

The Glory Gauntlet

The Long Poems

Benjamin Kimble Rogers



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The Long Poems
by Benjamin Kimble Rogers

Illustrated by Lacey Henry Stinson

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Other books by Benjamin K. Rogers:

Holding Five Aces

Returning from the Pyramid

Small Potatoes

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The Long Poems

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The Dance of Corbett J. Algonquin

THE DANCE OF CORBETT J. ALGONQUIN

After T.S. Eliot's Poem – in Female Voice

*“When everyone was suffering in tropical temperatures,
she would say, ‘What a marvelous climate for dancing,
it is so easy to warm up!’ When it was cold, she said
she found it bracing.”*

– Fonteyn on Pavlova

Allow us, when the stages are figuratively oiled
And have not the shape of the serpent coiled,
A privilege known to be dance;
Allow it for one who's never alone, and me as well,
When time's a bell
That empties to quench a panoply of stars,
While we dodge from here the mewl and choke of cars:
Find stages unworn by the skin's decay,
Of some dancer's fray
While the viewer's eyes are consumed to see . . .
Allow us this kind of experience:
The chance to be delirious!

In the audience the people whisper free
In hushed-up tones of you and me.

The amber known as blue in oscillation,
The amber tinge hued with oscillation,
Chills the flesh in its rampant pulse,
Kneels twice to show for a king's own ransom,
Nudges the scepter to a new lofty height,

Knights higher the call to all proscenia,
Turns quickly to the center of the stage,
Then abdicates.

And in this invocation of the dance
There will be reason to follow a king's commanding,
A reason to pull the feet to form,
To flex one's posture, start up the warm,
Twist out a wrist to simplify an arm,
To prepare bends, contort the face,
Sail over the promises that greet, in silence,
The reasons to feel, in confidence, no harm,
Then meet pure essences with a timeless charm.

In the audience the people whisper free
In hushed-up tones of you and me.

And of course therein lies the reason not to fail,
To dip the leather to the resin's pail,
To cut out all cost of grimmest critique,
Wallow where only pity's not meek –
(Will the cheer: "She has left the stage for good!");
Yet I ask
Did I dig the marks too deep?
For within the steps that start the reverie
The end shall cause the middle's gain to sleep.

For I have moved them all before, expressed them all: –
Have moved the lights, the sound, too seldom ether's wing;
I have stepped my life round this wedding ring.
I've danced with particles of self 'til they'll fall
To deeper pits, where orchestras still sing
Of what's to come – should I rely on pandemonium?

And I have moved the forms before, expressed it all –
The forms which blind as you reap higher charge;

And when I've reaped, and sown, and dangle from dispute;
When I, a puppet, refuse to stall,
Then what should I refute
Of lessons learned which guaranteed the ilk of a greater range
And rely instead on pandemonium?

And I have moved the shapes before, expressed it all –
Shapes which cling to touch and tone
(And in the nearest limelight calcify the bone!)
Was it beauty standing close
That made me so morose?
Shapes which turn my face to wax, to rage in their call.
Should I rely on pandemonium?
And how should I refute?

.

Shall I say, I have danced at night on spangled stages
And felt the grip of a circus height
Where frightened artists shed faith in the frayed trapeze?

I could have been the vein that's ore unmined,
And cooled at core by an industry's decline.

.

And the light, the vague sound, eats from the moment vapidly,
Digests the entrances,
Delays . . . inspires . . . or leads to clean remembrances
Called forth from spins of you and me.
And must I, after all the *ronds de jamb* and *port de bras*
Express the truths of who I was?
Though I enjoy the solitude, the curtain's call in pretense raised,
And though I've seen my shapes exalted,
I am no sylph, its faith too faulted.
I have seen more self in the wisp of a slow fan's turn,

Have known more gain in a Christmas lantern;
And in the all, I was not praised.

And would the values have still existed, in the main,
Have still existed, if the turns, the weakened churns, not been,
Faulted by the grip to reach some top, control some ken;
Have still existed, but for you and me,
In a challenge to bring blank karma to its knee,
To pass the crust, ascend through the vain,
To put one's self at clouds that should transcend;
To say: "I have been to Bardo; how it was cold;
The journey down, but a figure then of the rain,
A leaf descending to the earth, from out of gold"

To this say: "It was a chain,
A grand ascendance through a gulf of pain."

And would the value have still existed, in the main,
Have still existed to confront the sight,
When looking back, or fore, along a broken stage
To take my place in reminiscence far too long,
Among the scent of pine mixed with song? –
And yet, I know not what I mean,
When meaning falls short, too short to glean.
Would value have still existed out of sight,
When turning to the lights, if they dim out, to say:

"It was a chain,
A grand ascendance through a gulf of pain."

.

Yes, I may be Cleopatra, the barge as my demesne.
An easy rule was mine, through beauty's calculation,

Where service, easy – the sun’s sure set – the ochre Nile –
The passion that felt a resonance in every inch and mile,
And every thought, a greater obligation:
Sometimes the queen, sometimes an aid,
At times all powers that couldn’t be ruder,
And every quest, an honor roundly staid,
At times pure glories of recalcitrant Buddhas.

I dance young . . . I dance old . . .
I shall shed the leotards and dance within the bold.

Shall I shave my hair to skin? Do I bow?
I will carry freshest roses, and bend them with a vow.
The audience shall render, and hopelessly allow.

I do not think that they will bow to me.

I have seen them raising banners through darkest nights
To erase the simple missives meant for dirt
To take away the promises of hurt.

We have played our holy robots to the hilt
With all the gathered toil machines can give
Until the lights go black, until we live.



Stanislavsky's Retirement

STANISLAVSKY'S RETIREMENT

*". . . there are three forms of Plot to be avoided.
A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to
misery, or a bad man from misery to happiness . . ."*

– Aristotle

Proscenium arch, its curve so slight,
Is lighted by the actor's guild,
Who make of the fun that all of them make,
Some kind of work, in the right place:
Take us again (this love and I)
Among the fortunate ones who watch
The green river's glen from a cushioned sight,
Who can entertain that very stuff;
And for a moment I have forgot
Remind me of the work I did
For the velvet crew, till the late of night
And the making of form out of mitered thought.
Take us, like summoned children,
To gather in such rite.

They wash the dishes, they wash the clothes;
And guard that I'm not comatose.

If you read, read well; but do not read
Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson.
Gurdjieff was the devil,
His mustaccio, the ersatz horns into Gehenna;
Deep pit, Roomie, if you go there;
And Roomie would break into the bookstore
To steal the book, when I say this;
In the middle of the night,

Because of curiosity.

Come on with me to one more show. We'll walk,
I'm ready. "Did I do this one?" We'll dress and go,
The street fog with a blue grey quilt,
A cloak, a circus tent; or a more a cape
For some disguise; a detective's rise
To his profession: The lamplighter pauses
To give his confession, aloud, with such ease
To personae above in a yellowing city
Racked within the architecture;
The cold, more cold than Macbeth's sheath.

They wash the clothes, they wash all the dishes;
I know that my trouser legs are like bridges.

We'll do one more show, and then back to the prison,
The Siberian curtain call,
And I would know what every line would be
To grace ideal, and even then
Refine them with some azure light;
To accent syllables that might make a pearl blush;
Or the forming of a round tone
With lips, eat peach, smack of a nail
Driven in the fourth wall
Where some sure rabble has gathered in the balcony,
And mumbles back the lines
To one who hears no sound, saying –
"They mop the floors with mops that mop themselves;
The director is some sorcerer's apprentice!"

Morning and potty, and evening and potty,
And boredom, boredom;
Morning and potty, and then you see
Every kind of God Almighty damned
Crime done to the elderly people here!

Shall I study more of some renowned
And favored maker with a quill
Or rusty Underwood, who worked with candle
Or neon, and in the far room
Of his chosen abstraction
Where colors make word forms
That end in my puppets?

