

R

eturning
from
the P pyramid



Early & New | Benjamin
Poems Kimble
Rogers



RETURNING FROM THE PYRAMID

Returning
from the
Pyramid



Benjamin
Kimble
Rogers

PONDEROSA PRESS
Plano, Texas

Other books by Benjamin K. Rogers:

Holding Five Aces

Copyright © 2009 Benjamin Kimble Rogers. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Email: BenRogers59@aol.com
www.BenjaminKRogers.com

Cover Design, Book Design, and Artwork by Lacey Stinson.
Email: Painter@DancingOkra.com
www.DancingOkra.com

Back Cover Photography:
James Thomas Rogers, Jr.

Ponderosa Press
1724 Huron Trail
Plano, Texas 75075

Third Edition

Contents

I.	
A Gathering of Old Men	9
An Expression	10
Sign Up For This	11
Poem Unable to Reform	12
Telegraphic Stars	13
W. H. Auden's Face	15
Sestina: Needing to be Awakened	16
Lines for Those Waking	18
Returning From the Pyramid	19
Confucius Would Agree	20
A Posture of the Reclining Buddha	21
Hangovers of the Heart	22
My Body Sags: A Villanelle	23
II.	
Elegy Beyond any Replacement	27
Attempts at New Differences	28
An Odd Course in Likemindedness	29
A Midnight Dream	30
Ode on Easter's Spring	31
Angela, Saint Angela	32
A Riposte and Dialogue	33
Starting up the Computer	35
Savoring the Mystery	36
A Calendar of Parenthood	37
The Overseen: On Sylvia Plath	38
The Unseen	39
III.	
The Horn of High Pitch	43
A Burgeoning Prayer	44
The Competitive Audition	45
A Lending of the Palette	46
Spring Nights, or Spring Rites	47
Ode to a Dying Fire	48
Why Contemplate Beyond the Meditation	49
Elegy, to the Tune of Falling Towers	50
A Dizzy Happening	51
Ode on Sartre	52
Checking In	53
October Reverie	54
Just Being a Kid	55
The Grinding Aesthetic	56
A Car Passes By: A Villanelle	57

I

“Here are strange fashions of music.”

– E. Pound



*A GATHERING OF OLD MEN AT THE
DOUGHNUT SHOPPE*

The old men gather to speak of politics and their berry picking:
old men who are selling their age to youth: the price,
a poor penny on any barrel head.

And from the reception of these small amounts of money
there's cash enough to buy themselves their coffee.

Age becomes merely the most convenient implement
they use
in the quarry of time's mason.

These old men gather to speak of tournaments
and paradise, though paradise becomes spoken almost tacitly,
can be seen quite serenely in all their faces.

Their feet have been on the long, long path;
and those of their followers –
the ones behind them – theirs too
are firmly planted.

AN EXPRESSION

I explain this on the mirror
that has fogged over
from all the shower's moisture;
and with one finger draw out the meaning
I wish for the day –
not as a hieroglyphic, which excludes
the common users of the room,
but for the bright light which yawns
through the morning window.

I write: "I have found this day today
to be the child of inexorable parents, who had good sense,
who knew the best things of all to teach their children."

And I, not being a child, leave the room behind,
and the moistured mirror, so it can evaporate
and condense, back and forth, at later times,
for the garden plants sitting on the window sill.

SIGN UP FOR THIS

The atom has its beloved proton;
Adam had Eve. The streets of New Orleans

have the Mississippi River on which to lean.
These are all fortresses of reliable comfort,

things steeled, near-riveted, which can be seen
with common eye work.

The window glass through which I look out
into a courtyard beyond
allows the entering light to be a passing thing.

So it is
that that which grows, has that
unto which it grows; and the wind,

evident in the trees, is not an apparition,
but is the breath of the earth itself.

It carries the sunset's army
into a benevolent form of surrendered sadness.

POEM UNABLE TO REFORM

A lady comes in with a sack over her head
and the old man says, "I see you!"

"How can that be?" she says,
as she adds a second sack.

"But I cannot hear your voice," says he,
with a troubled throat.

"I would dance for you, if I could see my way,"
as she begins to bow and dip.

