
Spots, not scattered but deliberate as red anthills,  
rose festively, like balloons from a Grand Opening.

Originally a poem about lack of expertise being a kind of disability—especially when one looks at the kind of expertise represented by Schweitzer—this was the beginning of *Three May Keep a Secret*. Pinky appears for the first time, based on a woman who worked for Aunt Monte when I was about six years old. The mysterious rash flourished and faded, leaving a story behind; thereafter, the poem underwent multiple reproductive fissions.

*The Fisher of the James* retells the Grimm brothers' fairy tale about the fisherman and his wife. A muskellunge taken from the James River reveals himself as the spirit form of a sachem from the seventeenth century.

**For man's convenience** (Seeing Regis and Kathie Lee on a Bus in Richmond)

*Miscellaneous notes:* This was written in February, 1994. On March 6, 1994 I submitted it to *The New Yorker*. It's about men and women, *Paradise Lost*, and watching a teevee while riding a city bus. We do not regain the blissful seat but instead sit on stools in talk shows, thereby restoring ourselves to the *logos*. Painful puns—disease that turned his feet to yams, i.e. iambs. Acres...surmounting the sacred mount of Oreb. Muddled Flight/Middle Flight. The Home to Come: well, everything said about paradise is not so attractive. Crystal blur vs crystal clear/ KristalNacht. Obedience must be inferred, as is the internal code. Feet to show them light versus "thy word is a light unto my path," etc. Chattering slow enough i.e. in terms of frames per minute. A street that only goes one way (Cary St. downtown) is both Time's Arrow and Christ's One Way. Contrast the former followers of the Way with these modern riders surmountably intact—expressly not insurmountably intact. Just as the perfection of Paradise was defaceable, Note that talk show hosts and other stars are themselves kinds of electronic appliances.

## Gibber

Gibber was my imaginary friend when I was a child. The poem was about Ginny's dining room picture of a child feeding ducks. Susie and I talked about the picture, which reminded her of childhood. The clover string recalls Susie's story of the clover chain which she and Ginny strung across the driveway before Truman came home to Franconia after work. The swaying hands over a brook recalls Milne's poem about Piglet and Pooh watching sticks float beneath them as they looked from a bridge. This was intended to be a children's poem, but it doesn't work. Too much freight.

## Latimeria

This poem was written while waiting outside Taiphooon Restaurant, in Pentagon City, March 13, 2009. I was watching a skater, a hawk and a cloud while thinking about a friend's sick grandmother, my Aunt Monte, my feelings about myself, and the chemical composition of the body. "Cosmos" turned out to be an organizing word for the poem. It is derived from a word that could mean both "adornment" and "order". From this root came such ideas as "cosmetics" and "cosmos"—literally the "apparel of the universe." Our understanding of the world is our way of dressing it up. Incidentally, the "fossil fish," named *Latimeria*, was found living off the coast of Madagascar in 1938. The reason it was called a fossil fish was that the only other fish like it were in ancient fossils from the Devonian period. No one knew that such fish still existed. This fish had scales intermediate between the placoid scales of sharks and the cycloid scales of modern fish. These were called "cosmoid" scales. This completes the circle of associations brought together in the poem.

The phrase about the stars not yet commenting on life is a reference to a line from one of Shakespeare's sonnets. He was alluding to the Platonic idea—still current in

astrology—that stars control our destinies. As he said, “the stars in secret influence comment” on our lives. The poem suggests, to the contrary, that humans first had to imagine the idea of direction & destiny. Everyone knows that we’re mostly water, but what this implies is that we are mostly not alive. The poem starts with this premise. Of course, a sizable part of the body is also not only not alive but dead. This includes our hair, our outer skin & nails, and the many dying cells continually being removed by specialized amoeba-like cells throughout the body. We share many attributes of water—such as our flowing through time. Life itself is one event. See it as one very long, intricate event. From a star’s viewpoint, it would be difficult even to make it out. The “supple joints” of water are its loose hydrogen bonds that give it such unusual properties, such as becoming less dense when it solidifies.

Finally, there are several references to the development of bone. From a chemical point of view, bone is a mineral containing Calcium, Phosphate, and Fluorine. This mineral is called “apatite,” and, through the enzymatic action of phosphatase, the mineral is precipitated from blood & deposited around the Haversian canals in thin sheets or “lamellae,” that is, like “leaves.” Without their protein content, bones are simply this brittle mineral. I think that bones got into this not only because of the fossil fish but also because of some discussions with a friend about exercise, bones, & muscles.

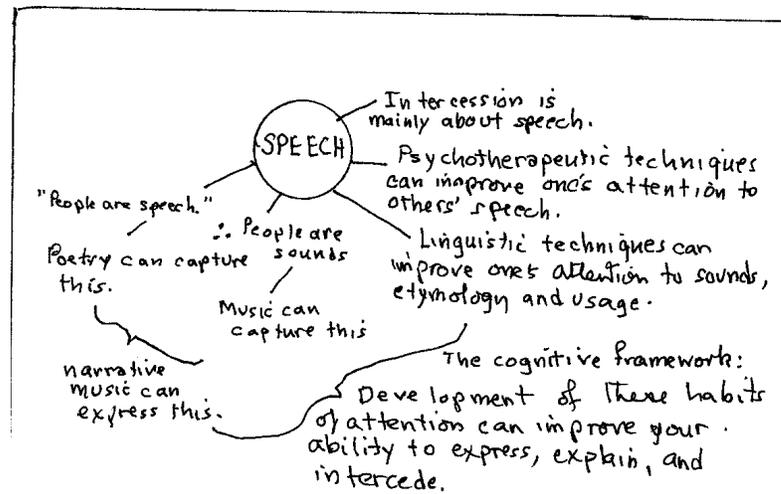
Putting poems like this together is like assembling a puzzle. In this case, I seemed to see at once where all of the pieces went. It’s not what usually happens; poems are usually slow-going. It interests me to think back over how it came together, but probably it’s not so interesting to others.

***Marking Time: A memoir:*** Poems reflecting on the land and peoples of New Mexico and on my family when we lived there both in 1960-1963 and in 2009-2012.

**Ornament** The poem that originally contained the line “all that glitters is not ornament” was a prologue to *The Good Samaritan* cantata (1968). I never was satisfied with it, but I kept it. In Robert Hass’s study of Frost, he mentions Peacock’s 1820 *Four Ages of Poetry* which 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 . . .” The artifact mentioned in the antler poem is shown in *National Geographic*, March 1, 2008.

### **“People are speech.”**

This statement, made in the “Signal Point” section of *The Profit of Doom* in *Frameshifts*, came from my experiences in at the medical laboratory in the Ft. Leonard Wood Army Hospital, where I was stationed from December 1967 to August 1968. Meditation centered on speech and intercession. Here’s a concept diagram from the journal:



The diary from this period was a record of the effort at what I called "reasonable intercession." It included study notes on *The Story of English* (1952), *The Families of Words* (Mario Pei, 1962), and a book on psychotherapy. Also included were notes on the other servicemen in my unit. I tried to use my "cognitive framework" to make orderly observations. The effort was incomplete and unsatisfactory but instructive. Balzac's plan was more wonderfully developed, but I didn't know about *La Comédie Humaine*, except for a few excerpts from *Le Père Goriot*.

**Teak** originally began with a rumination:

Here is a poem off the cuff but sly  
 and also tough regarding the beat  
 the ear or was it eye should catch  
 and how and where a rhyme should latch  
 (mostly inside but not too close—  
 the way for lack of better means  
 a boy loves those he knows he must)  
 and tough also regarding trust  
 in acts and scenes that words can make  
 attaching leaning as they go.

Here is a ten-lined structure, breathed  
 out like leaves or fingers  
 from a mitt of fetal flesh or webs—  
 damp and sagging lean-tos slung  
 to hammock prey in dewy rest:  
 clamp them in peace. Here it is:  
 I only call attention here  
 to Form because I want to show  
 it grow, achieve a curling shape,

and err enough to inhale fresh.

I know I'm pointing at the rhyme  
again but thyme should not close  
but link—as mother sees the wife  
Her son will find before he looks;  
as one may *know* before words come,  
rhymes put appearance to good use  
and signal something one should know—  
in this case, that the newborn flesh  
is the Accused before he breathes:  
accused inside though no one knows.

Because poems are not cars  
or hearses—nor I laid out  
just yet—I want a bumpy ride.  
Too much smooth twirling makes me doze.  
Read lines sing-song if you wish;  
mine hesitate, rush, draw out—  
spread—hold, reach, spill  
over themselves. Do as you will.  
My meter's the rolling stride  
of boy's walk at his mother's side.

\*His pace his own, it only happened  
She was keeping up with him. . .

After living with the above lines for a while, I deleted them, and began *Teak* at the asterisk.

### **Heroes**

This list with comment was written in August, 1990. (See the poem *Sustineo alas*, written about the same time.)

Our heroes tell something about us:  
Gilgamesh, George Fox, St. Francis,  
Jonah, Odysseus, Noah, Moses, Freud, Galileo  
Bruno, Copernicus, Darwin, Schweitzer, Jesus,  
Lincoln, Gautama, Lao Tse, Confucius,  
Sakarov, Mandela, King, Sean McBride,  
Newton, Bach, Mendelssohn, Prometheus,  
Edison, Gödel, Milton, Mendel, Walensa,  
Paul, Franklin, Washington, Shakespeare,  
Von Braun, Eisenhower, Goddard, Cavendish,  
Einstein, Hawkings, Wallenberg, Dickinson,  
Whitman, Goethe—

all who to some degree were spent and reborn,  
who returned with gifts of spirit;  
nothing more than will be told again and again  
because it seeps from our souls  
like maple sap tapped from a tree,  
from life one cannot stop living  
to distill for connoisseurs.

## **Makeshifts**

This was a selection of poems assembled around this idea: *The term “makeshift” is both question and answer. It expresses my limitations and consequent vocation as bricoleur and my belief that this vocation concerns making and moderating shifts of attention, diction, and ways of knowing. It is both a concession and a command. For me, both are inescapable. This is hard for pride to swallow and certainty to allow, but I have no other offering to bring.* As this was another “vague formulation,” as Professor Lusardi would say, I later disassembled the collection and left the poems on their own—even the title poem.

