

The reference to the ant, the lowest of forest fauna, can still do tremendous deeds in recycle living things and maintaining the natural world. The poem also brings to mind the fact that kings and princesses, even with the ceremony of royalty, can have a sad moment at times.

Nevertheless, the world is full of magnificent things such as a metaphor, which reveals many new ways of seeing and composing.

And finally, I cast away a coin which was the symbol of avarice to become a sovereign over the kingdom of my own mind and imagination.

Nottingham, England, 2006

To the Future

To the future, no diversions,
Spare me please, no trite subversions.
We have so little time for our own glory,
To write the saga of our life's story.

Don't avert me with sideways schemes,
No flashy urging and noisy scenes.
Making the worst seem as my own doing,
While I assist you with your own pursuing.

Don't square or round me into a bind,
In a frame that reflects just your mind.
Be a partner and share life's load,
Let's move, as one, up future's road.

Quietly converse, and then foresee,
How to make a pack where we agree,
With quiet talking and thoughts aligned:
Discover our lovers' path to one true mind.

Or:

I can do without you hanging about,
Less listening while you rant and shout.
If you return, and kindly beg my pardon,
I'll refuse to sprout in your social garden.

I will blossom beyond this day,
And, build my life a different way.
Lift my eyes, and gladly see,
A more caring love's destiny.

Beeston, Nottinghamshire, England, 2007

'To the Future' Back-story

This poem arose out of my impressions of the conflict between a friend's daughter, a classy ingénue, who has had an undue portion of unfortunate romances.

Her boyfriend, who it seems, continuously makes no great effort to listen to or even consider her side of a classic she-loves-him-he-could-care-less story. This generous caring young woman finally gives him an ultimatum and eventually dumps him.

Her resolve to find a similarly caring person builds a fire in her spirit. Of course, he will not listen and climb out of his self-centered view, and she dumps this feckless character.

There is a happy postscript beyond this poem, the young lady does find, after some fits and starts, has found a good guy who helps her build a real, sharing relationship.

Presently, they are planning to put their lives together in a partnership of love and caring, and are moving toward the altar.

Beeston, Nottinghamshire, England, 2007

Memorial Day in Brockton Town

Snaring drums, blaring trumpets, and banner'd flags waving,
Majorettes strutting, soldiers winking, and children smiling.

But at my side a blind and deaf young man craving,
To 'see' and 'hear' the joyous event's parading.
I shook his hand, and when he thought 'knew' me,
I tapped the day's rhythms into his palm,
I knew was desperately searching.

Confused a bit at first, but then as the idea hit him,
Then, his smile sent shivers through me.
With waving hands and rough throaty sounds,
In his own way, he shared the celebration.

With every able part of him,
He tried to express his full elation.
We sat there, that day,
Just two guys quietly remembering,

And honoring the brave men and women,
Who fought the good fight, and died to save our nation.

Brockton, Massachusetts, 1964

'Memorial Day in Brockton Town' Back-story

My dad wanted me to take him to the 1964 Memorial Day celebration in Brockton, Massachusetts, which was his hometown. I said yes dad, I'd love to do it but we must go in my MG sports car. I told him if he didn't like to ride around his hometown in a sports car he could always borrow his cousin's car. I was sure Tubby would let him borrow the old Chrysler for tootling around town.

I had taken the last two weeks in May, as my leave from the Coast Guard Engineering Station in Cape May, New Jersey. My four-year service assignment was just about over and I was trying to decide what to do after the military. Re-enlisting was out of the question as the radio traffic and scuttlebutt from Southeast Asia was not particularly inviting.

My next assignment upon re-enlistment could have been the Engineering Station in Washington D.C., but of course, there were no guarantees for the future. Rather than take a chance on two more long years in the military with Vietnam hanging over my head, I had a plan to go to California, and look for work after the service.

In another social encounter added more temptation to the 'Go West young, man go West' syndrome, I hooked up with some exciting people in Hawaii and California during my service time. Their approach to life was quite different from my stiff New England mind-set. The challenges they faced and the methods they used to solve their problems were new and exciting.

Out East if something is not broken, you 'just don't fool with it.' In other words, don't try anything new, and if you suggest anything new for something that's close to working you might get pounded. It was easier to ride status-quo-mobile until the wheels fell off. Then you would get up and fix it, but of course, you'd be out of a ride for a few days.

At the time, I was still a New Englander at heart; patience and propriety were quite acceptable there. But out West if an item showed the slightest sign of not doing best job possible, out it came and a new invention mercilessly took its place. As far as a New Englander is concerned, Westerners cannot sit still for a moment.

We drove out on the Massachusetts Turnpike, which was new at the time; this route got us to the Boston area in about an hour and a half.