"But this is music," says he.
"And I am fond of browns, greens,
and colors that reach out in multifarious arrays."

"I will paint my eyelids bright chartreuse," she says.
"But you must never see what's hiding underneath,"
as she begins to dance.

"This is growing to be unusual," says the man,
as he begins to hear. "I understand her words
as if they were a nighthawk's cry to the leopard,
or a leopard's cry to man," and he begins to cry.

She dances more, falls down,
and begins to play with a marble on the floor.

"This is the world," she says. "And it is mine!"
and drops it through a hole.

"Now the world is gone," he laughs,
as she begins to cry. He wipes away her tears,

and there he sees what she had said he should never see.

TELEGRAPHIC STARS

There is so much left to be done.

Even though the bed sags, and the stars
peck out their Morse code,
I don't know what to do.

I would inject humor into a lime,
to suck it, if I could.

Even Nefertiti's smile (if she had one)
would not be worth emulating.

I am so ragtag tired
of these ragtag days,
and ragtag tatterings mixed with smatterings.

The poem comes in here

About a rich man who dies,
and leaves his money to a moron.

Sometimes I think I'd be that moron
after all the money's spent.

Rather than "guess" about it, I'll know what to do.

This message has been brought to you
by telegraphic stars.



W. H. AUDEN'S FACE

There was a line in Auden's face
For every line he wrote;
He wrote them straight
And wrote them to turn;
The fire of his eyes would burn
With a literary fate;
A not uncommon bloke
Who led with the upper case.

Mark time with the shift of his eyes,
For they had studied the bards
With a dance that Nijinsky
Could not command,
Or take into his Russian hand
And offer to Stravinsky
To shuffle with his cards
A new ballet for others to surmise.

It is a redundant surprise
That Auden's face and Auden's lines
Could be the epic
That he never wrote,
The words that no one ever spoke
Or made of them a relic.
He had proven, in his times,
The ways of words to be unwise.

SESTINA: NEEDING TO BE AWAKENED

A hot cup of coffee will do the trick,
Poured in among the sleepy elements
Where laziness maintains its consternation
To be aroused. There is not one single
Spiritual effort that is preferred
Above my numb, drowsy malingering.

Yet I cannot prove my malingering
To be a better magic, the sure trick
To turn a card the way that is preferred.
Not on my life I'll bet that elements
Know what I'm up to, in every single
Clock-struck moment. In my consternation,

I realize that my consternation
Could be the cause of my malingering,
Behind one piece of toast and a single
Coffee cup. Should one dare to play a trick,
And send me back into the elements
And douse me in a way that they preferred?

No, it is not in the least bit preferred,
In the midst of all this consternation,
All this gaff among many elements:
To roll all of my feigned malingering
Into one final, smoothly parlayed trick,
As if that could be a hardy, single

Answer to questions that have no single
Mode of quest. It's not the least so preferred.
I think that the coffee shall do the trick:
The caffeine magic: no consternation
In those chemicals. My malingering
Will be perked back toward the elements.

And it's not I'm afraid of elements –
I am familiar with every single
One, their place, their ploys. My malingering
Is fully conscious of what's now preferred.
We all have choice. There's the consternation
Of life's probable, pitiable trick.

Elements make their sciences preferred.
A single man knows much consternation
Malingering within the wild world's trick!



LINES FOR THOSE WAKING

No man dreams here. The twig is broken
by the weight of winter.
The distant voices in the wet, red clay,

where the men worked years ago
to make the road, can be heard.

We have fallen here, together, by the pine,
by the new growth of winter,
below gray sky: a Southern immortality.

The sap from the tree
heals wounds too young to notice,
too old to forget.

A fence post claims its support
from the will of strong ground.

We've fallen here, winter day, gray life,
fresh apple soon to come.

And in all this silence,
where the insect bites the quiet, all men dream.

RETURNING FROM THE PYRAMID

Glen Kennedy, in memoriam

The febrile, sub rosa languages of mythos
have been so eagerly uttered, in grunts,
by this caravan's leader. And he leads,
and a caravan, a chain, becomes
the talisman of distance – it stretches, halts,
and links the sands of almost every desert.