## **Palliative Care**

Giving is life-fostering concern, loving others and the self. But the variable gears of risks small and large and the human resistance to change make the task of giving as part of a biotic and beloved community a laughably desperate task. Trances deny the senses as well as membership in the biotic and beloved community. To clear the vision of us so afflicted I tell a story. The story is made of seven-line stanzas, the lines each with two strong beats or stresses then reassembled into prose. Details come from our experiences in Chicago, Oklahoma, and Richmond and from my journals, 1960-2013. It was published online on Medium on October 21, 2013.

Here are footnoted lines from *Finding a Purchase*, as given in the expanded version, which included End Notes, given at the end of this document.

### ***Finding a purchase*<sup>ii12</sup>**

*Three reasons for another book of poetry*

**Much understanding is learning what to ignore.**

Like snowfall’s white scatter<sup>iii</sup>,

**Try the Beta<sup>iv</sup> Version.**

**The energy carried by matter**

Greasing the antler<sup>v</sup> after scratching on it

***Four May Songs***

for sustenance

**May Day<sup>vi</sup>**

**The blue sky<sup>vii</sup>**

**The Mortgage Button<sup>viii</sup>**

**Makeshifts<sup>ix</sup>**

***Contents of the title poem<sup>x</sup>, “Finding a Purchase”***

***NOTES ON THE PICTURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS<sup>xi</sup>:***

**Push off the Perogues<sup>xii</sup>**

1

Now I will speak of understandings<sup>xiii</sup>

I am but one, no more<sup>xiv</sup> —

We live within our magnitudes<sup>xv</sup>,  
Tell tales, tend right and left,  
Behold no more than is revealed<sup>xvi</sup>

2

Wild caws and chittediddles’ saws<sup>xvii</sup>,  
But as radiance in a cup<sup>xviii</sup>.

3

Suffice<sup>xix</sup>, save dreaming, there’s no more:

Nothing’s known of myst’ry<sup>xx</sup>, the beyond,

4

It is for now, no more<sup>xxi</sup>,  
And if I find ways to tell  
That stay close to the bone  
Without becoming ossified<sup>xxii</sup>,  
It is to depart this skull<sup>xxiii</sup>,

The agencies of thought<sup>xxiv</sup>,  
The native peoples who create what is<sup>xxv</sup>.

**Good Medicine**

1

The *between*<sup>xxvi</sup>

This passage is a tunnel<sup>xxvii</sup>

Above, the martins throng the Spirit Mound<sup>xxviii</sup>—

3

4

You are the gift<sup>xxix</sup>,  
The gift of survivors,  
The *gift outright*<sup>xxx</sup>

*Hear then the holy message:  
There is no easier passage*<sup>xxxi</sup>.

*Ubuntu*<sup>xxxii</sup>

Sometimes a thready course  
Of bottlenecks<sup>xxxiii</sup> and self-deceptions,  
We make but one river.  
One mind<sup>xxxiv</sup>, one people,  
One living and one cosmos<sup>xxxv</sup>  
Made of many,  
We<sup>xxxvi</sup> learn to see.

### **The Interpreter**

How can we trust her<sup>xxxvii</sup>?

She finds us artichokes<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **Conceptions**

Concepts always betray the facts<sup>xxxix</sup>.

### **Contraptions**

### **Counterpoint**

Assault both from the rear and frontal<sup>xl</sup>  
Compels us to be contrapuntal<sup>xli</sup>.

### **Props**

1

Supporting action are the qualities of things,  
Five sets in a second changed on a stage<sup>xlii</sup>

As for the red wheelbarrow<sup>xliii</sup>,

2

Though neither real nor achievable<sup>xliv</sup>

That it's better to inquire<sup>xlv</sup>;  
That oxygen feeds fire<sup>xlvi</sup>;  
That deeds remembered are immortal<sup>xlvii</sup>  
And liberty's a holy portal<sup>xlviii</sup>.

**Partners**

1

The universe has us outclassed<sup>xlix</sup>.

Someone must work to clear its name<sup>l</sup>,

A Krishna, Enkidu, Nestor, or Clark<sup>li</sup>.

2

Sharing all lines and the quilted cover<sup>lii</sup>

Of the Earth, now surveyed;

Waiting to be remade.

**Nine More Understandings<sup>liii</sup>**

**Deflections (100)**

**Progress (200)**

**Crooked E's and Other Swell Ideas (300)**

**Patch this to his midbrain (400)**

**Wooly Bears (500)**

**Landmark Shopping Center (600)**

**Death Benefits (700)**

**Teak Walker (800)**

**Seeing Regis and Kathie Lee on a Bus in Richmond (900)**

(February, 1994)

**Sunday Afternoon**

**More END NOTES follow.**

Here are the notes given at the end of most of my books and scores:



. . . sharing all lines and the quilted cover

*of the Earth, now surveyed,  
waiting to be remade.*

—*FRAMESHIFTS* (vol.2, p.376)  
(Quilt design by Mary Hobson)

## **AFTERWORD**

Annunciations surround us. Attention to them reveals patterns in the world around us and inside us. Attention is always rewarded, but annunciations come on their own terms. Mary did not make a deal with Gabriel. Newton did not select his own spectrum. Proper attention requires the proper frame of reference. You do not watch the *chola* cactus grow without yourself slowing down. You don't see through the *sipapu* hole in the floor of a *kiva* without knowing that the character of the world can change so much that only a few survivors may rise into the new reality—the new frameshift.

My writing and music are about accepting annunciations, changing your frame of reference, and crossing thresholds into new realities. We cross thresholds at a child's

birth and coming of age, at the death of a loved one, and in other moments of insight and sacred encounter. *Annunciations*, my first musical work, was an oratorio about the angel's message to Mary. In my works, annunciations come in many forms: a crocodile's warning (*The Queen and the Crocodile*); a child's disappearance (*Shura*), a tattoo (*Hidden Moves and Hidden Faces*), a frequency distribution (*Spearpoints Bright*, second story in *FRAMESHIFTS*), a veteran's memories (*Amber*, a chamber opera), and even a virus that seems to have a message for its hosts (in the second volume of *FRAMESHIFTS*).

Sometimes nature's annunciations must be mediated, as when James Hansen explained the frameshift of climate change to a Congressional committee or when Bill McKibben wrote his book, *Eaarth*—giving a new name to our altered planet. In *Marking Time*, a memoir, my reflections are mediated by the mountains, wildlife, and people of New Mexico, where I lived as an adolescent. Avery Crawley, the weather-prophet in *FRAMESHIFTS*, comments on the way things and places seem to hold our memories:

**In some way, railing and cloud could be trusted;  
They kept his memories, as did Ark and Salvage Yard.  
These and his museums and Foxglove Center  
Were his vessels for such memories . . .**

Returning to New Mexico after more than forty years, I found that many places and objects still held memories. Annunciations surrounded me. Perhaps, like the teepee stone formations of Cochiti, the annunciations had been there all along. The poet Basho wrote:

**Stillness—  
soaking into the rocks,  
the cicada's cries.**

Were so many annunciations soaked up by the desert during forty years, or was I finally quiet enough to hear them?

—*Richard L. Rose*



Other works by Richard L. Rose:

***FRAMESHIFTS? Two volumes? What is it?***

It is literary fiction made of multiple genres united by theme and character. At first glance, it appears to be a story collection, beginning with a mystery; but look at the back and you find a philosophical poem. Between the covers are mysteries, suspense stories, literary fiction, science fiction, love stories, fictional memoirs and letters, adventure stories, dramatic dialogues, and a section of poetic narrative made of a dozen forms—sestinas, sonnets, *terza rima*, *droeg-kvaets*, prose poems, ballads.

One may read the stories and poems in any sequence, but as one reads, a novel emerges. Its narrative concerns a fictional community in Northern Virginia from the current time to a disturbing future of climatic and social upheavals. Both volumes are listed on Amazon in hard copy and in Kindle versions. Rose's book blog is <http://www.frameshifts.com>. To find or add to the reviews on Amazon, look for *Frameshifts* by Richard L. Rose. A sample of *Frameshifts*, the mystery story *Death Wears A Tricorn*, is also available in multiple e-book platforms.

***MARGINAL NOTES.*** Words and music, collected with personal papers, are on the website [marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org](http://marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org). Here find reference to the set of operas—*Annunciations*, *Amber*, *The People's Voice*, *The Books of Daniel*, *La Rinuncia*, and *The Profit of Doom*—as well as other works and information, including the sequel to *Frameshifts*, entitled *Hidden Moves and Hidden Faces* and information about works in progress, such as *Floats and Sinkers*, a poetry collection, *Marking Time*, a poetic memoir, and *The Fisher of the James*, a solo work retelling a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale about always wanting more than we have.

## About Richard L. Rose

Richard L. Rose has retired from several careers, including teaching, medical laboratory work, environmental education and research, math and science supervision, and teaching science and science teaching methods in public schools and universities. After growing up “on the road” with a military family, described in the memoir *Marking Time*, he settled in Northern Virginia with his wife to raise two sons and follow his vocation of teaching and avocations of writing and musical composition.

Since retiring, he has produced a poetry collection, *Floats and Sinkers*, and a set of chamber operas, *Annunciations*, *The Books of Daniel*, *Amber*, *The People’s Voice*, and *The Profit of Doom*. Following his wife’s death and beginning a second marriage, he composed *La Rinuncia* and self-published the novel, *FRAMESHIFTS*, in 2011. All but the last of the operas were benefit concerts for groups like Amnesty, Habitat, and local charities. Another musical work, *The Fisher of the James*, on environmental concerns, and a set of stories, *Hidden Moves and Hidden Faces*, come from living in Richmond. The book and other projects are described on his website [marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org](http://marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org) and book blog site, <http://www.frameshifts.com>. In his spare time, he collects rejection slips.