The ride was a little fast for dad, and he asked if we if it were possible, after our Memorial Day, visit to come back home on the old Route 6.

This longer slower route would entail driving out of Providence, Rhode Island across the middle of Connecticut, and back to Springfield, Massachusetts. At that time of year, the lovely New England spring scenery can make any road trip worthwhile.

We were later to regret that decision as road crews were working Route 6 for most of its length, and the going was slow. I think it was three hours, almost double the time of the Turnpike. On that trip there was plenty of time to talk about dad and son stuff.

I think he enjoyed it even with the delays. I worked to find common ground between us, but because sometimes we have much to say. Still there was a connection between us, which time and distance never could breach.

I thought the world of my dad. He was my hero. Someone who could, at age fourteen doing finger-numbing piecework, could tell a baseball-manufacturing supervisor, "I will quit this job of winding baseball's if you cut my pay rate." The supervisor did cut his rate because my dad made the twenty-year men look bad, he quit working in a factory, and made his own success by never working for anyone else in his life.

Although, my dad was an anachronisma, a person out of his current time, we were still had lots of things and ideas in common. He grew up without electric lights, the whole development of technology was a wonderland to him.

I was able to talk to him about not only the many things a father and son considered common ground, but he also attempted to stretch my intellect during those cold New England winters. I can still remember him trying to make me understand the philosophical implications of Arthur Miller's novel "The Crucible."

My Mom said it was the difference in our ages that kept him from connecting with his children, as he waited too long to have his first child. He started his entire family after dad was forty-one.

But in my opinion age does not matter when you have a 'ideal' hero of a dad.

Be that as it may, on that Memorial Day trip nothing got in the way of a good conversation; that day was special. Arriving in Brockton, we Tubby made us welcome, as he had done for many other special holidays.

As usual the Memorial Day parade marched up through the center of town. Tubby' friends and relations were there, aunts smothered us with kisses, uncles bear hugged us to a spine cracking limit and cousins fooled around as the young will always do. One of Tubby's friends came to the parade with their son George, who was a deaf and blind mute fellow.

The loudness of the musicians produced plenty of sound and vibrations for George to feel if not hear. I was quite sure he could feel the drum as the sound beat me in the chest.

Then the boy's mother suggested that George sit in my MG, and when he sat in the sports car, and touched the vibrating car body his eyes lit up.

It was almost as if he could 'see' the car. While Dad, Tubby and the father went off to find a pub, George his mom and I sat there watching the parade go by.

The pounding the rhythm of the band music seemed to help him understand some of what was going on. And, even though he could not see, hear or speak to express himself, his excitement was palpable.

With this poem, I found, that extending myself beyond my comfort zone by helping someone 'participate' in an event that otherwise would have been close to him was a lifelong treasure.

This type of life experience has the potential to lift all participants in ways beyond comprehension. Dad taught me well on that trip, and the smile on his face reflected the fatherly pleasure he felt with his 'number-one'.

Brockton, Massachusetts, 1964

Mountain High

Hillock high and mountain higher,
Born of Gaia raised in fire.

Jagged peaks plague sky's domain,
Sons of earth pulls them down again.

Rising fast or slow with the earthly tide,
Cold in winter and sere in mercury's ride.

Builder and sculptress of majestic falls and glen,
Rising and declining to retake the land again.

Gaia respected in those that hear,
Those that don't, as with fools, no fear.

Mammoth Mountain, California, 1984

'Mountain High' Back-story

Staying at a friend place in Mammoth Mountain, California provided strong impressions of the Sierra Nevada Mountains' power and majesty.

Standing at 8500 feet in the town of Mammoth in the cold full moonlight, and looking up to the 10,300 foot peaks of this ski and mountain biking wonderland was both inspiring and at the same time somewhat intimidating. We hiked up to the 11,500 foot level of the Pinnacles in the Mammoth area and the experience was unforgettable.

Scaling the heights of Mammoth Mountain could be analogous to politics; some candidates want to be on the peak, perhaps even stay there, but the prices that must be paid in going down can be more expensive than dangers encountered going up.

Perhaps that's why so many elected politicians once elected to high office, do whatever is required to stay elected; they are afraid of the descent.

Mammoth Mountain, California, 1984

Chapter 2 The Elegies

Introduction

Generally consisting of a poem about a somewhat serious subject, an elegy comes from Elegia, which was both a lament for a funeral rite and a celebration in the ancient Greek tradition. So much of this unique way of looking at life and death has been lost over the years that its discovery is like finding an archeological treasure.

Singing, music and dancing was at the center of many tribal gatherings and ancient Greek celebrations. Funeral rites also involved a song or music from a flute or lyre.