The speaker's speech, his visceral throb,
his sweet-laden punch of sound,
are not really understood by anyone at all;
yet they bring relief to ears for those behind
who search the night sky
and guess which way it is his guiding leads.

What pay shall this champion get
for his amusement? And what shall break out
of the dull night as a transparency meant for light's invention?

What cost shall he tally, and then assay,
for all his formal knowledge of the secrets held in mystery?
And what febrile, sub rosa language
will he translate for us all, in journey's end?

CONFUCIUS WOULD AGREE

I declare myself a free man.
Confucius would agree – but was he?

Of course he was!
And he was free
longer than the fingers of his hand.

Did they reach
the snow-draped mountain's head?
Of course they did!

And even touched
a cloud's hurry:

and then returned
for rice with honeyed curry.
And from the mountain
where they probed a sky's promise

they returned with his affable wisdom.

He declared himself a free man,
and in this trance and dance
of my own,

I declare the same.

A POSTURE OF THE RECLINING BUDDHA

As the rose lies there, so does lie the Buddha.
In his nostrils – wisps of wind,
The sleep of flowers that have made his peace.

The nightingale, in one song,
Sings a gale full of harmonies,
Tuneful to his fragrances of thought.

Does he dream?

The bulbs that were born in his fantasy
Awaken to near light,
Their consequences neverlasting.

Yet he, teacher against so much pervading malady
Reigns out to sleep, and its decay.

And if he dreams, does he dream always?



HANGOVERS OF THE HEART

I have a hangover in my heart, waking up –
you're not here. I have drunk

of love's cup; drunk too much, too fast, too long –
too sweet.

Now I have to pay – not only
the piper – but a blood-thickened pulse,

and a throbbing brain:
with the ache of dimensions I should never have known.

Oh, don't laugh at the joke
when it's on me.

If a jester bent to touch my lips
to convince me that I must rise to face the day,

I should pay no mind at all to his wayward source of humor.

What has left me in this coma's dress
is all the love I've ever known,

and all of the love I've never known.

MY BODY SAGS: A VILLANELLE

My body sags from weight I cannot see.
So much unseen drags out a savage rail.
I'll look for things that teach me just – to be.

Though any measure sets the measure free,
Such heaviness of thought will break the scale;
My body sags from weight I cannot see.

And though my mind may have fragility,
The strength of wind learns from the strength of sail;
I'll look for things that teach me just – to be.

And nature could avail its courtesy
To lessen up a load that shall prevail;
My body sags from weight I cannot see.

On harder ground: a stand, an Odyssey
Could show the searching in some fictive tale;
I'll look for things that teach me just – to be.

And from this being, such is jubilee
Which cures rank feelings that from chance must ail;
My body sags from weight I cannot see:
I'll look for things that teach me just – to be.

II

“...and coughing drowns the parson’s saw...”

— *Love’s Labor’s Lost*



ELEGY BEYOND ANY REPLACEMENT

For Deb

All the chess pieces easily fall over, when the table
Becomes tilted one way or the other,
Towards us, or away from us.

So it is that then the game is lost,
Determined by human winds, or by Nature's
Halting crawl – or even by dim stars.

And what's behind those stars: interlinks
Between, or interactions from, yes, the Beyond?

I did not lose you away from me.
You did that for yourself; and the statement
Is not even grammatically sensible.
But who's talking now about sense?

Who would have taken care of you
Through vast insensibilities? Perhaps none did.
It was too much, in the way that gutters,
In spring rain, take on so much more than they can handle.

Your garden – it is for you, and you alone.
See, there are the forsythia, the hibiscus, the yellow saffron
That leans towards the wan.

We have drowned our hardest memory in these colors,
And stark impermanence has proven to be
The gauged part of our mistake.

Take it to heart, a casual note about remembering;
And then we'll reach the final showdown with the spectrum.

Watch! Watch! We are hauling light!

ATTEMPTS AT NEW DIFFERENCES

The crackle of the evening fire speaks the ancient language
of those choosing to forget, and those
refusing to remember. What syntax in the flames –
What diction in the radiant glow –

Two motions are common here: remembering,
and forgetting – at cross purposes with one another;
as when it's cold, we desire the heat; and in the heat
we beg for April's shallow breezes.