Recurrent themes are the transience of our lives and habitat and an insistence that we find effective ways to attend to this fact. By producing benefit concerts, reducing royalties, and recommending nonprofit organizations worthy of their attention, he invites readers to make their own creative responses. Perhaps readers of *FRAMESHIFTS* will be inspired to imagine and accomplish something positive for their communities. In writing, however, his intention is simply to tell a good story with interesting characters in surprising situations.



This note comes at the end of *The School Year*:

Transects are long cross-sections through experience, spanning miles or centuries. Each kind of transect has strengths and shortcomings. Multiple transects help to recreate the experiences, to help in the work of remembrance, and to serve as external neural tracts, firing and wiring as they go. As I studied, I wrote little booklets for personal reference—journals, albums, summaries, and drawings—all providing material for transecting life experiences. Difficult as it may be to believe, I was very selective. Poetry, music, and fiction are also transects in that they both re-collect and integrate experiences. As Tom Farley says, they are “*trap-lines for the dead.*”

### **A stack of references**

The *Transects* is only a devotional guide, compiled over many years from varied sources which cannot all be acknowledged except for occasional citations in the text and the general list below, made as I worked down a stack of paper scraps, diaries, drawings, letters, cards and books gathered over half a century. The *Transects* was not assembled to satisfy academic or professional requirements but to see what could be used from the precious *débris* left from the whirlwind of experience. The *Transects* serves as a personal reference and guides meditation with its collage of *non sequiturs*; so also may this unsorted stack of sources extend your divine walk.

Family papers and letters, including personal journals (1960-2013). In this were also included interviews, worship services, concerts, classes, and conversations with the beloved dead. Most of these were later discarded.

Some of the family letters, diaries, and the book, *Proud Wanderers*, of Virginia Sullivan Bruch. Her book, a genealogy of the Helms and allies, and papers are in a special collection in the Pogue Library of the Murray State University.

Newspapers, particularly the *Washington Post* (*wp*), *National Observer* (*no*), *Richmond Times Dispatch* (*rtd*), *New York Times* (*nyt*), *Fauquier Democrat* (*fd* same as *Fauquier Times Democrat*), and the *Alexandria Gazette* (*ag*).

Journals and magazines, particularly *Science* (*sci*), *Science News* (*sn*), *World Press International* (*wpi*), *Time*, *Newsweek* (*nw*), *The Nation* (*tn*), *The New Yorker* (*ny*), *U.S. News and World Report* (*usnw*), *The Times Literary Supplement* (*tls*), *The Week* (*tw*), *The Smithsonian* (*smith*), *In these times* (*itt*), *National Geographic* (*nat.geog.*).

A website, *Big History*, discovered when this project was mostly finished, takes a similar approach, using powers of ten, interesting graphics like John Sparks's *Histomap*, etc. The site is a curricular resource for teachers.

An indexed list of some of the writings of Richard Rose, in the appendix below,

And good talks with many books, some of them stacked below:

*The National Trust Historical Atlas of Britain* (Nigel Saul, Ed.), 1994.  
*Trampling out the Vintage*, by Frank Bardacke, 2012.  
*Before the Dawn*, by Nicholas Wade, 2006.  
*Saxons, Vikings, and Celts*, by Bryan Sykes, 2006.  
*The Neolithic Revolution*, by Sonia Cole, 1970.  
*The Provinces of France*, by Doré Ogrizek, 1951.  
*Kings and Queens of England*, by Eric Delderfield, 1978  
*The Pentagon*, by Gene Gurney, 1964  
*Call of a Distant Drum*, by Charles S. Speed, 1987,  
*Adams County Historical Society* (rootsweb ancestry.com)  
*The Universe Within*, by Neil Shubin, 2013  
*First Steps into the Human Dawn* (*Earth, March 1992*), by Noel T. Boaz  
*The Geological Time Scales on Wikipedia* (as of 6/21/2013) and in  
the chart created by Haq and Van Eysinga (4<sup>th</sup> edition, Elsevier)  
*History and other notes* by Susan Bruch, 1962-1967.  
*Chronology of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* by Philip Waller and John Rowett, 1995.  
*Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-continent* by Irving Cutler, 1982  
*Starling of the White House* by Edmund W. Starling, 1946  
AND  
*Asimov's Chronology of the World*, by Isaac Asimov, 1991  
*The Shooting Party* by Anton Chekhov (Folio Society edition of 2006, with notes and  
chronology by John Sutherland.)

***Isaac Asimov dedicated his chronology to “Human history: A dark and turbulent stream of folly, illuminated now and then by flashes of genius.”***

Asimov once wrote that perhaps humans are distinguished from their animal cousins by being able to live in times other than the present. Desperate enthusiasm to live in the moment and seize the day may blind us to the wonderful creative engagement to be found by living in the past, the future, and in the imagination. In his nimble *Chronology*, the ever-engaged Asimov was more comprehensive, his method more orderly, amiable, and admirable, than mine.

But for my entries I lowered the Admission Price.

THE END

# ***FINDING A PURCHASE***

***Annotated Version***

*(Last book of Frameshifts )*

## ***CONTENTS      DEWEY CATEGORY<sup>div</sup>***

*Push off the Perogues              (100)*

*Good medicine                      (200)*

*Ubuntu                                (300)*

*The Interpreter                      (400)*

*Conceptions                        (500)*

*Contraptions                        (600)*

*Counterpoint                        (700)*

*Encounters                         (800)*

*Partners                              (900)*

**Push off the Perogues<sup>lv</sup>**

1

Now I will speak of understandings<sup>lvi</sup>

And of how things are:

To expose and tell

What knowing is

And what is known.

Of many before

And many to follow

I am but one, no more<sup>lvii</sup> —

Two eyes, two ears,

And a thicket past the brow.

We live within our magnitudes<sup>lviii</sup>,

Tell tales, tend right and left,

Behold no more than is revealed<sup>lix</sup>

And yet we imagine other scales

And other latitudes,

2

Other worlds –upstream

And down into the grain of things.

Other worlds, our theme

To work and realize,

Are found in our imaginings

But understood by reckonings

That map both thoughts and prize.

Oh that we could gather wisdom up

Not as a yarn,  
Covered by retellings,  
Or a tale cut from chatterings against silence;  
Wild caws and chittediddles' saws<sup>lx</sup>,  
But as radiance in a cup<sup>lxi</sup>.

3

As we two settle in this place  
My aims are but to understand experience,  
And show such understandings as I may,  
And claim that knowers and the known  
Suffice<sup>lxii</sup>, save dreaming, there's no more:

No take-off without landing,  
No pulse without breath,  
No life without death.  
Nothing's known –however much we're fond—  
Nothing's known of myst'ry<sup>lxiii</sup>, the beyond,  
Or understanding beyond understanding.

4

I am but one, no more,  
And if I tell how things are  
It is for now, no more<sup>lxiv</sup>,  
And if I find ways to tell  
That stay close to the bone  
Without becoming ossified,  
It is to depart this skull<sup>lxv</sup>,  
To pull off and look back,  
The principle applied  
Being that to go outside  
Requires free passage  
From a thousand tribes,

The agencies of thought<sup>lxvi</sup>,  
The native peoples who create what is<sup>lxvii</sup>.

### **Good Medicine**

1

What was, and is, and is to come  
Is not beyond understanding  
But sitting across the room.  
Given any two, it is the constant third,  
Special but not spectral:

The *between*<sup>lxviii</sup>  
That beckons from another's eyes,  
Not thing or being  
But relationship,  
A domain whose variables  
Rise from interactions  
And fall when we slip  
In betrayals.

This passage lies  
Through others' eyes.

2

This passage is a tunnel<sup>lxix</sup>  
With ancient trails to other rooms  
Where by trials and ordeals  
We try out our ideals  
Such as they are:  
*A great catch,*  
*A sharing of bread,*  
*A send-off for the dead.*

Above, the martins throng the Spirit Mound<sup>lxx</sup>—

Not souls, but birds

Who know where insects can be found.

So are creeds—

The high aerobatic acts

Made of deftly soldered speculations:

The flux of words.

3

Worship defines the object of devotion;

Then canon follows revelation.

Given the ritual or rationale,

We choose tradition or reformation.

Either names the nameless;

This is not a person, place or thing,

Only the *between*

Summoning us to action;

That ties and re-ties us to the given,

For we are gifts of the survivors

By whom and from whom we rise.

4

You are the gift<sup>lxxi</sup>,

The gift of survivors,

The *gift outright*<sup>lxxii</sup>

Of land and family and culture.

Despite your wishes,

You are the gift.

*Attend. Learn what was given.*

*Give and respond and listen.*

You are the gift,  
Lifted from the human and animal,  
The beautiful and terrible.  
Despite their wishes,  
You are the gift.

*Hear then the holy message:  
There is no easier passage<sup>lxxiii</sup>.*

***Ubuntu***<sup>lxxiv</sup>

All who cross the continent,  
Meet every human tribe,  
Climb the great divide  
To look behind our human history,  
And make the thousand portages  
Across the wide cerebrum  
Learn to see.

Sometimes in a rush,  
Sometimes a thready course  
Of bottlenecks<sup>lxxv</sup> and self-deceptions,  
We make but one river.  
One mind, one people,  
One living and one cosmos<sup>lxxvi</sup>  
Made of many,  
We learn to see.

## **The Interpreter**

How can we trust her<sup>lxxvii</sup>?  
She could call a strike on our position  
And we would never know.  
Captive of one people,  
Bought by another—  
Like words, stolen on pretext  
Of being loaned--  
She finds us artichokes<sup>lxxviii</sup>  
By poking sticks in trails of meadow-mice.  
Is it in fact her gift or something *she* would never eat,  
Some joke to see *us* eat it out of season?  
Yet only by looking through her eyes can we see.

## **Conceptions**

Concepts always betray the facts<sup>lxxix</sup>.  
The notions of a bear  
From paw prints left in barren tracts  
Or stories natives share  
  
Of vengeful giants snapping necks  
Like beans; or drawings scaled  
To the micron; or muskeg specks  
From tundra cores detailed  
  
To prove an ancestral beast  
Stopped for halibut;  
Or image showing the least—  
A follicle of hair, cross-cut—

Miss the black maw  
Of oblivion.