Shall I study more instead of a reader's skill
Where the plastic skull is filled
With rosined images that could never work
In the dark box lit by the marble light,
In the quaint box filled with the human life,
The sacrosanct home that I lorded
Against the impossible, irremediable
Thirst of Art? . . .

And what is this Marx,
And who wrote his marks
And could he be termed successful?
And of course, am I?

.

In the fog of the night when the lamplighter spoke
He was speaking to us with a hope for our nod,
But who would have heard his parakeet voice
Over carriages?

I could have called us plugs in the ears
Of Circe's men, blind as Teiresias
To the razor rocks.

.

And how the proscenium, feminine,
Spreads out the fingers of the actor's cast,
We have known, the curtain,
A wall of chasmed blue, an afternoon pool
In which to get lost,
And among the drinks and the spices
And the clink of the cafe later
We could talk of vague performances,
Of our own atomic conformances
Which shook a profit's table
(Did we shake the prophet's gable?).
I feel it doesn't matter now,
I sleep . . . I eat . . . I doubt;
And when I don't doubt
I feel a weeping that resides at a far fathom.

For why should I doubt the way he played a footman
 or a king,
Or the way she brought blossoms back from Paris?
Have I been a man born without a name,
But who has made a name?
Can I feed my failures anywhere but in my mind,
When a grating distant phonograph
Adds life to a sepia photograph,
As Roomie sleeps in old bones,
The cradle of Chaos,
With a nurse's white pale against his Cyrillic tattoo?
 The line of my medals
 Is a train through frozen provinces . . .

And why should I doubt when one is not here,
When the sunset still makes,
By the garden gate, a silhouette familiar for a moment;
Or is it some part of dramatic flair
That goes with the sunspots,
That causes wild variations on ancient themes? –

It is impossible to say just what I see!
But as the sunlight through the rain
Made prisms of a suitor's hand,
What was there to change, to say:
 "I have not heard of Heraclitus,
 Tell me some more of Heraclitus."

.....

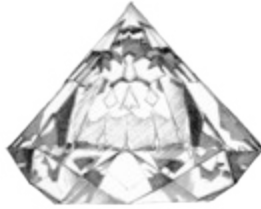
If! The magic "if!"
For if I were the nameless paradoxalist, at least for now,
Who sought the sour notes, and wrote them down . . .
However, I am not, and will not choose to work the opposites,
For then a choice that shows the least amount of relevance
Would have the great degree of competence;
And that is a ridiculous beginning, middle, and end.
(I painted the greenroom green with my optimism,
And walked home through snowy streets,
And saw my name gathered in snowflakes.)

It is all pretense . . . It is all pretense . . .
My love of fictive reasoning,
My love of the character's seasoning
That would hold the echo up for rapt applause
As if it made a modicum of sense,
As if I could ever, with a modicum of youth, go back.

I do not see the changes meant to be.

Scenery of aperture, and afterwards, cold sandwiches
To keep the hammer humming,
Because of the table work, and the line readings,
And the need to go over and over and over –

To contemplate the dark
Is to contemplate the need for lightness,
To close the eyelids, to feel no gravity.



Observations of, on and about
Gatesworthy Danson McBride

ROAD MAP

for Observations Of, On And About Gatesworthy Danson
MacBridge

The poem is a ritual which is a prayer for energy to overcome the personal entropic process.

Theme: We must exert more than what is exerted upon us. Hence the reason for making the Poem.

- I. The Pine Tree Haven – an invocation to spring, homage to Eliot, discussion of forces, Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea
- II. The Bounty of the Flesh – rhymed quintrains about youth monologue, mating interactions
- III. Mapping The Gestalt – answers six questions, why is there so much death consciousness, what are Ouspensky's halfsteps, what is grace, what is beyond I-Thou, are there divisions of time other than past present future, is the knowledge of God enough?
- IV. The House Of Good Fortune – entrance into the Grail Chapel, which is nature; a giving of thanks

Interlude

- V. The Transmigration of Souls – wants to make a spiritual experience

VI. Dissecting The System – Gates, the Non-Listener (as Faust)
rattles monologue to Margrete: he in youth, in old age, and in
middle-age

VII. The Snake Charmer – three romantic liaisons

VIII. A Look Through Venetian Blinds – first concerns with
death

IX. Coda – Goethe's Prologue in Heaven

OBSERVATIONS OF, ON AND ABOUT
GATESWORTHY DANSON MACBRIDGE

Die een ander jaagt zit zelfs niet stil

– Unknown

Nil sine magno vita labore debet mortalibus

– Horace

I. The Pine Tree Haven

This oratory to spring clips about the ear,
Sings first unto itself, coy with its beginning,
Fiery as it proceeds, desultory
Through a chrysalitic self-awakening; cantabile, dolce
Into its own ears, as if it were spewed out
From the highest steps of a vaulted theatre
Or from some tree out further than Golgotha
Which gives a swank and savage countermand
To the old man's words, the one who had broken down,
Broken the words to match the shards of who he was;
For with the promised odor of this violent wisteria
Which are faced-about towards the graveyard of old autos,
And with the sight of the quinces against the busy road,
And with the dogwoods with the way they
Display the myth of their legend,
And with the sounds of the ravens in mass and in solitaire

Hacking away at the potentials for peace:
This all puts the old cooled verseman
(The one who was no doubt then young),
Puts him back to parthenogenesis,
Puts the king back together again.
For under the rugs of our depressions,
Joined in the dust, with our spoons we filled
The hourglasses that were caught in the eyes
Of the flapper class, he the high, and I the low.
This is spoken out rapidly, all the way to the webwork.

The wind makes wine from out of the clouds
And that is drunk by the trees,
Which then direct the traffic of the morning.

High pine needles, prickly
To give a gooseflesh, or if they fall
They serve the flowerbeds, the boxwood gauntlet
Where the yellow finch runs and buzzes
In its minimal way, unapprovingly.

I have, at long last, learned how to live without intelligence,
Yet offer this.
Sisyphus had to be the broad-minded, macho unforgiving type,
The over-achiever, patient, into rock and roll.
Weighty, colored the brown of the wren's back,
Solid, like the fused trochees of the densest line:
The boulder may not be round
Which would make it even harder then to move.
Yet he moves it to keep it from removing him.

The waves, though the tides move out and back,
Always fall toward the shoreline, falling continuously, falling
Like a child's first step, or the trace of human history,
Out and back, the hug of the sand
To take some of it with it
Or leaving the best of itself, not always calm,

Not always indifferent, the fall away from
And the fall toward, leaving itself and claiming itself
At the same time.

"Santiago! Santiago! You bring back the fish!
"You bring it back in your arms
"And that's what you wished!
"You never upon never gave up.
"Look at me, look,
"And share with me a seed of your courage!"

WE PICK AT OUR TEETH WITH BONES
AND EAT OUR FISH QUITE DELICATELY.
SOMETIMES THE PLATTER MEAT IS SPOILED
AND CARCASSES ARE STREWN WITH LEAVES. FLAKE OFF!!
EFTSOONS THE WORLD BE PLEASED.

Away from the "it" of the world, away from the it,
Under the trees of choosing, the live oak or the walnut
With its lateness to leaf, and each leaf spinning, saying
"When the wind goes out, it has to come back;
"When the wind goes out, it comes back the same way . . . "

But better the pine, with its aural grasp of volume
Against silence, to sit under the silence
And to taste against the cigarette mouth the tang of its fruit
And to feel no guilt if the wind moves on.
The sea will turn the boogie
And the wind will howl the woogie.

II. The Bounty of The Flesh

Gates came from the womb kicking and screaming,
Exerting the effort
In a new-found consort

Not knowing the meaning
But to kick more against the webwork and the seine.