Solitude in the veins of loneliness
knows only the clocks' ticks, one in every room,
one within the wall, and in the hidden barrier
to night's mystery.

Tick-tock, we all fall down.

We always have the choice to remember to forget:

See, it's warmer with new logs, and you've moved even closer
to where energy is depleted
to make room for comfort: a sigh
being the last flame needed in the chest before sleep takes itself,
carriage and all, down the quiet path,
down lanes lined with elm, oak, and knobbed shrubbery.

AN ODD COURSE IN LIKEMINDEDNESS

As I walk under the loftiest pine, on the only
hill of the neighbor's property,
I feel a certain detachment I've felt only while swimming.

It's a certain obliviousness to the state of things:
a lack of depth related to the Orphic daze one must feel
in mid-sentence of a hymn that seems to know no end.
I fall deeper into any lack of comforting shallowness.

And in this recrudescence of my need for nature,
I grab the tree, suffer silently the quaking of my arms,
as I try to reach some nymph
I can only imagine as being there.



A MIDNIGHT DREAM

Somebody took out the human race last night.
Nobody's left.
We're all gone.

The hit was made by some well-placed, massive comet,
hired by the cosmic Mafia.

I wonder, "Were we at all worth it?"



ODE ON EASTER'S SPRING

1.

I drift through this high, seasonal glory,
Its spring of fresh vapors broadening sense
With cloud bursts of star-blur, promontory
Heights which remove all shadows of pretense.
And here I find my own breath combining
With that of the chill of near human snow,
Crystals in every slow exhalation
Informing the face of its struggle, sting
Of cold air, immediacy of flow,
Subtleties with timely exultation.

2.

And the magnolia is not a surprise,
Neither to sight, or what's left of scent
Among the ribald jokes now known to rise
About – among this all – what's heaven sent.
And in the distant, cleared land, the acorn's twist
Deep in the earth, prepares for newer form
Where trees will beg that their treelines listen,
As if some serpent had bolted, or hissed,
Or worse yet, lay in the grass to glisten,
Awaiting its opportune time to storm.

3.

This ringing of bells near some holy hush
For souls in sacrifice, becomes too rare
A sound, an attitude's uncommon blush,
While the change of wind rushes through the hair.
And force, and all historic consequence
Bares down, a leadened weight cast fast to hold
True thought in place, much as a people's dream:
For each intemperate cry is of the cold,
A troth that splits the rocks to gather hence:
These bells! These bells! Behind a martyr's scream!

ANGELA, SAINT ANGELA

You are like ice which has melted on a frosted glass, in the winter.
You are the extra ark
which Noah must have built back then, just in case.

These odd skills of yours, which shine through your protruding eyes,
wear down the feldspar I'm known to hold up,
strained in hieratic praises. See,

the flurry which comes along with snow
wraps now about your ankles
with a dance that has become prolix,
in the very end, unstoppable.

Should any kind of continuance of a "you with me"
be stuck to this rising domain,
let it be lofty.

And as I change form – it's only because of you;
and the rare exchanges we speak to passersby
are lost in the street's allure.

They'll acknowledge us with their nods,
as if we are some kind of strange fruit.

A RIPOSTE AND DIALOGUE

for Amelia

You spoke to me as a train on the fast track of language.

The problem that this presented
was not only one for my dummy ears;
but it also spoke of your sycophantic, cloying need