### **Contraptions**

With hinges, bridges, booms,  
Sockets, needles, ropy sinews,  
Rib-vaulted rooms, gliding puzzle-joints  
Musky remedies, perfumes, knives, inks  
Bloody drinks, fabric of hide,  
And necklaces of teeth and claws  
Worked out from the slaughtered beast,  
We wipe the ochre from our faces,  
Speak to the departing spirit;  
Rub out faint lines of construction  
And other bloody traces  
Of how we learn technique.

### **Counterpoint**

Art, always confrontational,  
Shows all knowledge is relational.  
Crawlers creeping on all fours,  
We make our way on metaphors.  
Assault both from the rear and frontal<sup>lxxx</sup>  
Compels us to be contrapuntal<sup>lxxxi</sup>.

There are no town limits here.  
We anchor our craft from fear  
The churning swells of voices  
Will tip out our devices.  
Guiding art or how we think  
We use images or sink.

## Props

1

Supporting action are the qualities of things,  
Forty sets a second changed on a stage<sup>lxxxii</sup>  
That is the world, whose openings--  
All played within, there being no without--  
Present reality, arriving all the rage,  
Leaving at the side door, bundled with provisions.  
As for the red wheelbarrow<sup>lxxxiii</sup>,  
And Experience --wide or narrow—  
In matters of this sort  
What we know is by report.

2

Self-knowledge, perfect form or beauty,  
Like alchemy, eternity, and equity;  
The Grail, and checks forever payable,  
Though neither real nor achievable  
Are worthy in that what we learn  
Along the way is a true prize to earn:

That it's better to inquire<sup>lxxxiv</sup>;  
That oxygen feeds fire<sup>lxxxv</sup>;  
That deeds remembered are immortal<sup>lxxxvi</sup>  
And liberty's a holy portal<sup>lxxxvii</sup>.

*Accept that what we take*

*For things is what we make.*

## Partners

1

What's given simply is too vast  
For us to take more than we make.  
The universe has us outclassed<sup>lxxxviii</sup>.

A witness wants to be believed,  
But in passage to the report  
Intention frames what is conceived;

Though truth may always be our aim,  
It is embedded in belief.  
Someone must work to clear its name,

A partner for the passage through the dark:  
A Krishna, Enkidu, Nestor, or Clark.

2

The only partner I have had in this  
To wait, to listen, and to see me through,  
Unknown, yet inches from this line, is you;  
Yet I might know you well enough to kiss--  
With each always purchase of the other,  
With each a continent to understand,  
With each a hidden people, hidden land  
Sharing all lines and the quilted cover  
Of the Earth, now surveyed;  
Waiting to be remade.

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<sup>ii</sup> THIS IS PROBABLY MORE THAN YOU WANT TO KNOW. This is the annotated version of the poetry in *Finding A Purchase* for those who want explanations. I am not trying to spot-weld a

meaning to every phrase, but I would have you know rather than guess, however wisely, what I intended. The title poem is a braid of three strands: the Dewey Decimal System, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the physiology and philosophy of cognition. Susie's graduate work on library science was interrupted by babies. She loved libraries and, like me, wanted to be a "sponge," as she said, for all they had to teach. She also had a lifelong interest in American history, and particularly the interactions of explorers and inhabitants during the expedition of the Louisiana Purchase, sponsored by Mr. Jefferson, whose letters she helped to summarize when she worked summers at National Archives. Her graduate study on the education of gifted children was interrupted by sickness, but we had a thirty-year conversation about how children think and learn. This poem braids these subjects by using the Decimal system for organization, the *Journals* for the description of the journey, and the findings of cognitive science for the explorers' discoveries.

- iii Confidence levels are determined by the scatter of events.
- iv Siamese fighting fish are sluggish creatures who live in shallow, muddy water and supplement the oxygen from their gills with gulps of air. When two males meet or when a male sees his reflection in a mirror, they become colorful and aggressive. We need to upgrade our idea of what is *natural* to a "beta version" that includes such performances and artifices.
- v This ancient piece of art was pictured in a *National Geographic*. The phrase "calm above much trembling" is my most concise statement of the tension between two scales of observation. The line "all that glitters is not ornament" turns a phrase and also echoes the first line of an early poem. The first Prologue to the *Good Samaritan* cantata (1968) began: "The poet's song an ornamental glitter, say? /A shiny, a laboriously polished bauble . . ." I sent this poem to Susie for her comments before we performed the cantata at Kleber Kaserne.
- vi This was originally on a birthday card for Susie. Later, I included it in *Profit of Doom*.
- vii Susie always looked up at the sky. She loved to watch it. It was one of the many small pleasures and discoveries in the day, like small children, birds roosting in a tree, and unusual stones, that kept depression, anger, sorrow and ugliness at bay.
- viii A small, wooden button is attached to the newel post of a staircase when the mortgage is paid.
- ix This poem is extracted from *Crooked E's and Other Swell Ideas*. I present it here in the company of other meditations on permanence and transience.

x

**CONTENTS      DEWEY**

***CATEGORY (my version of Dewey's system)***

		<i>Push off the Perogues      (100)</i>
		<i>Philosophy</i>
<i>Good medicine</i>	(200)	<i>Religion</i>
<i>Ubuntu</i>	(300)	<i>Community</i>
<i>The Interpreter</i>	(400)	<i>Language</i>
<i>Conceptions</i>	(500)	<i>Science</i>
<i>Contraptions</i>	(600)	<i>Technology</i>
<i>Counterpoint</i>	(700)	<i>Arts</i>
<i>Props</i>	(800)	<i>Drama and literature</i>
<i>Partners</i>	(900)	<i>History</i>

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<sup>xi</sup> **NOTES ON THE PICTURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS** I am not much of an artist or photographer, but I believe that even my crude images enhance the work. Here are the images shown:

- Push off the Perogues*            The bow of a wooden boat  
   A magnified image of a sarcodine  
   A dish antenna  
   The rose-pattern coffee service that  
  Susie bought us in Germany.
- <sup>xii</sup> *Good Medicine*            Cave painting of wild cattle, one  
   is marked with an arrow to show  
   where to shoot.
- Ubuntu*                        Image of brain and terrain. On the  
  left, the colors suggest cerebral  
   arteries. On the right, they join  
   streams in a river's watershed.
- Conceptions*                Skull of a brown bear
- Contraptions*                One of several branches that Susie and  
   picked up around beaver dams to show  
  our students.

Finally, the patterns found in the copies of this work I made for Bill, Rob, and my sister were colored by Susie. They are the last crafts she made.

The word "pirogue" was usually spelled "perogue" by Lewis and Clark in their journals.

Throughout the poem, each set of lines or stanzas contains 92 syllables, the number of different chromosomes per cell of a speaker and a listener, or 23 from each of their four parents.

So many "lines" connect us: genetics, business, politics, and trade, telephone, evolution (exemplified by the 9-2 pattern in fibrils of sperm, bronchial cilia and protists), product lines, expository lines, musical lines, daily pleasantries, and lines of work and lines of thought (disciplines or ways of knowing) –some of which demand that we reshape ourselves for their less than entirely worthy purposes. Personally, I have tried to avoid lines of work that require dissimulation, manipulation, sycophancy and self-delusion. It was arguably not always in my best interest. Of course, ultimately, one cannot avoid absorption in some work, even if it is the determination to remain idle. One only achieves anything by becoming absorbed into it –even if only briefly. Even tinkerers (*bricoleurs* like me) must settle in one place to write a poem. But one's efforts must be well-directed.

Originally, there was an additional set in this section; because it seemed to need such a long gloss, I put it into the endnotes. Perhaps it should go on into the trash. Transparent it isn't. All this said, however, I can't yet bring myself to cut it:

<i>Where two meet there are always four;</i>	8
<i>Given ins and outs,</i>	5
<i>The takeovers and routs,</i>	6
<i>Though two may speak, listen for more.</i>	8
<i>On twisted pairs, or nine round two,</i>	8
<i>Phrase parallel or bowed,</i>	6

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<i>Pendent on taut speech,</i>	5
<i>Sometimes we only stay alive</i>	8
<i>With a line like "how do you do?"</i>	8
<i>Avoiding lines that misconstrue</i>	8
<i>Self and understanding</i>	6
<i>Means that when one makes a landing</i>	8
<i>No line is ever all you do.</i>	8

Instead of using this, however, I bring in the topic of lines again in the last movement, Partners, last stanza.

- <sup>xiii</sup> *Finding A Purchase* began as I was doing errands on May 17, 2007. Often when I am driving or waiting I recite my understandings about different subjects and also recite commonplaces that I enjoy recalling, the order of topics recited following the subject organization of the Dewey Decimal System. In a very modest way, in *Finding A Purchase* I emulate Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, also an expository poem and Pope's *Essay on Man*, which was one of the poems I would recite when Susie and I recited poems to each other. She asked me to repeat the lines about the "middling state." Story-poems are more common, but narrative structure for the whole work seems insufficient in a poem that means to deal with the nature of things, humanity and cognition. I do not want to use a huge speculative narrative with the sweep of the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, or the *Aeneid*. I want to stay close to my subject, avoid exaggeration, and avoid unnecessary narrative. Alas, no readers may be interested in such a thing, but the poem began itself and wanted finishing. Being a tinkerer, I obliged.
- <sup>xiv</sup> I take the subject seriously but acknowledge my grave limitations. Leon Kass writes of the "blessings of finitude," i.e. the courage, beauty, curiosity, achievement, and compassion that are generated by our realization of our limited lifetimes.
- <sup>xv</sup> My favorite reference about magnitudes is Kees Boeckle's *Cosmic View: The Universe in 40 Steps* (1957). My son, William L. Rose, however, has surpassed this in his GIS programming.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Our sensory witnesses have limitations. For example, retinal rods' peak response is calibrated to 490nm. Similarly, our associative and functional cortex and thalamic relay systems are limited. Percepts permitted by our attentive and orienting processes are limited. Concepts emerging from many connections across many ensembles are limited. Value systems such as those of various catecholamines also limit what we notice, conceive and understand by flooding us with strong dispositions. Similarly, we are limited by our reflexes and learned biases and stereotypes. All of these influences are the "revealers" to which I refer. Our knowing begins with their permission.