And with each kick he said, "Let's see how this does."
And the legs grew strong
And his voice would clang
And he said, "Let's see how this goes."
And he found comfort in the cool massage of the rain.

But the muscle builds up in the heart till it pops
And that is not really to say the truth
Because it probably happens to both
Who are in commerce in contemporary shops
And one must kick from the sinews again.

Or at the playground when one takes a sock
Humility climbs in the carriage
And will then disparage
Itself in a sack
And the blow will then have been better for the pain.

Not all of the knocks he took, but some of them he made
And Gates opened up and at times was not afraid
And shunned his meekness
And learned that care is from strength and not weakness
And as he grew he pushed against the wane.

*Caro mio ben, credimi almen
Senza di te languisce il cor*

And even the heart of a pure white rabbit
Beats in heterostrophic form
Unto the auditory briarpatch of Iniquity!
After the baby food strewn on the floor
(The cardial goes out and the cardial goes in)
Where is the appreciation?

After the knee pants and the carnations
(The cardial goes out and the cardial goes in)
Where are the thanks that are deserved like the justest war?

"My mama told me to get stoned
"And I monolithically tore out all her bones."

"One has to ascend from the cross again," says Gates.
"One has to constantly refuel."

"As there are three states of matter
"So are there three states, the flesh, the bone and the blood.
"And in the constant fall, one reunites, doesn't one?
"And which is most solid? The fisher brings home
"The remains of hope, and waited with hope,
"And moved across the least solid of his sins
"And ended up broken in the webwork."

Gates, on the front porch, pauses, admires the bird feeder
Built for the occasion of spring attraction.

Gates speaks no further but watches the wrens compete
With sparrows, and the little dance, and the wave
Back and forth, and the glass of the feeder holds forth
Some reflection of their movement.

"See, there is lust, when the season should be called
"Cold, Brown, Hot and Lust.

"It is all in the ways of the wings of those wrens.

"They fly because they exert more
"Than the air exerts on them.

"It takes courage to remember fear.

"I met her in the birth of Eden,

"And it was all one well-kept garden;

"Near the perimeter the adolescents strolled,

"Indeed adolescence itself was discursive.

"I guess they were watching for the perfect

"Symbiosis to be born. Enough."

One bubble finds another bubble,
Overweight, underweight, the plumb into the webwork.
One bubble finds another bubble, or surrounds it,
Or submits, cathexis
Two bubbles rising till they touch the ceiling,
Or dome, or laquearia till someone
Pulls them down,
And one pulls them down
Who is the heaviest, pulls down
With word weight
Pulls across the ceiling
Or pulls across the stage
Or pulls across the imaginations of their Golgothas
And one bubble feels another bubble
And on and on, inside and out
And their imaginations and their macerations . . .

III. Mapping The Gestalt

1.

She wakes up in the morning to two eggs, bacon, thanatos
And a glass of orange juice. Why is this so?
The attraction to the dance,
Through the gate, over the bridge
 –Suicide on the side
 Genocide bona fide
 Patricide will abide
 Matricide open wide
 Infanticide someone decried
 Sorocide in the tide
 Fratricide needs no guide
 All of them homicide

She smokes her slag pit, and stares at the pirate flag.

Because of the fall back into the timeless twist
Of the smoke that is the aftermath
Of the gravity of death, is she so conscious.

2.

Rats running in the attic, the microcosm,
Feet like rain on the dry rafter,
Soaking them with sound, droppings

And between the joists
They chase their own tails
Gravitas for the mystic, the mountebank and the mathematician

3.

The room, the gym floor waxed
Is filled with parallel bars
From wall to wall
And one lone gymnast
Dressed in white, in constant pulse,
Works them all
And this is grace

4.

The meta-I, the meta-Thou
The curved line on the flat space
And the paradox route
Is a cop-out
"Beyond the limit! Beyond the limit! "
I am an expert in television!"

5.

Time works, gets up in the morning,
Goes to bed at night,
Signs the timesheet
Gets paid in seconds
But has different divisions than we realize

Crazed through much time-bearing
The clock begins to weep
See it melt
Like unattended candle
The between time, like toejam
The ritual of cleanliness
Time is also the forgotten,
The remembered, and the wished

6.

Aquinas and Henry David
Sit on a rock
Overlooking the water,
And Aquinas says,
"The mind of God . . ."
And then his words falloff
Like the slope of the bottom of the pond

And Henry David says,
"The mind of man . . ."
And his words are unfinished
Like painting that is abandoned
For no reason but distraction

IV. The House of Good Fortune

Edifice

But with a face that could be sculpted *ad primarum* by
Some Polyclitus,
Loaned from the intensest of his paradigms,
In the intensest of those centuries
Where all attentions were paid to every curve and brace:
August in the May rain,
Though soon agressed by sunlight; edifice, stalwart
With a face that makes a wink
But only in its pretense, in teasing.
Of blood, bone and wing, though of granite in its grit—
Throws open the doors, and then closes them:
And we go up close, and go to pry and to pry
With our truths, and upon no opening
We stand back and wait

"The reward for patience is more patience"

And we camp out, by the end of the field
After the last row where the corn had been planted,
Only then to notice that the doors open as they will,
And we go back, and we go in:
Bridge could be made from the jewels overlooked,
Unpicked
From the scatter of a precious, glittered harvest.
One knows, but cannot tell the dimensions
Of the impossibly large,
And the metaphor sinks in like the teeth of solid miracle;
The gate leading to the webwork
Which is the superscript of the impossibly large,
A casement through which to look
Reminding

And one circles the monument
On a brevity of breath
And is reminded,
As the wings curve the air,
That there was young time in the making of all things.

Face that could be sculpted by some Polyclitus . . .

For half a sky to be in a marbled room
And for the clouds to create cortege within this room
And to move around in the sphere within the cone,
Is what this atmosphere brings

A little dance in the marbled room
Dance of sky

Is there good and bad?
Or is it all good when the roofs cantilever to show
The light delivered on a plate of stars, and a swirl
Of scent comes in from the new leaves; and the cone,
Which is the earth (one small punctuation), rolls over
In the litany of its hum? And the touch of the breeze is good.
It is she who was a companion, who said:
"O Mighty, if it is your will,
Put Gibraltar through my spine!"
And it is she who thumbed through the fire, flame by flame, and
read, there,
Out loud, a passage or two from hell. Maudlin, on
A deep, thick floating barge of heat lay one depicted
Whose face, as she looked, she would have known, were it turned
toward her.
To the outside, the branches of the dogwoods played their turgid
Requiems, their limbs, like the bow of the rebec,
Ever closer, more than intimate. As a self of her reflection.

But the face would never turn; and yet she knew what faith had meant
To one who had given it up: an island left in the far sea
Of another world, but not here, not now; and of and above the Inter-
state Highway,
Made up of amoebas in course: this vaulted room, the mowed grasses,
The gardens of expectations that make the effort – the pull of effort –
The push of theogonies – to know! – to **KNOW!**
We sat on the edge of the bridge which goes from home to heaven.
Moreover, our feet swayed, metronomically, to measure this practical
distance.

At one end, there was the familiar. The mockingbird sang,
The near fields of summer were spotted with brown bundles,
The dogs ran among them. Whoever was owner of a melon pasture
Had set out propane guns that went off, intervallically, to scare
Away the deer. Sunset floated to the near vainglorious,
Between horizons, yet closer to the one horizon; a hen brooding
On rosened air to hatch stars. "And what's the difference
Between happiness and joy?" wonders Gates. "Joy turns time into
Something of everything."
For on the bridge between our domestic ken, where the scent of pears
Came across the yard, and the smoke from the neighbor's grasspile –
Between this and that, and what was further out,
We measured with our monkey motions time
Its vestiges that turned end to end the hourglass, as we waited,
Or did not wait, on the edge of the span which is rising
Between here and there – and forth ever.