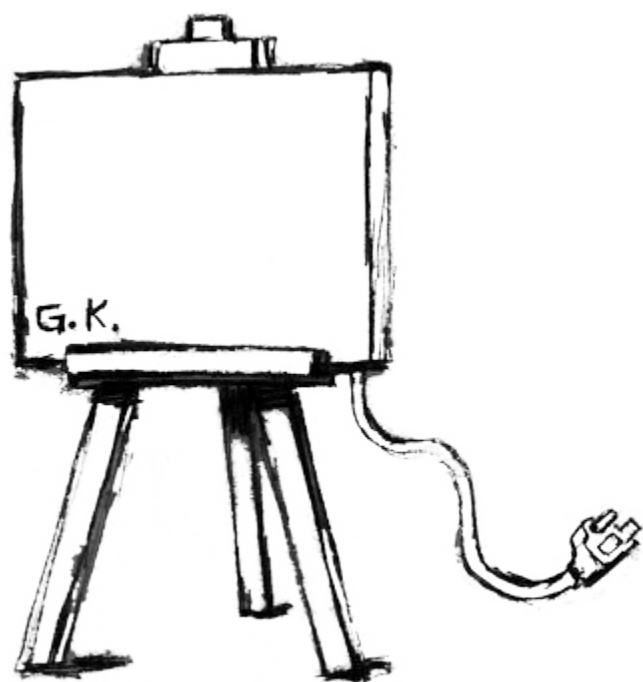
to raise a kite quite socially high
to match all your stately, bold affections.

Though the smile you can deliver
is alone the churn and whirl of a grace machine.

One can hear out there, an egret in solo, during the dawn,
calling out this, your name.

It lulls the flight of the keen-eyed merrywing –
till it almost stops, mid-air,
to search for a new horizon:

New horizons are that which go forward with your words.



STARTING UP THE COMPUTER

I take to this new endeavor
With wide-sprung hands.

Far be it for me to say that modernity
Carries with it necessary casualty.

When I look at unmown grass
I only want to dance in it,
Some dizzying Isadora
Still playing to packed houses of Antiquity.

Slowly descends the foreign karma,
And I move, glacial, embracing new smiles,
Joining the crowd of rack-brained neophytes,

Those who get lost in fine revery.

SAVORING THE MYSTERY

I am one big ball of twine. You
may take one loose end of me, if you choose,
and pull it until your own guts
start to rattle. One great sky-way
could be waiting for us both.

And if you pull with the furor
of a charismatic, with a crowd observing (in humility),
they may watch to see if your potential
is equal to your potency.

I'll hold back nothing at all.
My whine is the stuff of eagles!



A CALENDAR OF PARENTHOOD

Everyone needs to raise a lunatic.

And what would parenthood be like
If there were none? Take for example

My first-born. He could
Recite the alphabet backwards, at the age of three.
That means his potential worth
To be about as much of nothing
As taxes paid back to the poor.

And he could also sing some song
By Nikita Khrushchev. (This was in the mid-50s.)
And sing it with a little bit of a Russian flavor.

And then my second- born: She knew the way
To San Jose before it was a city.

And could get lost in the sounds of Elvis Presley
Till the cows came home,
Not to mention her other siblings.

And then about the baby . . .
What about the baby? We put him far away,
Far away where he could not be touched
By time, space, or abstraction.

There
He now walks around the room we keep for him
Built in the attic,
A room where I myself live, at times –

When the snows fall heavy on Kilimanjaro.

THE OVERSEEN: ON SYLVIA PLATH

She was golden when she started,
And rust when she found out.

I'm not one to say that stripes
On the back are preferential,
Any more than I am able to say
The door swings only one way.

She was tall in the mind, quite tall;
And that in itself
Was enough to project
Her into the guaranteed role

Of a Zorro-against-the-self.

She would never win at anything,
And we knew that.

THE UNSEEN

While the Halloween moon can appear to be a cold, hovering ball,
So does the October wind reek the witch's breath.

Trees stand more mightily, when they are naked,
And all their movements anatomical bare their bones –

The tibia, the clavicle, the femur – in a rotting brown shade,
Or a gray that's disguised like a gravestone.

The surfaces of the nearby tombs pray for the lights that are stellar;
And I move among strong webs which are strung up vascular –

Though nothing holds me back from the walk,
As I walk through shaded dark, and even darker
Than the lidded lead on top of broken centuries –

Or as I walk with skin-bared feet, it's over the soil's
Insubstantial, crumbled carapace.

Nothing will grow the fear of solitude
More than the dodge of something in the distance, something indiscernible.