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- xvii A chittediddle is a katydid, also called a sawyer. The name comes from the journals of Lewis and Clark, who first heard them in the land of the Omahas (Mahars), a tribe decimated by smallpox, in July of 1804. I also take advantage of the double meanings of “saw” and “yarn.”
- xviii The rhyme comes from one of Susie’s favorite poems by Sara Teasdale, “Life has loveliness to sell,” about a child looking up “holding wonder like a cup.” The analogy is to dish telescopes, which gather light.
- xix The philosophical position, derived from Whewell, Fleck, James, Peirce, Bridgman and Dewey, is that what we know is our experience and the reported experiences of others. It is initially an operational kind of knowledge. When certain operations and measurements are taken under certain conditions, one can reliably predict the consequent experiences. In rule-based systems (mathematics, music, chess, gin rummy, mathematical logic, grammar, ideal gas model), the consequences are even more predictable. To speak of knowledge beyond experience is to mistake the nature of knowledge.
- xx It’s not an accident that the word “myst’ry” has a space in the middle. Like the hole in a doughnut, it’s the unknown to which we refer with a word. Once made into a word, this doughnut hole functions grammatically as if it really were something. This is where problems begin. Needless to say, I disagree with Huston Smith about the importance of mysticism and agree with Marianne Moore that complexity is not admirable in itself nor is its insistence “the measure of achievement.” Subjects like “dark complexity” and “high mysticism” are notable for their lack of substance. Having said this, I stand guilty as accused by my advisor, Dr. Barry Beyer, of “liking complications.” Susie was also irritated by my circumlocutions and mystifications. She always hid her irritation, however.
- xxi Concepts are contingent upon experience. They change as experience becomes truer. Isaac Asimov’s essay, *The Relativity of Truth*, explains that the truth of a concept such as the flatness of the Earth depends upon usage. For trips of a very short distance, flatness is a workable concept. The concept does not work for transcontinental travel, however. As we gain better understanding of our experiences, our concepts become both more general and more detailed. What is meant today by “atom” is quite a different concept from what Dalton had in mind when he tried to explain the mixing of gases in the atmosphere.
- xxii I’m referring to bone, not being stoned. There are many subjects I have made no attempt to understand: sports and most leisure activities, rock music, addictive substances, sexual adventures, mosh pits and other mob events, stocks and bonds, economics and financial matters and interior decorating. No *double-entendres* to any of these subjects (and many others, for my ignorance is broad) are intended.
- xxiii See Ogden Nash’s poem, “There is a knocking in the skull . . .”
- xxiv This is Marvin Minsky’s designation for neural ensembles that work like programming applications (applets). See his *Society of Mind*. The idea that each of us is many or “a city,” as William Carlos Williams said, is an old idea. I suggest that each of us is a continent of many peoples to be explored and mapped.
- xxv Benjamin Whorf, Edward Sapir, Colin Turnbull, & Edward Hall have all written eloquently about the interrelationships of language, culture and knowledge. The Whorfian hypothesis that linguistic structure may predispose the development of concepts is considered unsupported, but I still think about it and, in different forms, it continues to come up in professional meetings. In a larger sense, it should be obvious that the foundations of language and culture

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were created by “native peoples,” particularly Neolithic peoples. So also, the neural ensembles and tracts of the cerebral cortex create what is in our consciousness.

- <sup>xxvi</sup> This is the *Enterzwischen* described by Martin Buber. I’m suggesting that it may be quantifiable.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Lewis-Williams and Pearce (*Inside the Neolithic Mind*) argue that images such as tunnels have a basis in both archeology and neurology.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Clark wrote about the martins swarming on the lee side of Spirit Mound (in South Dakota) on August 24, 1804. He also commented that he supposed that native Americans may have gotten their idea about departed souls congregating on the Mound from observing the martins.
- <sup>xxix</sup> This is condensed from the program notes to my opera/musical, *The Books of Daniel*, originally presented as a benefit for a student scholarship from the Loudoun County Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa. It finishes this section on religion with a little sermon.
- <sup>xxx</sup> From Robert Frost’s poem, *The Gift Outright*, beginning “The land was ours before we were the land’s. . .” was what he recited at the Kennedy inauguration. Not only the land but also our physiology and cognition are ours before we really understand them.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> As there was no short-cut across the continent, no Northwest Passage, and, as Euclid said, as there is no shortcut to understanding mathematics, so there is no escape from being recipients of gifts, biological and cultural. We are not self-made. We arise, biologically and culturally, from survivors. One reason for writing this poem is to make a few statements about our knowledge, our limitations, and our relationships to each other. These statements are obvious but difficult to accept. Indeed, our “never-sated appetite for self-delusion” assures this (See reference to Frederick Crews in the endnotes to movement 900.) I would, however, prefer accepting them to concocting elaborate stories or systems from my unwillingness to accept them. Ultimately, there was no natural Northwest Passage, stories and hopes to the contrary notwithstanding. Telling ourselves elaborate, exaggerated yarns about race, religion, epistemology, cognition, and the nature and origins of humanity simply stall more productive efforts.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> As I understand it, this African word, “Obuntu” or “Ubuntu” is a Nguni word defined as “humanity.” It means that my well-being is linked to yours. It refers to reconciliation. I am a human being because I belong, participate and share with others. There is no solitary human being. See Allen’s biography of Desmond Tutu, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*. This is also a familiar concept to some Native American tribes. This South African concept is quite different from our idea of reconciliation. In our culture, two might be reconciled but remain self-sufficient and insular. Needless to say, the subsequent commercial uses of this term are irrelevant here.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> By one account, one of the earliest bottlenecks for early *Homo sapiens* reduced the population to about 20,000.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> The speculative notion I have about “one mind” will not be obvious without another tedious note, so here it is. I’m not thinking of Emerson’s ONE SOUL. My working definition of *soul* is that it refers to a “whole-hearted” effort or approach. Examples are team-efforts,

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performances of all kinds (stage, surgery, aerobatics) and acts of uncommon decency. This is not, however, what I mean by “one mind.” In using this term I’m wondering whether there is not a sense in which all human attempts to understand nature (including self knowledge) are shared by all humans. Now, of course this doesn’t actually happen; that’s why I say it’s speculative. Yet every time students go to a *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* or read Epictetus or use a dictionary or apply Boyle’s law in a lab or listen to Churchill speaking during the Battle of Britain or listen to the *Eroica* or Paul Simon & Ladysmith or Sweet Honey in the Rock are they not sharing this mind? That its neural ensembles are widely distributed and often inaccessible makes it no different than many brains disabled by disease. To the extent that intercommunications, whether traditional or electronic, improve connections does it not become more unified, purposive and sure of itself? Does improvement of its integration not make it better able to understand its internal differences, discrepancies and incompatibilities? Admittedly this is an analogy, but I present a poem, not a treatise.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Heracleitus: “the living share one cosmos.”

<sup>xxxvi</sup> I like the fact that the beginning of this sentence can serve either as the appositive of “we” or the direct object of “to see.”

<sup>xxxvii</sup> This poem about Sacagawea is also about language, its limitations and the left-cerebral interpretive system of cognition. This system sums up a situation and provides the conceptual context for our actions. That it may do so through bias, stereotype, and impulse as readily as through accurate assessments is a reason to question our impressions and impulses. Susie and I enjoyed a play about Sacagawea presented in Williamsburg.

<sup>xxxviii</sup>

See Lewis’s entry for April 9, 1805. It describes Sacagawea’s hunt for wild artichokes. As she points with a stick, so the language student must learn to point and name in another language, always uncertain of the exact referents.

<sup>xxxix</sup> The poems for categories 400 through 900 are *all* about “facts.” But all facts that do not simply register sensations or report measurements are also conceptual and intentional. Levels of conceptualization vary. Your immediate impression of a wounded grizzly running towards you is something like “threat: run!” This is a low-order fact. A theorist (the personification of the Interpreter) seeks facts to support an opinion. Even though she talks about such palpable matters as tracks, spoor and dentition, she is assembling a concept of “urosity” or “bearness.” A romanticist seeks facts to support his feelings. Goethe spoke with scorn of “those whom theories convince.” A technologist seeks facts that can be applied to problems; indeed, he may see the bear *in terms of* the problems. In solving medical problems, Dr. Groopman (*How Doctors Think*) says that physicians anchor their diagnoses on initial impressions about the patient and subsequently only seek support for the initial diagnosis. This method seems to work more than 75% of the time. Dweck, who studied “learned helplessness” (later generalized to the “attribution error”) demonstrated that children’s concepts of their low intelligence led them both to conclude that they could not do well in school and then to perform in ways that justified their beliefs about themselves. Finding the irreducible, immediate, factual contents of experience requires us to realize the roles played by our cerebral tribes of interpreters and conceivers and epicureans and to summon trusted partners who can take *us* as what *they* make and then invite us into their experience.

<sup>xl</sup> We are confronted by what we can and cannot see, including information from both the occipital visual systems and frontal intentional systems of cognition. Inspiration, as Avery Crawley says in my book, *The Profit of Doom*, comes from capacious inhalation –being willing to take in the difficult, the unmanageable and painful information in order to make something from it. I call what I do “folk art” because I do it outside an academic or

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commercial context –where I can take deeper breaths. Even folk art attempts to embrace and transform the difficult aspects of our experience.