In the very heart of the room
Sits there like the pearl, the song: the aire:

"Take it but in the heart, take it but in the flesh
There comes one wonder day, in the single year;
At least one, and a half of one deep in plush,
In luxury – and for that I give thanks.

And that one day may be without a peer,

In spring when fountains flow as vegetations
And the bird on the high limb knows favors
I want to hear – and for that I give thanks.

Or for the health: a sphere of jubilations
For a perfect week that knows no wavers;
Or a little bit of money to give away,
Just a very little – and for that I give thanks

The warmth of others, from what they may not say,
Makes a good hearing; call them fellow beings
In a bond, a nexus that creates the one,
A good knot tight – and for that I give thanks!

For spirit, above all in solid seeing,
Be it measured not by shadow, but by sun:
The praise follows; it comes as rain so running
Through deep music – believe me. And for that I give thanks!"

Interlude: Nectar By the Sea

Perhaps she is the ocean. How she rages!
How brave men sail her; though the boatswain washes up
Upon the shore.
She feels such affinities for the sea. Even
Her waves rhyme: sea gulls: such able orators.
If the sea were one heart, so great the vessels.
Her love is my salt.

V. The Transmigration of Souls

This soul moves over to that soul;

And that soul moves over to that soul;
And this soul to there,
And that soul to this one,
And another one over here;
And they all collect in a swirl
 And a whirl,
And they all collect in a swirl
 And a whirl,
And around, and around:
The vortex to issue incredible sound;
And they all ascend as in one fine lift
And in a sigh, and in a cry
All that's one group, the one that's meant to fly
Toward the top, to the peak
(And then back down a little bit),
And onward to the top
And onward to the peak, and
In a final absolute, one fine-fling rally
Into the crown of the crux, into the tear in the loft
We all gain, and re-gain the ZENITH OF HEAVEN!

. . . to float back then, down as the vapours,
With feathers in their banks
And into the chests, back to the chests
Of us all.

VI. Dissecting The System

The nervous human race runs by quickly
Quickly.
TICKy tack, TICKy tack, TICKy tack.
TICKy tack.
And the question comes up, on the back stretch,

About the personal imperative.
TICKy tack, TICKy tack, TICKy tack.
And the question comes up about the cycle.
TICKy tack, TICKy tack, TICKy tack

The scene in early age: Block One:

*In youth, one walks out in the morning
(Dew on cold feet), lifts the weight (iron and fire),
And the bones hold up strong,
The blood boils warm, and the wings dance
With a span that has grown much lighter*

"The devil (we'll call him 'Meffy'; we'll call him 'Meffy'),"
Says the Non-Listener. "We'll call him 'Meffy'. Knowest thou
Thy Goethe? Knowest thou thy derivation? What we need here
Is a clearly defined enemy. No doubt we have it.
So Meffy is in battle with the Supra-God.
You have to understand the decade. You have to understand,
It's all in the decade, the juggle of life, and the juggle
Of death; and Meffy's over there, kneeling in a rice patty,
Kneeling, for to watch from a safe distance. The stench is in the air.
Take this scene: The sun puts a mild scorch on the day,
Like an iron that's left overnight, left on the ironing board;
The sun puts a scorch on the day, comes down on the hippies
Gathered together to listen in the park, the Neiman Marcus hippies,
The grovel hippies, hair like webwork, hair like horsetail;
Music loudens as you near, dims as you walk away; and~
There stands Meffy, absorbing it all, the heretical imperative,
The quiet fame of the dynamic process, what Pink Freud
Would call the Stoned Generation. I'm sorry, but it takes
A lot of this kind of scene to get my point across,"
Says the Non-Listener. "And I truly, truly want to get
My point across."

"Your point's sharp, and I get it," says the Listener
To the Non-Listener. "I listen completely, and to myself.

Redemption." Says the Listener. "Tell me more."

"Well, if people are given a false ideal, or distorted one
Which they do not perceive as being that, if they suffer
And mimic to the icons of desire, that which is the hype
Of the hypocritical (the evangelical pharisees running
Around not realizing their own nakedness, much less their hexual,
Sexual jump-in-the-jelly needs): tradition for the sake of tradition
Leads to a paralysis of the Will!"

Block Two: The Scene At Lateness of Age

*In lateness of age, one walks out slowly in the morning
(The dew on cold feet), lifts the weight (heavier with iron and fire),
And the bones hold up strong,
The blood boils warm, and the wings dance
Into high flight.*

"The personal renaissance, and its trace elements . . . "
Says the Non-Listener. "They go on; they only fade
In and out, move like The Golden Section, leaving skid marks
(Don't get me started on Marx), skidding across the Eternal Dialectic,
The Internal Dialectic, all ever and forever giving birth
To the anti-entropic rocket, which has essences in what
Is rightly called Freedom, which has its nest in Sacred Reality,
And is based exclusively, paramutually, and inevitably
On the availability of physical mobility."

"I am listening," says the Listener, "to what you say. Redemption.
Tell me more, soberly."

"Well, according to the measurements I can make, fairly
On the side of precision, with these calipers left
In silver from a few generations back: on a good day
People are only about two-thirds unconscious. That's
Not too bad. Perhaps the bureaucrats more. (They never retire,
They just become carbon paper.) With the remaining one-third
(And that capable of fluctuation), things can be done. Perhaps
There can be a raising of that fractional reality. We must
Not be afraid of time; art is the presence of life,
But not life. In order to clear away the shadow,
We have to use a few brooms: the being of nothingness
Thrown out, far away, with the bath water. The static processes
Tossed out repeatedly to the wolves.
We have to listen to nature. Perhaps that is
The most important thing for us to do. To listen
And listen to ourselves.
We have to take out a little bit of time to scream."

Block Three: In The Middle Age

*In the middle age, with a turn of the page,
One walks out again in the morning
(Dew on cold feet), lifts the weight (heavier with iron and fire),
And the bones hold up strong,
The blood boils warm, and the wings dance
With a span that has grown so very much lighter*

"Tell me," says the Listener to the Non-Listener.
"Tell me about the little people."

"When the philosopher from Teutonia said,
'Let us dare, despite all, to trust,'
He wasn't talking about mercantile madness,

He wasn't talking about mediocrity of manipulation,
Of the human kind and un-kind."

"Tell me about madness," says the Listener to the Non-Listener.

"Of all orations," says the Non-Listener, "Those applauded
Or those given air,
The verse-writer is least understood. Who refines the world
Away from the world, who throws it a curve of quality."

"Redemption."

"The disguise of freedom, that well-worn mask, is materialism . . ."

The nervous human race runs by quickly
Quickly.
TICKy tack, TICKy tack, TICKy tack

VII. The Snake Charmer

With the syrup poured in such a way as to
Saturate the French toast, and with the scent of the lilies
Following close on the trail left by the quinces,
Who is the one to claim the future as being relevant?
Or when waking in the middle of the night –
How the stars clatter their cold teeth
Because all of the heat has been focused, taken to one point?
The webwork broken, the bloodveins making the roadwork
To jazz rhythms, the neighbors walking through the yard
To not notice anything profound, the bridge across
The eyesight into one another, deep into the eyes,
Digging the cave back into the neolithic: Gates learned
That the love effort is the easiest, most natural;

And in giving, the will is given back, palm pressed
To palm, to the other's palm, with a slight push,
And a slight retreat: and to push again, were it
Ten thousand miles.

With the smoke from the fire, the unpurged images
Become purged, and rise through the high pines,
And it is cold in August, and the art of friendship,
The art of rain, and the science of fire, are lulled
By the guitar in the minor key; and what is sketched
Against the shore of the lake, to the sounds of the old Indian woman
Who had lived among the reeds and the rocks, was taken by him
Back to the weary city. They pressed their art together,
And the will was given back to both of them, with a slight
Push, and a slight retreat. He sat on the end of the pier,
Not too disappointed in the way the ripples told him
He would never be back.