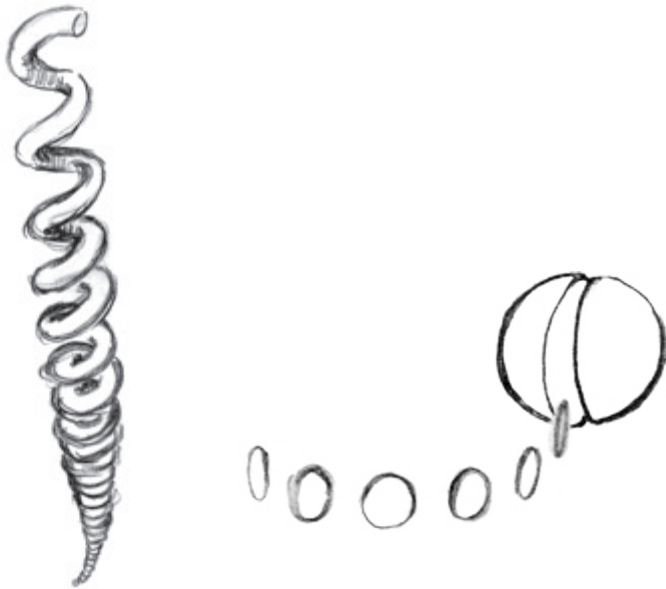
See! It flashes in the wisps of hot and nacreous mist;
Then hides behind a bush, one that stands
As if painted by some frantic, wild hand,

One feeble, dying, trying to reach, with its handy brush,
The beauties that are lying there, hidden within the leaves.

III

“The world was full of parents taking care of people.”

–Zelda Fitzgerald



THE HORN OF HIGH PITCH

I'll take any adversary against this awful August heat.

That year,
you were the connoisseur of the water,
the summer we swam
as if our reverences were in each stroke,

and meant to take us to the final niche
at the end of the pool. You turned to me once and said,
"I'll never drown again for love."

As we got out of the water
your bathing suit dripped a parable;
and I was reminded of the slums in which
I'd grown up, the maximum death that was there,

like oxide to rust souls –
an antipathy among all things human
which had rubbed out my childhood of joy.

And if the boorishness of my self approaches
again those times, either that chlorine arcana,
or the dregs of the shanty hovel,

I shall dismiss all natural dialectic
and move on through this life, knowing
a future I can apportion to better things.

That will be the dandy dance,
the chromatic move through cathode lights,
scintillating vapors.

A BURGEONING PRAYER

I knew a man who was disgusted for almost all of his life.
Should a leaf fall down:
disgusting!

When someone would sneeze, or cough, or sniff:
disgusting!

A bird could build one of the finest nests
in a nearby maple tree: disgusting!

 This man could take a wine glass
filled with hope,
and turn it into a tin can

filled with despair. Such sadness
was in his eyes –

That was where the “collected” part of us all lives,
the breathing of human sorrow; where

the dread behind the lids is a curtain descending
all of the way to the death-knell.

And this was where his music lay;
when he threw out all of the harmonies,

the sweetest cadences, the peaking of the paraphrases;
and even a final resolution. It was hard for him

to start his life on any day,
and to know it through mid-course, and all of the way
to the end, in sunsets, which carried no sweet codas –

tags that should have been built with mirth,
with a fondness for life in general,
and a true sense of satisfaction.

These all did not lead him to any memorable dream.

THE COMPETITIVE AUDITION

They both had the stature of two queen bees in combat.
And we let them approach slowly, as if ice water
were needed to cool their heels.

Paula, on the left, was something
of an acrobat, and could stand on one hand,
toes reaching high enough to achieve
the perfect balance of her wedding cake.

Jill snarled at the first judge,
until my own teeth ached. After

they had both sung mercury-like songs,
the vote was a unanimous sidelong glance towards the door.

Jill held up a finger as she headed out, silently;
and Paula's skirt caught on the radiator
long enough to give off the faintest odor of sandalwood.

A LENDING OF THE PALETTE

The hungry peacock waddling beside
the neighbor's water trough
struts and preens, showing almost all the colors
known to the rainbow.

As it heads down the dirt path
to a nearby chicken coop, it loses
some of its feathers to the high-grown saw sedge,
and the rose thorns – those
which were planted in the late 50s
by the neighbor's aunt.