As part of the Eleusinian mysteries, the elegy was performed by two half choruses, one on either side of the stage and they would perform their separate parts by alternately singing their parts.

Many forms of the elegy came from the epic style, which consisted of poems by Homer, and celebrations to Apollo.

The modern day Elegy at times delves deeply into its subject matter, and contain various forms of emotionally charged content.

Elegy for Louisa

As her father knelt,
And watched her young life fade away,
With trembling arms he cradled,
Her tender limped frame.

His streams of tears and anguish;
Her hair in disarray.
Constantly repeating softly,
Her lovely Louisa name.

The path from the gun,
Was not right, he thought.
In passing, relentlessly,
Through her heart.

This horror made a life become,
No more than a crumpled naught.
Rather me than her:
I would rather my pointless death impart?

O' bullet why did you not,
Away, away veer away from my,
Innocent sleeping daughter.

I'm the one you wanted.

Instead of her senseless slaughter.

Why did it so bluntly halt,
Childhood's joyful living thrill.
Through life's great effort,
And a caring family's love.

Why is life so gently granted,
Then sinks so low to kill,
And, where is our humanity's
Lofty guidance from above?

As that bullet made its horrifying run –
And tore dad and child asunder.
What more damage has it done
With its obliterating thunder.

Why did that path of destruction,
In the midst of our bullet-ridden strife.
Descend through life's corruption –
To take another person's life.

Was a villain, created by nature,
Make that raging bullet fly.

Or, did rampant nurture,
Make my sweet Louisa die.

Go beyond life's wild and wantons whim,
Make it simple, clear and plain?
What message can we give them,
To send them straight again.

Unrestrained Love is not the answer,
To this mystery of growth.
Straight talk and honest answers,
A growing child needs both.

Keep them on a moral path,
Correct diversion long before it starts.
Tell them of our humanity,
Don't shoot hate into their hearts.

Surviving life's mêlée,
Of ever-threatening ages -
Through evolution's dark and forbidding past.
Basking in the glow of enlightened sages,
Hoping love would grow and last.

Half a billion years of struggle,

As our life, long ago begun.

Will it take another million,

To get our civilizing done?

Ventura, California, 2007

'Elegy for Louisa' Back-story

As the idea for 'A Poem for Louisa' started to build, the elegiac form came to mind. In the modern English world it is a poem of pleading, serious thoughts and mourning, as in Thomas Grey's poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard".

Reading about this incident in the Ventura County Star started me thinking about composing a poem about the unfortunate killing. The newspaper story concerned a senseless and unmentioned murder of a child in Ventura. Tantalizing us with an overriding question: Why did this happen?

It is so frustrating to hear of the taking of any life, especially a young life, full of promise and the possibility of accomplishing wonderful things, being killed by an indiscriminate bullet. Circumstances being what they are in this world, a random bullet, as wanton as the thought that launched it, could have been destined for anyone. Life, what a conception, how great an adventure, and how close are have come to those penultimate rewards of evolution, just to have all our struggle, ended in a millisecond of irrational murder.

Why is it that anyone, be that person so high or low of stature, be of such a uncontrolled condition in life, and with their need so desperate as to threaten another life. In too many sad cases take away that precious gift from our million of years of struggle. And, more disturbingly if perpetrator thought at all about what they were about to do, what made them absolutely sure they were right in doing so.

The previous thought is so well described, so eloquently and deservedly put by Jacob Bronowski, in his seminal book, "The Ascent of Man." Standing amongst the ashes of Auschwitz, Poland, Dr. Bronowski attempted to connect the reader to his relatives who were reduced to numbers in the crematoriums there.

After all the struggle and evolution we have been through, will we ever become completely civilized? Have we learned anything from our history of destruction, genocide and annihilation? Will any or all of us, at some very opportune moment, say in one quiet internal voice, "Enough, we are done with our savage past; now we have become citizens of a civilized world at peace." One can only hope it will happen in some distant century, or a million years distant, if we survive that long.

Ventura, California, 2007

Elegy for Sarah

Part 1

Silently when late May eagles dance,
Among whispering, zephyr'd trees.
A lady's lovely weeping countenance,
Banks her eternal soldiers' leaves.

Their duty done and charges spent,
Their medals brass or silver shine.
Each at their noble burying place,
Honor and duty: far above the line.

Sons who paid more than heaven's rent,
Now tended in their quiet quartering space.
While she guards their lonely discontent,
As silent tears, desecrate her lovely caring face.

Part 2, Eagle I

Her young son's smile, at his first flight,
The memory of John swirls 'round about her.
His efforts as a pilot to remake the world aright,
As weaker men shy away, and then demure.