On the stage, the actor knows the quick essence
Of time, and the timing of the line against the mood.
And the impression comes across, as she roots herself
In the grooves of the stage, where the wood, across the centuries,
Has buried, resurrected and enjoined a mass that claps
In the echo of its own joy. She pressed her mind to his,
And to Gates, this was enough. The beauty of the mind,
Its tone, clarity, and its journey, the sixth sense,
Traverse not only the synapse, but as well all latitude.
The exertion is sustained, and the effort turns the wheel. ••
And from each bright spoke a request for a certain sound,
Not to be there, but to hear the reprise of a present moment again,
How it was thought, that

As the light fades,
The wind wants to move time

Even faster; green and glory,
The world it is glory
For just its turning,
The sun like fire going out;
And we estimate more of ourselves
Than what we are;
And the light fades in increments,
Yet some bird finds harmony
With another.

VIII. A Look Through Venetian Blinds

There is a water hydrant in the graveyard
So I shall water the bones.

IX. Coda

The sun intones, in ancient tourney,
With its fraternal spheres,
And its sororial gasses of light,
The melodies of the simplest order
Against the complex web of night.
But night fades too, for it is blessed
With a thought of you, and a thought of me.
I give you the valley, for are they all hills?
I give you cosmic CON-SCIOUS-NESS.



The King of Fire

THE KING OF FIRE – THE FORMING OF THE PLANETS

“Results from unmanned space efforts have obviously been more rapid. We have discovered much about the earth: that it is slightly pear-shaped, for instance; that it is surrounded by the Van Allen radiation belts; that our previous concepts about the atmosphere and its upper reaches were erroneous; that solar wind streams around the earth in a huge teardrop pattern. Our probes to the moon, Mars, and Venus . . .”

– John H. Glenn, Jr.

I Rock Commerce

1.

The water was the beginning of some grand illusion. Rain
Fell to an emboldened universe, and all of the ties to ten million debts
Moved over the waves which were not there.
See, the dolphins swim in murky near-distances,
And in their own common skin-garb, with their eyes being the inven-
tions of the eye,
Itself, a slowly rotating lava. And in all of this emotional swinging,
In this roiling of this whiteness, there falls a clear-cut case
Of overproduction; that is, a work done by some Hermit of Light.
Some Hermit of Light?
Shall there be a will in the want of what is?

A shade of purple, or a floridly dressed Ramses, with some cat perched
That’s ready to climb the muscadine vines of gravity,
In this acreage of skeletal sky (itself a work of art that’s been hewn by
the piercing wind) . . .
These, take all of them, and a better part

Of the sweetening goodness, where nothing roams,
Where nothing has kept a close-lain track on form,
For it's here that nothing by itself
Knows what it must take to build home.
And this is a nevertheless in the middle of a so to a what.

2.

Sticky things are so much better than non-sticky beliefs;
As with rock, the rocks among the green alfalfa,
Where no wind of any kind of dimension has been ample to move
 such seed,
And where the interminable green grows not a guest,
One who comes in the door, who barges in the door,
A plutocrat of spectra
As if the last locust might be considering some four or five
Of the newest directions. Or where the wasps,
With barbing rhetoric adhere each to their own individual
Roles of mock punishment, and that is against the grain,
The dark grain, below the trees of living silence
That shall not root in any way that's easy.
This is a by the way of one only to a maybe while.

Or rolling, they shall all be free of a terminal sense,
That which is perceived as the friction which pulls the gentle grade
 upward;
Or has the need to be pushed at last, not in any way stagnant
Or of primordial vision.
For whatever becomes form from this completeness
Is more than nothing – take a bluebird's egg, for example,
Or the weave of the noon fog which lies in precious dwellings
At the depth of sight when cold has been made too bright.
And this is a could when a where's not should.

3.

The rocks among the leaves, those brown leaves, those leaves
Left to swirl in tiny panoramas were her awakening
As she conquered her moving on,
A moving on into bluer light, was truest to her moving on. The wheat
Would be the wheat, and she had remembered it well,
Had followed in the fields to the end of the levy road,
Where she was known to throw pebbles into the nearby spillway
To tease the harkening, hungry fish. And one old fisherman
Had forgotten his boat, or so it seemed, yet
Had his favorite anchor, had thrown out the anchor lightly deft
And with precision, aimed at God knows what.
For the anchor he had was pure obsidian,
And he could polish it each time that it surfaced,
Then think of his wife, from whom he must get distance,
And far enough away, and always so far away. And when he mumbled,
(Which he did often), it was in the fisherman's lingo, the soft lingo,
So then an entire subculture of private things were felt between his teeth.
And his dreams of braggadocio, where the fish feed,
Were meant for his buddies waiting.
She threw the largest pebble, but only to the railway trestle nearby
And far, far beyond the fisherman's head.
As the overs are into the whethers of a not uncertain certainty.

A banker of the stars trod into the poolhall
Looking for old two-fisted Louie, that day;
For the money that had to be exchanged was the order needed to
play the game:
One eightball orbiting the rack, the rack, the rack.
And light was out of a stained glass sun, a grabbing sun,
Which Newton must have forgotten, and could have,
Had he been the kibitzer that day.
Louie had something playing on the jukebox as distant to the ears
As the distance of the Roman Boethius,

Philosophy lining the underarms, the scent of tulips.
One dollar here, one dollar there,
All the way up to ten billion septillion!
Though any game implies a winner, even in the season of winter –
Who would stoop to incautious verity?

Sue was in her racy, leisurely suit
Watching as her manna beer soothed her mood
Like some baby's self sung lullaby. She thought
About how the privacy of the night had created itself,
Spookily, though she had no complaint; though the balls
One the table had grown slowly and slowly out of focus. Though
she knew
There was a greater cosmic space
Over the great red rock of Time.
She thought about these forms, the interrelations of such things.
She thought of nudity, the time in the park,

And a Shakespeare sonnet she could quote
While the balls move, and the weather changed.
No game at all is enough to her; no game, no gaming trick of subtlety.
Only the visual, and the cool beer, and the sound of the rack.
Only this was the before of the all; the left behindness of the after.
Booly, booly, booly.

4.

Peace had become the lower strata of the volcano
Stirred by the hurricane, any hurricane, this hurricane.
And who was it who said something about BEGINNINGS?
What was this about the rose taking over, would slowly,
Like the sea turtle with over-malted eyes?
She didn't believe in anything any more,

Any more than she believed in numerical wonders
Of the strung-up ‘possum, or the fly. She dodged belief.
She refused to chart the angels on their way,
Those who would fly in unequal ether, among the flowers,
Among the seeds, thrown from the wayward trees,
These things she called to their own hallelujahs –
And what is it who holds the palm
At the end of perception, but the thing itself?

II The Waterfall Brigade

1.

It was the poet who had stood at the end
Of the schoolyard thunder, stacking the books
Stacking the papyrus, an itch that had to be scratched
Like Faust’s roofbrain clatter; allowing it to fall
Like lightening, in his midsentence.
One stack stacked for neofiction, one stack stacked
For the ocean’s biography, one
For the whale’s prose-worthy Ahab –
Whatever intelligence was being born
Was being born with the life of a clock’s
Succession, though there were no clocks,
No unabated noises which would drive the callused
Monk (be he fallow-driven, garden-driven, sincere),
To distraction, over and over and over
Measuring the moment’s gain.
One stack meant for the prophet’s potential,
One stack meant for the cricket’s quiet,
One for a club that would conquer any moonbeam –
And the raw meat was much better

Than the jasmine's fruitless, inoperable tang,
Or so he read – that Neanderthal tooth, rotten,
Still merciless in his side;
One stack stacked for a mother, one for the brave fathers,
One high enough to be maps for the children
That were scattered by their four winds.