- xii Any system of counterpoint gives control over many voices. In the graphic arts, the work is framed or set apart, the rules operating within the frame, whether a painting or an installation, providing a controlled space for disparate forces and components to interact. The American Constitution gives control over many opinions within a system of forces checked, balanced and resolved. The primary and higher systems of perception construe our awareness of a world of objects and events from a multitude of disparate signals. The control systems of engines, political theories, and the arts derive from the perceptual and conceptual control systems of cognition. This is why Bach's *Art of Fugue* is about more than music.
- xiii All of Gerard Edelman's ideas about *qualia* may not be necessary to his otherwise convincing description of the nature of consciousness as a kind of performance being set up for us many times a minute by the interactions of cortex, thalamus, key nuclei and what he calls "value systems" of secretions which, like the various catecholamines, send our emotions, with cognition in tow, cascading down various tracks. See *Wider than the Sky*. These frequently changed (perhaps every 25 msec) and continually adjusted conscious states (*qualia*) are the basis for what we call experience and reality.
- xiii This refers to W.C. Williams' poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, and his dictum from *Paterson*: "no ideas but in things." While I agree with this, I must also acknowledge that because of our Interpreter, our corticocortical pathways, and other features of our cognition, it is also true that things cannot be dissected from our experience and therefore our ideas of them. We know things because we act upon them and in the same action probe them to learn more. The sensing, acting, probing, remembering, learning and knowing are constituents of both the experience and the idea. In taking the view that what we know is our experience of things rather than things-in-themselves, I probably differ with Williams. Experiences are matters of sampling, transducing, associating, predicting and conceiving, i.e. taking and making. The simpler the experience seems to us, the more likely it is that we have made it so. We improve in our understanding of things by modifying our ways of experience. It's not that a thing doesn't exist on its own but that we only know it through our sensori-motor-conceptual experience. This experience depends upon our skill, measurements, tools, language and concepts with respect to the thing. These features of experience give us the properties of the thing –the props in all senses: supports, properties, stage materials. These props enable us to stage the world from moment to moment.
- xliv One reason that these ideas are neither real nor achievable is that they are usually stated in absolute terms. Unconditional equity would be impossible to achieve, for example, because it could not be arranged for all people to have equity with respect to all matters. If the earth's surface were equitably divided for all humans, most would receive a plot of the sea. If only the dry land were equitably divided, many would go to deserts and icebergs. When we use words like equitable *relative to some goal*, however, they can guide us to make good reforms. For example, we might consider the goal of more equity in available housing, etc. The same can be said of "eternity." It is obvious that human bodies are not built for eternity, but it *is* possible to improve the human condition by extending life expectancy. Self-knowledge, eternity, equity, and other ideals lead us to inquire and learn. This is their value.
- xlv This comes from a statement by Socrates: "*There are many things I do not understand, but that we should be better, braver and less helpless if we were to inquire than we should be if we*

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*engaged in the idle fancy that there is no knowing and that one need not inquire, this is a proposition upon which I am prepared to fight.” (paraphrased)*

- <sup>xlvi</sup> The experiences of Lavoisier, Mme. Lavoisier, Priestly, Hooke and Boyle transformed the alchemy of Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon into chemistry. Their experiences were constrained by replications, calibrated instruments and repeated measurements. The descriptions of their experiences and their findings were studied like scripts and performed in hundreds of settings. Just as the experience of how to handle fire was refined from one generation to the next, so the experiences of chemistry were refined. Now the forbidding mathematics of theoretical chemistry seems to defy the claim that it is a refinement of experiences, but it is.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> I was thinking about how to define “eternal.” Can we examine this religious concept to discover anything worth retaining? I don’t like simply to dismiss religious ideas. They are *about something* even though they are problematical. Indeed, my whole *Marginal Notes* was devoted to retelling certain religious stories of particular value –stories about *the Good Samaritan, Daniel, the founding of America, the Flood, the Blind Beggar, The Sower, and the family of Agammemnon*. At the very least, “eternal” means “remembered” or “worth cherishing.” Whether the great deed was at Roncevalles or the upper room, those who were there took pains to have it remembered. The fact that the content and even the meaning of the story have changed is perhaps of less importance than the effort of preservation itself. The religious group is always more important than the object of devotion. After all, the definition of the object comes from the group, and, like any other concept, it changes, notwithstanding the gyrations of creeds and canons. Any religion that lasts will continue to grow outside its canon. Its traditions and interpretations are the religious equivalent to the modifications of theory and concepts which go on in science, but unless they reach the level of a heresy or reformation, these traditional interpretations are just considered *plenary canon* at best or devotional, non-canonical and edifying sayings. See F.F. Bruce *The Canon of Scripture*.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> The social ideal of equity, like the goals of eternal life, self-knowledge, and creating or finding gold, is to be approached, not achieved. In approaching such imaginary or visionary aims we learn other things, like the balance of powers needed in government --and inventions like chemistry, *chansons de geste*, and the process of systematic inquiry. These inventions are not secondary to ideals. They are what ideals generate. Emma Lazarus says that Liberty lifts her lamp “beside the golden door.” Despite our feelings about the homeless, the gypsies, the diseased and wretched, and despite the inequities that lie ahead of them, the door, lit by a lamp like Schweitzer’s lantern on the dock at Lamberene, is still open. The ideal resists corrosion. Despite the restrictions imposed upon us by the nature of cognition, these inventions show what imagination can achieve. As William Carlos Williams said,

“The flower dies down  
and rots away  
But there is a hole  
in the bottom of the bag.

It is the imagination  
which cannot be fathomed.  
It is through this hole  
that we escape.”

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Ideals remain active as long as our imagination continues to see through them. See also the comments in *Profit of Doom* about Avery Crawley's museum of inventions.

<sup>xlix</sup> Not only are we outclassed by the size and power of the universe; we are literally out-classed by the inestimable number of categories, concepts and patterns that potentially exist in the universe. Such comments as "Accept that what we take/For things is what we make" may lead to the vapid remark that "nothing's real." In fact, nothing is *more real* than the experience of that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands." (I John 1:1) This is also the kind of experience that Wordsworth recounts in *Tintern Abbey* and that Faraday had, observing an electrical phenomenon in the laboratory, when he exclaimed, "Oh that it would go on!" (paraphrased). When all our sensory and cognitive witnesses are fully engaged to take in experience and process it through the percepts and concepts provided by our bodies, we are very close to happiness as defined by Aristotle, *viz.* "the full exercise of our powers along the lines of excellence." It doesn't get any more real. That we do not get "outside" knowing or outside the skull is not something to lament in exaggerated tones (or tomes) but rather it is an understanding to maintain in lively awareness. We are always, as pilots say, living "on instruments," the instruments being perception and conception. We do not get outside them: they are the conditions for cognition. To speak of knowing without percepts and concepts is like speaking of seamanship without the sea or ships.

Remaining alert to the nature and ranges of the readings from our instruments keeps us from being too easily persuaded by them, as we are when we act from impulse or prejudice, for example. We are less quick to say that our experiences are "real" or "the way things are" and more likely to be skeptical and to seek corroboration. Remaining alert to our instruments helps us to restrain speculation and seek moderate courses of action. All instruments require maintenance, calibration and attentive use. Taking our concepts and percepts for granted can be as dangerous as disregarding an altimeter or weighing saltpeter on unzeroed scales.. One need only consider such concepts as *race, gender, divine right, geocentric, Arianism, jihad, crusade, segregation, free market, miasma, phlogiston, ether, and atom* or such percepts as *field of view, contrast, relative speed, perspective, frequency, and duration* to realize that these are tools that deserve at least as much care and attention as the lawn mower we pull out every spring.

<sup>1</sup> Verification requires peer review and replication of findings. Often the replication leads to a simpler way of explaining the findings. There are other kinds of partnership, such as that between the theorist like Priestley or Maxwell and the empiricist like Hooke or Faraday. The partnership of the hubris-afflicted Gilgamesh with his wild friend Enkidu brought about just the kind of correction that is always needed when leaders see themselves as a class apart rather than as a temporary executive function whose most important working-requirements are compassion and wisdom. After writing the poem, I came across this comment in an article by Frederick Crews in the March 2007 issue of *The Skeptical Inquirer*: "*I suggest that there is no such thing as deep knowledge, in the sense of insight so compelling that it needs no validation. There is only knowledge, period. It is recognizable not by its air of holiness or its emotional appeal but by its capacity to pass the most demanding scrutiny of well-informed people who have no prior investment in confirming it. A politics of sorts, neither leftist nor rightist, follows from this understanding. If knowledge can be certified only by a social process of peer review, we ought to do what we to foster communities of uncompromised experts That means actively resisting guru-ism, intellectual cliquishness, guilt assuaging double standards, and, needless to say, disdain for the very concept of objectivity...*" (Volume 31, Issue 2, p.30).

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Truth-making or trueing up our ideas can only be done in a community, no matter how great the genius who originates the ideas. Furthermore, the studio of nature ultimately compels us to work together if we are to grow in understanding. When Niels Bohr realized that he could not simultaneously think of his son in terms of love and justice he compared the difficulty to simultaneously holding in mind the figure and ground of pictures like the familiar vase-face. From these observations came his concept of complementarity. Methodological problems, according to Heisenberg, prevented one from simultaneously measuring speed and position of particles, and wave-and-particle duality was a perceptual artifact rather than the way things were. Multiple observers are needed if we are to have any hope of understanding complementary events. Even self-knowledge, which can only be approximated, requires others. These others are as often preachers, poets, novelists, musicians, dancers and painters as they are cognitive scientists, and this is why we need a “social process of peer review,” such as Crews describes.

The “witness” is all of our perceptual and conceptual apparatus. We can behold no more than it reveals. We badly need other frames of reference, an escape from our own skulls, but it’s hard to get any free passage beyond the mind’s territory, although we make some progress by learning other languages, such as maths. What we most need, however, are partners—others who verify our work and validate our claims. By them, we gain the height and change of scale to see beyond ourselves. And by those other partners, whose love we cannot value too much, its worth being “unknown although its height be taken,” we come down in scale to see within others—a territory also beyond ourselves. So, through partners in both verification and empathy, through community, we find a way to get around our own intentions and our self-embedded truths. These two paths, understanding and compassion, together deliver us from our own limitations, while we deliver others in the same ways—even if they are only strangers who later happen upon something we made long ago, like this poem.