In going through the open gate, some of the feathers
catch on the gate latch and loosened wiring
of the fence, giving an array of natural color
and beauty to the works of this man (the neighbor),
to his ingenuity,
and to the wires sewn fully and tactically
by his severe pragmatism.

SPRING NIGHTS, OR SPRING RITES?

O star. I know your position, your intensity,
and your distance. Can you tell me then,

does Nature have a soul?
And if so, is it any different from my own?

It seems that Wordsworth himself
had a dialogue with the soul of Nature.

If that soul exists, it must be imposing;
such that one can hardly deal with it.

There goes a speeding car by,
down highway 69! That's what I'm a part of.

Lost in civilization.
Lost in the need to define what time is.

Such as this is futile!



ODE TO A DYING FIRE

1.

I'll let this glimpse of cooling heat abide
Only to my mind's explosive fracture,
Where fissures are opened again to glide
Some vague thought out, a vain caricature:
Something that's held away, or taught new forms
Such as the lily, or as caressed air
That comforts in waver bold new scents.
Shall I relax my soul, then, as it warms
To think this rising chill becomes unfair,
Counteract it with a stronger pretense?

2.

Examine me, fire, instead I of you;
And leave myself beside the hearth comely
As this soft rug made quickly, and in blue,
With faded green, purples of Araby.
I bought them for home, such money's labor;
And it seems to squire the floor, render
Meditations of deep, secret thought, dreams
That shall pull a moon, yet not to hinder
Braveness for any self study's favor:
A cold house shall shiver still in its beams!

3.

Now almost gone – vain was its aria,
Where fear was all that furthered inward chill,
That further fogged the high laquearia
I cannot touch, though eyesight takes its fill
Of something higher, colder and less real,
Beyond the scope of human worth or need;
Where rumors transcendental bind comfort
To myth, and feeble majesty's lost zeal
Acts, as would the sea, calling to the port,
Where, at long last, each sailor shall be freed.

WHY CONTEMPLATE BEYOND THE MEDITATION?

These woods behind the house,
Mostly scattered pine, scant few hardwoods,
Deliver the silence of an escaped memory.

*Why could she build an edifice
Of such vain indifference?*

The house, too, is of wood,
And when I touch a bare foot in the winter
I hear a star creak,
And some new emulsion takes place
Across the yard
Where the walnut has stood, and far too long.

*Why should she build such rejection
To comfort the pantheon of childhood?*

One form of the wood
Is for us not to be superstitious,
But rather to work toward the feeling
Of how things, at good times, are together.

What would my grandfather have said,
Who built this house here –
About the lack of doves?

*Why she continues to rake
The yard
Of such debris, I do not know.*

ELEGY, TO THE TUNE OF FALLING TOWERS

Written September 2001

The stars lament tonight.
Orion tightens his belt,
As if pain has awakened him
At five a.m.

And what does time matter,
In such a case as this?

The hex has been put on
With Super Glue.

The markets fall,
Like those very towers,
And the lives lost
Are lost into eternity.

Rub the Lamp of Hope!
Polish the ideals
That have been lain down by Mosheh,
When he trod downward,
And downward, and downward,

Like water itself, tumbling in a tearful parade.

The grip shall not loose its tightening,
Like a sweetheart's grip to a rose,
Like a fast collar
Meant to strain compassion,

Like memories that have become HAUNTING,
NIGHTMARISH,
That wake a world from dream.

A DIZZY HAPPENING

The Gregorian chant
reaches even the ears of the mice,
the ears of the mice.

A soft lilt may be soothing.

The faint odor of bacon, once fried,
once eaten,
probably affects their libidos:

jaunty rascals, they are,
in their hiding places,

in their hidden caves
where they must be doing research
on what it takes to touch humans,
with foxy craft, and sly indirection.

I saw one once,
burying deeply under the couch,
one eye on my face

to see if screams would shatter the moon's Teflon,
if I then would lose everything, like I've done before,
again and again.

ODE ON SARTRE

1.