The moon, it shone in the backs of every eye,
Those of the wild men, and very often, the vile men:
A dragon! A dragon! Simply because of
The bragging rights left by the dinosaurs . . .

2.

Three by three, all that was parental –
The offspring all in need of spring showers,
Standing there in the altogether weary woe
Of fire side chat; or would you call it
Glorious grunting? Or some kind of hunkerd down squat
To draw out, with sticks in the dirt, the next day's plans:
Who would ever know the knowing truth of that time?
Who would ever know the knowing of them, at that time?
Yet rising into the daylight
He remembered how it had hurt so good,
The sun down on the back of the neck,
And on down the back, it leathery and unwashed
Until the last hart had been killed.
And she could forget the pain then,
The ice under the feet,
The feet laced with the need to go south in a season,
As she washed carefully in the stream, the child alone.
And when was the sun, that orb going down,
The same as all of those ones coming steadily
Through the tree-lined morning? Or were each different?
And when it sank, that dimming light, would it come back?

The wandering was almost over now,
And the hair grew, grew out of the matted brain
Which was yet to invent the sweet elixir of conscious life;
Only the streams with their falls;
Only the lying back into complete submersion;
And the teeth were sharp as tacks, no Colgate –
And the lions would roam, and all the nanoskills,
Be they hardly imperceptible, mounted
Their tamed and taut abstractions.
Alas! – the bird's sure winging – the cattle in their call –
The mole's desirable wrest in its lowly cavern –,
The bee's tumid dance which could show readily
A flower's only hope . . .
Da da, ma ma, the language's inert strangeness
Tied to the tactile wheel –

By and by there could be a time when Evamon
Could drink her scotch, good to the very last slosh,
Good as a stretched Athenian grapevine,
Where she walked, there chose her death;
And I would have been so afraid of her,
Said the toothless, drooling man, head in his hand,
Drink after drink after drink
But for the promises that she saved in a traveler's trunk
–Would never give up; only the glass turned high, and up
to surrendered heavenly horror.
And her son died easily in the whitewater life,
And her son dies easily in the race down freeway,
Though she herself had the courage of a dripping faucet.
Here! Images of gold; images of stark trees,
They being high enough for berry's blessing!

Da da, ma ma, this baby's language,
In the negative spaces of a mind so enthralled
With the endless cosmos . . .

3.

The grandmother had built the house of cards.
The yard broom, alone, had stayed in place.
The servant, at times, would mop the very back porch;
The servant would soak the wood,
Would soak the dry, untreated slats,
That thirsty and famous wood;
(No verse if free, if you work for it).

She said that the redbird was on fire,
She said of this there is no doubt. She loved the redbird.
“Do not kill the red bird.”
I'd kill them anyway, one thousand in my pouch,
Slowed them till they lost all flight,
And that it seemed, for I was mean, a crime perhaps.
It passed the time (and to hell with Ezra Pound!).
I am afraid, I am afraid, O so afraid!
And the letters left by the cavemen were lost,
Then secured in the miniature China box, sweet porcelain!
For Granpa raised the finest greens
That would ever come down the pike.

4.

All the fish that were caught were caught by the hungry,
Those who'd roam the vast savannas,
The deepest marshes, the temperate mouthing the intemperate,
The spears grasped like danger's foil,

The head of sense filled with those very fish,
Or the running rabbit. Sometimes the leopard
Would change its spots – and wasn't that evolution?
The back of the horse, much like a psychic's falter
Held up the family's long-stood wandering,
All across the Urals, over the Potomac,
The shallow Seine (when it was shallow),
Over the Yangtze, yellow with the blood of antelope,
Young from the blood of oxen, crossing this way and that
Like religions bound for the highest zephyrs. They marched on,
For there was no ending at the end of law,
Law of the horizon, law of that beyond. There was no law,
But that children died with childbirth, and mothers cried,
With childbirth, and held under their fingers,
Some christ-courage, yet to come, but to come in savor.

Mozart would not have died, had it been that Jonah,
With his wicca-saving words, had placed apothecary there,
In the lungs, deep in the veins – and what would the music then
Have been? Like cries of rainbows . . .

Old men moved across unmeasured sand.
How old could they be, says some bard of thinnest history?

III Baseball, Biology, and the Grace That Shall Remain

1.

If old Martin Buber were still alive, he would take out
The calculator, one which he'd bought at Wal-Mart,

(Or some such nonsense),
Fiddle around with it for a while,
And then try to figure out if God is tired.
He'd probably write it down, write it out in some big, fat book
Nobody reads, or much less
Even knows about – write it all out by hand,
Then give it over to some secretary, one
Underpaid like the larvae within the seas.

He would of course be distracted easily, be nearsighted
And prone to great fits of raging wrath:
“Darling, come in, it’s time for supper.
“You still haven’t bopped the carpet.
“The pot roast is simmering.
“Take your time, I guess, but remember –
“Do you instead want cold pot roast?”
And he would be figuring, and figuring, and figuring,
All that dagum figuring, wearing out light bulbs.
And he would be talking in his mind to Aquinas
In a computer, finding out the latest skinny,
See if anybody had a new update
On some phantom reconciliation, or some peturbation
About reason, or faith, the nature of ideas,
Checking out to see how wild will is, these days;
Or if Augustine were sighted in Florence:
A parlance, a parlance: run up the lottery
Of what is left of the mind!

2.

B. F Skinner would have moved into an apartment
Because it would have been very easily available
To some kind of voyeurism.
His wife, who would be living upstairs,

Would make soft knocking sounds in the night;
And he had already ruined his sweet daughter.
It was called over protection. She'd sneak in late,
Climbing in the lattice, dragging an old wedding gown behind
As if it were leased to trouble. Every day trouble
With Bif. She never, never would listen.

He'd read to her from Aeschylus;
She'd only want to hear the latest rap
About some cat named Ferlinghetti,
Or how to tie-dye leotards; and
Nothing about freedom, and dignity at all.
As this would distress him greatly, old B. F.,
And he would start smoking marijuana by the bushel,
Would start walking the streets of Concord
As if he were the patron saint, in season.
And after she hanged herself – psychology notwithstanding –
He'd think chains would have been a better way,
Keep her in a box, nail all the sides of her mouth
With propriety, teach her
At higher volumes, roll her eyes with nonsense art,
And then push her out into the cold, cruel world,
With his tether attached like Carl Jung's insistent boredom.
Then she would have been perfect,
But only if she had listened.

3.

Moses Hadas could have been a friend of mine;
I would have seen him coming over the mountain,
A satchel full of wisdom, on his way to his class,
Never late for class. The subject would have been a broad one,
A panorama of magic links, sleights-o-hand, twinkles in the eye.

He'd start at the start. He knew how to do that. He would start to
look up,
Bushy eyebrows making no lasting period.

And when class ended, when no one else would be leaving,
He'd look at the Aegean blackboard, dreaming of her eyes,
Some rare maiden with special promise that he'd met,
Or never met – a hummer to the lyre –
A dancer to the dance, and old blind bard
Whose memory, much like jello, quivered, screamed
Like gulls in ambulation . . .
Or if everyone left, he'd open up a book,
Lean in: a vat, a mercurial ink.
Grades, grades, grades. Who cares about these grades. He'd
Already made them!
And as the moment came when he'd seen the light,
It was some student had pointed it out, made it ultra clear.
She didn't know he loved her,
Had written her sonnet by himself, returned it, forged . . .

4.

Yogi Berra was known to dance the tango
With the wildest woman in sight, then marry her.
She loved baseball?
If a man can look fourteen directions at once,
He's bound to get a good job,
Probably even good retirement, dental care,
Overtime. – Wear and tear on the body,
Man alive, what a rough one! But he don't let up.