- ii To these famous partners from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Gilgamesh Epic*, *Iliad*, and Lewis and Clark expedition, I add Susan Irene Bruch Rose (“Irene Brooks”), because I was always composing and writing for her.
- iii To be able to take the world differently—to grasp how things are and to act wisely on this basis—you must put in the time and work to make and examine all of your connections to the world. This work of learning, synthesis, understanding and compassion ideally should precede decision-making and action. Animals react; humans perform. If we construct the world from unexamined prejudices, we will also take it and act upon it daily in the same way. Those whom we most honor, however, have first learned to understand and empathize; then they have learned how to put together one wise performance after another. This is the aim of education.

Forty years ago, I included an early version of this poem in a paper for a college philosophy course. I sent a copy of it to Susie. She didn’t know what to make of it. Neither did Professor Clark. And now, neither do I.

- iii This last set is made of earlier poems that I have selected for consideration under the same nine categories. Here’s a brief summary:

100 *Deflections*        The snow image returns from *Much understanding is learning what to ignore*. Allusions are made to various physical speculations—multi-verses, strings, altered views of time. As in other attempts to gain purchase or even a perch, however, our human achievements remain tentative, and our personal lives, temporary.

200 *Progress* We are responsible for our conceptions of what is dear and holy and worth cherishing.

300 *Crooked E’s and other Swell Ideas* is about speculation, economics, and community. It ranges from the Enron scandal to the gin riots (the Gordon riots of 1780 in London), the derivatives market, and the tulip bubble in Holland, weaving back and forth in history in the same way that speculation drunkenly searches for the best chance. I don’t understand economics. Ezra Pound, ranting about usury, probably

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didn't either, but when he wrote "learn from the green world what can be thy place in scaled invention or true artistry" he showed that he did understand about community. In the midst of empires that set themselves as centers and standards for the rest of the world is this drunken, unseemly, speculative enterprise. Somehow, it seemed fitting to end this litany of assaults on community with a dangling preposition.

400 *Patch this to his midbrain* This is a science fiction poem about thought control in semi-monastic community of the future, where an order of workers live by a Rule that turns *Te Deum* to tedium. A worker whose output shows unacceptable deviations undergoes a mental correction. The technician who modifies his thoughts is a kind of *über*-linguist.

500 *Wooly Bears* contrasts the track of a natural procession with the results of human activities.

600 *Landmark Shopping Center* is from *Profit of Doom*. I wrote it when we lived in Kent Towers, across Shirley highway from the shopping center. Sometimes it seems that ugly structures and rusting machinery will lie around the planet long after humans are gone. As I wrote this note, however, almost forty years later, plans were underway to knock Landmark down, but it still stands.

700 *Death Benefits* Just as the *Betta Version* poem insisted that artifice is simply another natural phenomenon, this poem reminds us that no matter how natural art may appear, it is artificially arranged. We rejoice in believing it to be real, when we know it isn't. Perhaps we willingly "suspend disbelief" because we are comforted by the complete and understandable world presented to us—unlike the world in which we search uncertainly for what we need and face the loss of all that we cherish.

800 *Teak Walker* While *Props* used images of stagecraft to talk about cognition, *Teak* is a three-act play about a complex young man with his own ideas about moving up in the world and getting justice for those who are dear to him.

900 *Seeing Regis and Kathie Lee on a Bus in Richmond* The "partners" in this poem are television personalities. More broadly, they are men, in the first section, and women, in the second section. Their images are the output from a home appliance that, like our other conveniences, makes our lives easier. Unlike blenders, cement mixers, or buses with televisions, however, the TV hosts provide narrative and meaning to a daily life that might otherwise be difficult to explain or express. Beginning with a faint echo of Milton ("Of man's first disobedience and the fruit."), I suggest that women understand this appliance better than men do. The reference to feet and light is Psalm 119:105.

*Sunday Afternoon* was written when we still lived at Rock Springs, where we found great pleasure in each other, our sons, and in life for 28 years.

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**

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This was the first work. It concerns the central problem: compassion. The music grew from a composition I wrote for Susie 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.

liv Categories in the Dewey Decimal System are: 100 (Philosophy), 200 (Religion), 300 (Human sciences), 400 (Language), 500 (Science), 600 (Technology), 700 (Arts), 800 (Literature) and 900 (History). Irene Brooks had a double major in library science and history. Her story is given in another book, *Primary Sources*. She is the fictional author of *Finding A Purchase*. Susan Irene Rose (nee *Bruch*) was my model for Irene Brooks; she might have pursued library science and research on Jefferson and Lewis & Clark if I had not come along. I evoke the Lewis and Clark expedition in order to launch this journey of understanding, to honor Jefferson and to honor Susie, who was so fascinated by him and by the period of western explorations. In *Primary Sources*, I imagine what she might have done if she had pursued her research interests instead of marrying me and forever becoming my listener

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The word "piroque" was usually spelled "perogue" by Lewis and Clark in their journals.

Throughout the poem, each set of lines or stanzas contains 92 syllables, the number of different chromosomes per cell of a speaker and a listener, or 23 from each of their four parents.

So many "lines" connect us: genetics, business, politics, and trade, telephone, evolution (exemplified by the fibrils of sperm, bronchial cilia and protists), product lines, expository lines, musical lines, daily pleasantries, and lines of work and lines of thought (disciplines or ways of knowing) –some of which demand that we reshape ourselves for their less than entirely worthy purposes. Personally, I have tried to avoid lines of work that require dissimulation, manipulation, sycophancy and self-delusion. It was arguably not always in my best interest. Of course, ultimately, one cannot avoid absorption in some work, even if it is the determination to remain idle. One only achieves anything by becoming absorbed into it –even if only briefly. Even tinkerers (*bricoleurs* like me) must settle in one place to write a poem. But one's efforts must be well-directed.

Originally, there was an additional set in this section; because it seemed to need such a long gloss, I put it into the endnotes. Perhaps it should go on into the trash. Transparent it isn't. All this said, however, I can't yet bring myself to cut it:

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<i>Given ins and outs,</i>	5	
<i>The takeovers and routs,</i>	6	
<i>Though two may speak, listen for more.</i>	8	
<i>On twisted pairs, or nine round two,</i>	8	
<i>Phrase parallel or bowed,</i>	6	
<i>Pendent on taut speech,</i>	5	
<i>Sometimes we only stay alive</i>	8	
<i>With a line like "how do you do?"</i>	8	
<i>Avoiding lines that misconstrue</i>	8	
<i>Self and understanding</i>		6
<i>Means that when one makes a landing</i>	8	
<i>No line is ever all you do.</i>	8	

- lvi *Finding A Purchase* began as I was doing errands on May 17, 2007. Often when I am driving or waiting I recite my understandings about different subjects and also recite commonplaces that I enjoy recalling, the order of topics recited following the subject organization of the Dewey Decimal System. In a very modest way, in *Finding A Purchase* I emulate Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, also an expository poem. Story-poems are more common, but narrative structure for the whole work seems insufficient in a poem to deal with the nature of things, including humanity and cognition. I do not want to use a huge speculative narrative with the sweep of the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, or the *Aeneid*. I want to stay close to my subject, avoid exaggeration, and avoid unnecessary narrative. Alas, no readers may be interested in such a thing, but the poem began itself and wanted finishing. Being a tinkerer, I obliged.
- lvii I take the subject seriously but acknowledge my grave limitations. Leon Kass writes of the "blessings of finitude," i.e. the courage, beauty, curiosity, achievement, and compassion that are generated by our realization of our limited lifetimes.
- lviii My favorite reference about magnitudes is Kees Boeckle's *Cosmic View: The Universe in 40 Steps* (1957).
- lix Our sensory witnesses have limitations. For example, retinal rods' peak response is calibrated to 490nm. Similarly, our associative and functional cortex and thalamic relay systems are limited. Percepts permitted by our attentive and orienting processes are limited. Concepts emerging from many connections across many ensembles are limited. Value systems such as those of various catecholamines also limit what we notice, conceive and understand by flooding us with strong dispositions. Similarly, we are limited by our reflexes and learned biases and stereotypes. All of these influences are the "revealers" to which I refer. Our knowing begins with their permission.
- lx A chittediddle is a katydid, also called a sawyer. The name comes from the journals of Lewis and Clark, who first heard them in the land of the Omahas (Mahars), a tribe decimated by smallpox, in July of 1804.
- lxi The rhyme comes from one of Susie's favorite poems by E. Farjeon about a child looking up "holding wonder like a cup." The analogy is to dish telescopes, which gather light.
- lxii The philosophical position, derived from Whewell, Fleck, James, Peirce, Bridgman and Dewey, is that what we know is our experience and the reported experiences of others. It is initially an operational kind of knowledge. When certain operations and measurements are taken under certain conditions, one can reliably predict the consequent experiences. In rule-based systems (mathematics, music, chess, gin

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rummy, mathematical logic, grammar, ideal gas model), the consequences are even more predictable. To speak of knowledge beyond experience is to mistake the nature of knowledge.