I perceive what I perceive, and meaning
Comes in flakes of eye work, phenomena
That move across the world's responded screening:
Branding the moment's prolegomena.
Then I know what I know, with ample sight
(Much less to ears), the setups of futures
And how they can supply a groundwork's base.
But what if there is nothing left to dight
The "something there" that's sewn with tight sutures:
Reality's young/old incorporate face?

2.

I hear much less of what it is I see
And feel more pains, and those of high regard,
To taste the aftermath of seasoned tea,
Or revel in the scents of food's reward.
Yet when this sense that can't exist returns,
Expansive proof of Nothing still stands tall:
One invests and wagers easily then
That Nothing has not gone with the seed ferns,
And peace which minds the histories of men
Spans – a dinosaur – The Great China Wall!

3.

Nothingsness has that solid Sartre pull:
He claims it "is", avers it cannot be
Not; for it measures out, has to remain full,
Exists, as would the princess to the pea.
Such a grapple! Such dim, far out notions
That wreck those brains which have far less substance
Than his: his I. Q. more than his kingdom,
Which served no rights to quaint, feudal motions.
Try, as we will, to grasp such instance,
We rely: his thinking was his freedom.

CHECKING IN

Left for living in front of the hospital door,
we look at the escalator from a distance,
as if it's a long line of hungry crocodiles.

The old man next to me, having achieved
great wonders by taking each moment
one moment at a time – as if
they were the rungs of a ladder, itself spinning –

steps through the door, then looks to me
as if to a savior, one that's condemned,
left to breathe a paradisaical air
in the back of his brain.

I merely shake my head side to side,
how we have to go on in. That no turning back
shall avail more security in this man's fate.



OCTOBER REVERIE

I keep hammering and hammering,
Though there is no nail. I keep on
Calling out for more and more encores.
The hall is strangely empty.

I've walked a frozen road
Which winds tenaciously among the spikes
And stanchions which rise
As if someone's sacred idols.

No war is beating deeper in the chest
Than this one.

Am I the cactus? Or the rose's thorn
Which turns to prick the rose
Because of apt proximity?

The reason that it does that
Is because it's the most important thing,
The closest thing, like skin. Wake up!

What we've all seen is sleepless!

JUST BEING A KID

I look out through this window for one more time,
because the desert, through the glass,
is one of whitest sand –
and there I see the faery-dancing.

And now it's almost sundown, in a weird October warm.
And as the month goes on,
the nuances of political games
(those that bind the airwaves)
grip in a gripe and a holding.

I shall not play my tambourine
to any of their mousy callings,

these politicians known to chew the fat
like some kind of tasty confection. No, I'm bewildered

and struck,
and I nod my head to start to sleep
with wild phantasms of a circus' tricks –

how it is that I can see the trampolines,
the rings of fire, the dance of a tightrope princess
who defies every bit of common decency

to make her bold entertainment
achieve the highest mark.

THE GRINDING AESTHETIC

It's a capital idea
to build a ship in a bottle,
at the same time that Hermann Melville's novel,
Billy Budd, lay open on the desk beside you.
That is a way that inspiration,
like a sweet perfume,
can tantalize the sensibilities of craft,
put it in a strong proximity to art,
till one becomes lost in minute details of work,
and oblivious to both.



A CAR PASSES BY: A VILLANELLE

A car passes by because there's a road.
Whatever man builds must conquer his needs.
Fate walks with a limp, and carries its load.

A cricket may lack a simple abode;
It moves through dirt clods, it moves through the weeds.
A car passes by because there's a road.

No one would envy the life of a toad.
It hops over water to rest in reeds.
Fate walks with a limp, and carries its load.

A bird may be singing an unknown mode,
As it flies in search of nourishing seeds.
A car passes by because there's a road.

A squirrel with one acorn knows where it's stowed,
Scurries through winter, secure with its deeds.
Fate walks with a limp, and carries its load.

Man would find comfort to break nature's code,
And follow its journeys, follow its leads:
A car passes by because there's a road;
Fate walks with a limp, and carries its load.





Benjamin K. Rogers' debut book of poetry, entitled *Holding Five Aces* was released to wide acclaim. His third book will be entitled *Small Potatoes* .



Ponderosa Press
Plano, Texas