It ain't over, till the pain goes away. You know, pain.
Grit your teeth. You did it yourself. Don't

Hold it against you, it might stick.
Don't go down the long slide, around the corner
Into the matted picture
Of some vain hero that you yourself could have been.
Take it for granted. Take it like vitamins,
You can take it like you take it.

Carbon – by Bizet – came indelibly as the solution,
Boiling, beaming, new baby born
Under the flesh, like quicksilver,
Ran through the veins of the one-veiner;
One-veiner become two-veiner, become, you know.
On, and on
So we're here, at this time, to tell you this,
We have come to tell you this, phrana ready.
Take a little time to sort through the rubble left,
For it's not rubble; look at it well.
If a mirror were held to the face of some rank demon,
How he'd gladly resign his post: Pure implacable joy!

IV The Circuitous Route Aimed at Everything

1.

Jupiter is rising.
Tammy Alicia, having left her pets behind,
Having a new, monophonic tune to kick around,
Lay comfortably at the edge of the oat field.
Her bare feet
Feeling the warm breeze.
It would take her thoughts far, and to new heights,

Which she needed. She lay back, and she gazed.
Her uncle, though somewhat unattached,
Had left her this field where she lay
In naked awareness. He'd left for the army early,
And none knew at all of his hesitancy.
A war of the worlds at that moment seemed possible.

2.

Saturn rising.
The ring was around her heart.
The young shoe shine boy
Had put it there. They had played
Behind the drug store, and never touching,
Yet touching deep,
Like a consecration of distance,
A novel avenue leading down the colonnade
Her bicycle never new at all.
What is this feeling, she wondered kindly.
Why now? Mother, I am so young!
Do I give the ring back?
Do I send another valentine I make myself?
Or is he interested today in Janiebeth?
– Her mother would leave to do ironing,
In constant smile.

3.

Neptune is rising.
Does anyone know how to dance with me,
Out here in this field, the oats with their pliés,
Jetes, the wind, with its choreography?
I would dance beyond the school's day;
And I never missed. I'd make another night

Of exhaustion, and on to deep, precious sleep right here!
I am so young, young to be
The beading star I see!
Will he come by, some stranger at a distance,
So I can hide, a camouflage in vegetable poetry
He might hear in the inner' ear's rhyme?
And then move on, perplexed
With the magic of the moment,
I feel nadir! I feel exalted zenith!

4.

Mercury is rising.
What a pretty girl I am,
Though who would ever notice,
Or am I? Moods change like the swirling
Atom itself; or like the nature of truths
In all the diverging philosophies.
I look forward (I cannot look back),
Look to physics, to the physical,
To the way I'll grow in knowledge,
Like these oats, themselves. But what
Of this red along my loins? So much more is needed,
In general, I know this as being so, know still some things, still,
Know teachers who must pay homage,
Who must line up, praying to the science, or the absence
Of God. Though I shall be the one who argues, like Plato,
Himself, under arbors green and ripe.

5.

Pluto is rising.
She paid no approval, nor any countenance
To all of its workings; how it made the sunshine dark,

No attention to the down side of things –
She knew that it shall come clear. – I shall make
Circles of their hexes, diamonds
Of their need to over come,
Rubies of their single mindedness.
Wasn't there someone named Hitler?
I've heard of him, heard through grapevines
Rich and terrible, even here. He'd show no kindness
To political queries, nor cultural mores,
Nor social countervailances of shock. He'd
Be over there, lost in his own morbid thought,
Lost to the pens – to the avid scribes.

6.

Uranus is rising.
Her knees were limber as the wading stork,
Not too deep, nor shallow. Her arms,
She could make them bend backwards,
Could bend to make elbows reach feet,
Bend her neck back to make spinal tap glory.
Ah! To leap at the sun!
What is this ache in the middle of my life?
Why should I feel this new and corporeal syntax?
The flow of veins, arteries, and lymph
Is cataclysmic, could paint new pictures stretched
And tightly stretching up on the world.
My eyes are fading, but I have lingered in the word,
Have made mincemeat of vaunted, scrubbed vocabularies,
Haven't I got myself?
Yet these lungs are full, and filling still.

7.

Mars is rising.
Purple clouds were integral to the mountain's
Artillery. She could hear them, or watch them
For long hours, watch them with a hawk's jealousy.
Join up, or cover up both ears, she thought.
Understand the ways of this, the men, the women,
The metal shuffled out to perform tasks of mayhem:
Martyrdom, and madness seemed commonplace;
A rising of the eyebrows, a yawn, a flair of indifference.

Yet, there was something inviting, a tease,
An inside call for action, a brief twinge
In the belly. She would not go to the mountain,
With its flaring light, cascading against the sea.
Her uncle would handle all of the passion, the victory,
The songs afterward, and the songs before they started.

8.

Venus is rising.
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,
And the bolder she became
The more she knocked at crimson doors,
How can I get to the top of this? How can I allow
Myself to be so passive, like these very oats –
Not very crimson, but dull, unchanging grey?
I will start at the top; it's just a pageant away;
I will start where the novice gives in to the pro;
But never give in, a crown to be polished
By the flows of my hair.
Into the clover, and into the meadow;
Some day I shall lie, refusing the dreams of tradition,

The conformity then of my personal wealth
To be shared, to be nourished with a satisfied heart.

9.

Earth is rising.
Orbs of complexity. Orbs spinning, thinning,
Growing. And who would ever know, if we weren't here?

She paid the publisher for her novel;
She paid the priest for her salvation.
She went into the study of tough-angled astronomy.
And over the distant lanes of light
Her visions caught the shudder of some confusions;
Then it subsided, like a wave resolved
Out of hyperbolic sin.
And then on to the telescope, on to a better vision,
On to the optics which were promised
By some exalted, regal insomniac.
And she would look high, and then look onward,
To catch within her exuded net,
The first vital, valiant, seething beam of hope.



The Karmic Road

THE KARMIC ROAD

*“Expressions of mystical experience will not stand the test of logic.
But, unlike the Aristotelian, the mystic does not claim to be logical.
His sphere of experience is the unspeakable.”*

– Alan W. Watts

I.

1.

I don't believe in anything that surpasses
The intellect. The intellect is but a pea-worth,
At times, lying in the recesses of digression,
Waiting for the minutae of reflection, sans goal,
Sans aftermath, and
With no journey before it considered in the least..

The mockingbird on a nearby limb must have
An intellect. It must have a perfect pitch
To do that which it does. It lights casually
In the English dogwood, which has shed already
It's referential blooms. And I wonder if this shining bird,
Building its nest in the English dogwood
Has ever met Buddha along the path, or Christ
In an ambrosial air

Now the raindrops. We know that the raindrops
Have had their previous lives, have come from forming
Vapor or ice back to liquid. These drops fall on
The heads of saints, among the confusions

Of seekers, down the burnt backs of sinners
Like trenches that were meant for war.
This mockingbird must feel the rain as
Affirmations of its flight, with its grey
And white flutterings contorting among the day lilies.
“Are these convulsions?” a neighbor may ask.
But no, they are merely and solely part of its nature,
The flinch and the spasm, and the torque and turn
Outlining its supposed destination. And are
There circles in this bird’s unmeasured flight?
Has it been here in a previous spring
When the rain created invisible walls
Of a ruthless power, over which one soars
To gain an access to vague dominions?
As we count the springs, and list the turns of the wind
With the primed devices of our heart:
The this-way, and the that-way:
We wonder what seasons can be conquered.
I’ve given up, though, on circles being more, or less,
Or not quite imperfect.