- lxiii It's not an accident that mystery has a space in the middle. Like the hole in a doughnut, it's the unknown to which we refer with a word; once made into a word, it functions grammatically as if it were something. This is where some problems begin.
- lxiv Concepts are contingent upon experience. They change as experience becomes truer. Isaac Asimov's essay, *The Relativity of Truth*, explains that the truth of a concept such as the flatness of the Earth depends upon usage. For trips of a very short distance, flatness is a workable concept. The concept does not work for transcontinental travel, however. As we gain better understanding of our experiences, our concepts become both more general and more detailed. What is meant today by "atom" is quite a different concept from what Dalton had in mind when he tried to explain the mixing of gases in the atmosphere.
- lxv See Ogden Nash's poem, "There is a knocking.."
- lxvi This is Marvin Minsky's designation for neural ensembles that work like programming applications (applets). See his *Society of Mind*. The idea that each of us is many or "a city," as William Carlos Williams said, is an old idea. I suggest that each of us is a continent of many peoples to be explored and mapped.
- lxvii Benjamin Whorf, Edward Sapir, Colin Turnbull, & Edward Hall have all written eloquently about the interrelationships of language, culture and knowledge. The Whorfian hypothesis that linguistic structure may predispose the development of concepts is considered unsupported, but I still think about it. In a larger sense, it should be obvious that the foundations of language and culture were created by "native peoples," particularly Neolithic peoples. So also, the neural ensembles and tracts of the cerebral cortex create what is in our consciousness.
- lxviii This is the *Enterzwischen* described by Martin Buber.
- lxix Lewis-Williams and Pearce (*Inside the Neolithic Mind*) argue that images such as tunnels have a basis in both archeology and neurology.
- lxx Clark wrote about the martins swarming on the lee side of Spirit Mound (in South Dakota) on August 24, 1804.
- lxxi This is condensed from the notes to my opera/musical, *The Books of Daniel*, originally presented as a benefit for a student scholarship from the Loudoun County Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa.
- lxxii Robert Frost's poem, *The Gift Outright*, beginning "The land was ours before we were the land's. . ." was what he read at the Kennedy inauguration. Not only the land but also our physiology and cognition are ours before we really understand them.
- lxxiii As there was no short-cut across the continent, no Northwest Passage, and, as Euclid said, as there is no shortcut to understanding mathematics, so there is no escape from being recipients of gifts, biological and cultural. We are not self-made. We arise, biologically and culturally, from survivors. One reason for writing this poem is to make a few statements about our knowledge, our limitations, and our relationships to each other. These statements are obvious but difficult to accept. I would prefer accepting them to concocting elaborate stories or systems from my unwillingness to accept them. Ultimately, there was no natural Northwest Passage, stories and hopes to the contrary notwithstanding. Telling ourselves elaborate, exaggerated yarns about race, religion, epistemology, cognition, and the nature and origins of humanity stall more productive efforts.

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<sup>lxxiv</sup> As I understand it, this African word, “Obuntu” or “Ubuntu” (from Bantu?) means that my well-being is linked to yours. It refers to reconciliation. I am a human being because I belong, participate and share with others. This is also a familiar concept to some Native American tribes. This South African concept is quite different from our idea of reconciliation. In our culture, two might be reconciled but remain self-sufficient and insular.

<sup>lxxv</sup> By one account, one of the earliest bottlenecks for early *Homo sapiens* reduced the population to about 20,000.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Heracleitus: “the living share one cosmos.”

<sup>lxxvii</sup> This poem about Sacagawea is also about language and its limitations and the left-cerebral interpretive system of cognition. This system sums up a situation and provides the conceptual context for our actions. That it may do so through bias, stereotype, and impulse as readily as through accurate assessments is a reason to question our impressions and impulses.

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See Lewis’s entry for April 9, 1805. It describes Sacagawea’s hunt for wild artichokes.

<sup>lxxix</sup> The poems for categories 400 through 900 are *all* about “facts.” But all facts that do not simply register sensations or report measurements are also conceptual and intentional. Levels of conceptualization vary. Your immediate impression of a wounded grizzly running towards you is something like “threat: run!” This is a low-order fact. A theorist (the personification of the Interpreter) seeks facts to support an opinion. Even though she talks about such palpable matters as tracks, spoor and dentition, she is assembling a concept of “urosity” or “bearness.” A romanticist seeks facts to support his feelings. Goethe spoke with scorn of “those whom theories convince.” A technologist seeks facts that can be applied to problems; indeed, he may see the bear *in terms of* the problems. In solving medical problems, Dr. Groopman (*How Doctors Think*) says that physicians anchor their diagnoses on initial impressions about the patient and subsequently seek support for the initial diagnosis. This method seems to work more than 75% of the time. Dweck, who studied “learned helplessness” (later generalized to the “attribution error”) demonstrated that children’s concepts of their low intelligence led them both to conclude that they could not do well in school and then to perform in ways that justified their beliefs about themselves. Finding the irreducible, immediate, factual contents of experience requires us to realize the roles played by our cerebral tribes of interpreters and conceivers and epicureans and to summon trusted partners who can take *us* as what *they* make and then invite us into their experience.

<sup>lxxx</sup> We are confronted by what we can and cannot see, including information from both the occipital visual systems and frontal intentional systems of cognition. Inspiration, as Avery Crawley says in my book, *The Profit of Doom*, comes from capacious inhalation –being willing to take in the difficult, the unmanageable and painful information in order to make something from it. I call what I do “folk art” because I do it outside an academic or commercial context. Even folk art attempts to embrace and transform the difficult aspects of our experience.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> The system of counterpoint gives control over many voices. In the graphic arts, the work is framed or set apart, the rules operating within the frame, whether a painting or an installation, providing a controlled space for disparate forces and components to interact. The American Constitution gives control over many opinions within a system of forces checked, balanced and resolved. The primary and higher systems of perception construe our awareness of a world of objects and events from a multitude of disparate signals. The control systems of engines, political theories, and the arts derive from the perceptual and conceptual control systems of cognition.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> All of Gerard Edelman’s ideas about *qualia* may not be necessary to his otherwise convincing description of the nature of consciousness as a kind of performance being set up for us many times a minute by the interactions of cortex, thalamus, key nuclei and what he calls “value systems” of secretions which, like the various catecholamines, send our emotions, with cognition in tow, cascading

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down various tracks. See *Wider than the Sky*. These frequently changed (perhaps every 25 msec) and continually adjusted conscious states (qualia) are the basis for what we call experience and reality.

lxxxiii This refers to W.C. Williams' poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, and his dictum from *Paterson*: "no ideas but in things." While I agree with this, I must also acknowledge that because of our Interpreter, our corticocortical pathways, and other features of our cognition, it is also true that things cannot be dissected from our experience and therefore our ideas of them. We know things because we act upon them and in the same action probe them to learn more. The sensing, acting, probing, remembering, learning and knowing are constituents of both the experience and the idea.

lxxxiv This comes from a statement by Socrates: "*There are many things I do not understand, but that we should be better, braver and less helpless if we were to inquire than we should be if we engaged in the idle fancy that there is no knowing and that one need not inquire, this is a proposition upon which I am prepared to fight.*" (paraphrased)

lxxxv The experiences of Lavoisier, Mme. Lavoisier, Priestly, Hooke and Boyle transformed the alchemy of Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon into chemistry. Their experiences were constrained by replications, calibrated instruments and repeated measurements. The descriptions of their experiences and their findings were studied like scripts and performed in hundreds of settings. Just as the experience of how to handle fire was refined from one generation to the next, so the experiences of chemistry were refined. Now the forbidding mathematics of theoretical chemistry seems to defy the claim that it is a refinement of experiences, but it is.

lxxxvi I was thinking about how to define "eternal." Can we examine this religious concept to discover anything worth retaining? I don't like simply to dismiss religious ideas. They are *about something* even though they are problematical. Indeed, my whole *Marginal Notes* was devoted to retelling certain religious stories of particular value –stories about *the Good Samaritan, Daniel, the founding of America, the Flood, the Blind Beggar, The Sower, and the family of Agammemnon*. At the very least, "eternal" means "remembered." Whether the great deed was at Roncevalles or the upper room, those who were there took pains to have it remembered. The fact that the content and even the meaning of the story have changed is perhaps of less importance than the effort of preservation itself. The religious group is always more important than the object of devotion. After all, the definition of the object comes from the group, and, like any other concept, it changes, notwithstanding the gyrations of creeds and canons. Any religion that lasts will continue to grow outside its canon. Its traditions and interpretations are the religious equivalent to the modifications of theory and concepts which go on in science, but unless they reach the level of a heresy or reformation, these traditional interpretations are just considered *plenary canon* at best or devotional, non-canonical and edifying sayings. See F.F. Bruce *The Canon of Scripture*.

lxxxvii The social ideal of equity, like the goals of eternal life, self-knowledge, and creating or finding gold, is to be approached, not achieved. In approaching such imaginary or visionary aims we learn other things, like the balance of powers needed in government --and inventions like chemistry, *chansons de geste*, and the process of systematic inquiry. These inventions are not secondary to ideals. They are what ideals generate. Despite the restrictions imposed upon us by the nature of cognition, these inventions show what imagination can achieve. As William Carlos Williams said,

"The flower dies down  
and rots away  
But there is a hole  
in the bottom of the bag.

It is the imagination  
which cannot be fathomed.  
It is through this hole  
that we escape."

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See also the comments in *Profit of Doom* about Avery Crawley's museum of inventions.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Such comments as “Accept that what we take/For things is what we make” may lead to the vapid remark that “nothing’s real.” In fact, nothing is *more real* than the experience of that “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands.” (I John 1:1) It is the kind of experience that Faraday had, observing an electrical phenomenon in the laboratory, when he exclaimed, “Oh that it would go on!” (paraphrased). When all our sensory and cognitive witnesses are fully engaged to take in experience and process it through the percepts and concepts provided by our bodies, we are very close to happiness as defined by Aristotle, *viz.* “the full exercise of our powers along the lines of excellence.” It doesn’t get any more real. That we do not get “outside” knowing or outside the skull is not something to lament in exaggerated tones (or tomes) but rather an understanding to maintain in lively awareness. We are always, as pilots say, living “on instruments,” the instruments being perception and conception. We do not get outside them: they are the conditions for cognition. To speak of knowing without percepts and concepts is like speaking of seamanship without the sea or ships.

Remaining alert to the nature and ranges of the readings from our instruments keeps us from being too easily persuaded by them, as we are when we act from impulse or prejudice, for example. We are less quick to say that our experiences are “real” or “the way things are” and more likely to be skeptical and to seek corroboration. Remaining alert to our instruments helps us to restrain speculation and seek moderate courses of action. All instruments require maintenance, calibration and attentive use. Taking our concepts and percepts for granted can be as dangerous as disregarding an altimeter. One need only consider such concepts as *race, gender, divine right, geocentric, Arianism, jihad, crusade, segregation, free market, miasma, phlogiston, ether, and atom* or such percepts as *field of view, contrast, relative speed, perspective, frequency, and duration* to realize that these are tools that deserve at least as much care and attention as the lawn mower we pull out every spring.