“You better get inside,” says the bird.
And is it a rick, or a bat? No.
It’s a hummingbird, and it darts and speeds
Like F-111s, with a bomb tucked in its bum.
It catches me *very* off guard:
OUT OF NOWHERE, this thing, this thing that
Wings the air in mid-summer, eyes flashing
More go lights than stop lights . . .
(Dot dot dot.)
And as the mind wanders one wonders why it was
T. S. Eliot was so unhappy. Maybe he
Had no hummingbirds! Maybe they were all
Killed off by the war, or the wars. And then, which one?
But the hummingbird may be a little war
Within itself, though I judge it not,

Lest my own wings would fall. Who could win
A race with such a humming bird? And is it
Faster than the grasshopper thing? You know,
The one that is the graveyard type. That one's
Got to be the fastest thing on *this* planet,
Putting the cheetah in the dust behind it,
Like some worn out dragster on a Sunday afternoon.
Maybe to stay awake one needs the butterfly kisses
From a hummingbird!

2.

The evening moves among the errant moving
Moon, the clouds dipping ice cream, rain
Having come and gone from the inner lives
To the outer lives, with dogs barking
Like kettle drums, a symphony that's being written;
And would it be written by some grand master
Turning the stars? For after all the dooryards,
And after all the comic wars, after the cheetahs
Chasing the hummingbirds, sweet, sweet sleep.

A young retired man is so relaxed
The dogs gather round him in his sleep,
With crepe myrtles enhancing his nose,
His moment of retirement coming on like
A freight train, that which is not stopping, but tearing up
The tracks, blending time with more time,
Roaring through the past like steely wool
Hurricanes. But this man, the retired man,
Seems almost to be content, and maybe needs
A few million dollars as mere pittance.
Shall we give it? And from the savings?
From the odorous stack of twenties
Old religions have given me?
And this would be almost enough.

II.

1.

But the poem goes on, like that very freight train.

Look here! Oddeta, or John Hammons, the physics teacher,
Or Elizabeth Cotton, picking her guitar
Which Steven Stills adored. But make no mince
Of words, she said; for these are not words
Made over toast and tea. (Three magpies
Come in from the Wallace poem) –
These things, along with the git-alongs
Can make a poor man blush. Stop and notice
The poverty of saints. Eye yie yie yie yie!

But somewhere in this muss of candle fire
(Some trickling to the voo-doo hex)
The work goes on; and grace, the sweet afterbirth
Of manna, comes within the Hebrew chant
To round out the morning's dawn:
A good shot of the old adrenal!

“Hey, I’m coming apart over here!”
That line for that movie had to not have been in the script,
Taken clandestinely, and put later on in the show.
Yet Ranzo Rizzo, that candidate for New York’s mayor –
Heck, who wouldn’t vote for him?!
(If hard work were fatal, my ole man
Would have been dead, long ago . . .)

2.

We all have had our struggles, and Ranzo has his;
Many and many a poor Ranzos in this world.

So, support the United Negro College Fund.
For America was built by Negroes! Gonna pick that cotton,
And pick it on the Milky Way!
– My brother wrote that line, that last one.
Always, he was a little Shakespeare.
“Git outta town, Billy Shakespeare!”

And why should we not all be getting better?
I ask such a question in what’s my line,
Or for the truth and consequences, with Fonzies
In the breadline – outta work actor, has got to be
Jewish. Seen him lately?

Or do we see anything, says Tiresias.

No I am not king Tiresias, nor was meant to be,
Or not to be. For we have glaucoma medicine
Nowadays, for that. Halle-hallelujah!

And if old Plato says that all things that are,
Head toward a perfect Good, (I’m sure
He told Aristotle that), we just have to deal
With the not-so-good.

Sometime I feel like an old rug,
Needing someone to make re-weave.
And where is the second person?

III.

1.

I think that that was what Martin Buber
Was all about. You know Martin,
The German theologian.

One little two little three little theologians.
You gotta write like you've got to leave the room
After every syllable. (James Dean said that,
More or less. And he was a friend of mine.)

Dad says that it's okay to write about Nature,
Again.
The mating mockingbirds, here again. Do they
Reach each other's tune, or rather – tunes?
Do they have to have each other (or *one another*)?
Or will they leave, and cut each other's hearts out,
Feed them to those kittycats? You know . . .
People do that. Had it happen to me once,
Back in a Dark Moon, back in Loo-sie-anna.
I lived for forty years in Loo-sie-anna.
And I died, for f-f-f-orty years, in Louisiana!
Got to be the best place to live, cultures
Abounding, open-mindedness, closed-mindedness –
No-mindedness. Baby, you got to learn
How to read. Like, it's mandatory.
And the beat goes on . . .

2.

My grandpa was not a cop; he was a Peace Officer –
And that is a difference. And he read the old
True Detective magazines, on account of
It gave him insight into how the crimes are solved.
How about a little salve, for solving the crimes?
You can help. You take a bath in it.
My granny – that angel – had the hardest life of all;
Had a deformed, idiot woman-child, with seizures
Galore. She was there. And with the least little sudden noise,
She (the aunt) would lose it all. At two a.m., four a.m. –
And I would rub her arthritic hands with Ben Gay,
And fight off the mosquitoes, and with her,

I would occasionally play Battle. Now that was a hard life.
And Gran would care for her with the patience
Of a female Job, this poor offspring of hers.
And Norman Lear should say: It's all
In all of our families. Just look around.
And does that make sense?
And does it make . . . at all, *any* sense?

And one angel falls in love
With another angel, for that's the rule;
No getting around it. And we stop and spit,
And we run wild, and we cry (at many different volumes),
And we cry then again. The idiot woman-child
Would not cry. She had no tears. She was dry.

You know, I think that she loved me, in her own
And only way. But there was a sense of
Duty, to the family, to life, the human race.
And she had her own sense of duty –
Way out there in a fog, somewhere.

Nature seems to float away, doesn't it, among
The asphalt, the pavement, the cars, boats
And trains, running late, running too fast,
Running for the money, to see the show –
Getting lost in the vicarious nature
Created first, by the photograph? It
Gave us vanity, sweet vanity, an image of ourselves.
That is, from the painting, to the photograph, to the movie,
To the television; and then on farther, to the computer.
Anybody left for frisbee?

(The hummingbird checks out the mockingbird;
But it's a no-go.)

IV.

1.

I love you more than this old hacker
Could ever tell. You know who you are.
And not many do. But then, these are all archetypes,
And relative. Is that what these mockingbirds
Are all about – or as Pawpaw would say:
The *mawking-boids*. (They say that,
In North Carolina:
And he could whistle up a dove, many times.
I guess he had a passion for the turtledoves.
Old man, long gone, in the ground.)
Just remember what I say,
And remind me of it, later.
My heart still thumps, in my chest, for you, and only you.

“Get the groceries, immediately. I’ve got work to do!”

“Do you think I haven’t got work to do?”

“Work, smirk. Get the groceries!”

“Yessuh, Boss.”

Are we moving toward a matriarchal society?

No problem. It’s about time.

What door am I going out; what door

Am I going in? What door am I going in –

You know the rest. Is this Janus-u-ary?

2.

In the benediction of all Time, (and Time
Must have a benediction), let there be

Bells on top of bells, peals

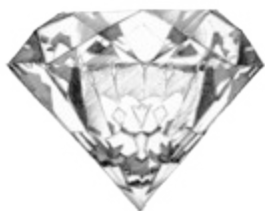
From the mountains of Heaven,

Rung by the angels seeking their own lofty thought.

One thing we shall do, and can do, is think.
And a *genius* is one who speaks the phrase,
Or maybe even just thinks one phrase,
If they perchance be near mute.

Take away the voice, and the mind will sing.
Take away the sight, and the heart will then see.
Take away all feeling, and we'll manage.
We'll manage, we'll manage, we'll manage.

And that is because of tautological truth.
I think I've said that before.





Sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis

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