Defending and rebuilding a shattered World,
While brave men prayed for a more peaceful era.
His deeds are her remembered feelings and words,
That tell of his struggle in that Second War of horror.

After his observer plane went down,
In a near miss of pond and river flow.
In a nameless field, near an obscure Belgian town,
Twenty meters more, and into the drink he'd go.

An ersatz ally approached her grounded son,
"You okay mate; you made it to the ground all right.
I can help you, I'm an Ally not the Hun,
You can share my humble tent till morning's light."

He said, "I'm a bit shaken during my rough landing,"
His energy spent he felt vulnerable and enervated.
Lieutenant John had trouble understanding.

And with his better judgment drained,
Curiosity about this soldier stubbornly remained,
His uniform, clean and tailor wrought.
By the current battles

“Does this road lead to Amblève sir,
My map is blurred, I dropped it in the mud.
And as such you see even in this dim sun,
Can you help me kind sir?”

“Even though he appears distraught,
This fellow’s bone fides I must ensure.”
Lieutenant John Sarkofsky quickly thought,
“Our fatigues are usually as dark as battles they endure.
And drenched in blood in the battles we have wrought.”

With the unkempt look of this battle line.
John feared he might be a saboteur!
“The password, to me you must assign?”
The spy answered promptly “RESTAURATEUR.”

As John called command control at Bastogne,
And listened for the countersign to let him go.
Hearing negation; frowned into his phone,
In that second’s diversion from his foe,
Lost the edge that soldiers acutely hone.

Then, realizing the saboteur’s aggression,
He struggled to fend off a hidden knife.

A flash of steel; a second's inattention,

Another hero-soldier gave his life.

His distant mangled and bloody heart remains,

Amidst the dark thoughts of far-off battle's rust,

Another flag presented, echoes Taps' sad refrains

All at attention, paying tribute to Civilization's trust,

Of Light and Peace, he knows no more,

He was only duty and honor bound.

Faithful to his God, his men and to the Corp,

In his hallowed place, deep beneath the ground.

Part 3, Eagle II

Her second son PFC, James, Sarkofsky,

On a cold and desolate windswept Korean hill.

Destroyed by a bleak and empty philosophy,

A vile corruption of complacent Mankind's will.

Overwhelming in its malignant lies,
Brought death to the PFC that day.
With dishonest and cowardly compromise,
And inveigling deception, our guard to allay.

Contemptuous of high aspirations,
Freedom's repugnance and disgust –
A philosophy of a dark and crueler kind.
Fraudulent and built on man's distrust,
Unchecked, dimming the light of cogent Mind.

Ten-thousand to the right of him,
Five-thousand more to his left.
With pitch forks and hateful faces, grim,
Dour men, of all humanity bereft.

And up the center, the hulking horde,
Screaming of communal death and woe.
Empty promises, forcing men à la pointe du sword,
Overran her gentle James, and many a GI Joe.

Part 4, Quietude

No familial embrace or a warm country home,
Their resting place, cold and dank within:
A dark and grey and dank molding tomb –
No father to calm life's ever-maddening spin.
Far and away and gone, from a quiet loving home.

Whenever their ramparts from traffic quakes,
Start to rumble and then to reoccur.
She feels their pain through her heart's aches,
As they surround and protect her –
Family thoughts abound then quietly demur.

Among sacred, silent berms of men,
Tending those brave souls interned.
In dusty wind or misty rain and then,
Tearfully not forgetting, she faithfully returns –
Straightening all their flowers forever and again.

Standing her watch silent, bold and brave,
A night's vigil, without a touch of fear –
Her memory of them, is all she has to save.
Deepening darkness comes ever near,
Resting heroes now, each within his granite grave.

Brilliant stars fade and flicker in evening's quiet hours,
The brave and valiant, rest this long night to endure.
Among those well tended and eternally silent bowers,
Each nurtured sweetly, quiet and forevermore secure.

She straightens a wilted, fallen flower,
And rights a few tilted crosses.
Restored to glory, as they once were,
Each an epitaph of her kindred losses.

Part 4, Reflection

Remembering her son's noble face,
And those who bravely soldier for us all.
And on this bank and shoal: this sacred place,
That gave us our free and amber prairie grasses tall.

That silent platoon, hearing her shiver'd cries,
Each with a well-earned heaven's pass.
Comforts and kiss away her bleary sighs,
Each appearing as she knew them all –
Amongst a sea of jealous blades of grass.

As each soldier dresses up his bit of leaving space,
Casting righteous glances to melt bigotry and hate.
Sustaining slender threads of our mostly 'human' race,

They smile and soften their tender mother's fate.

They then group 'round her,
Throughout the bleary night.
Turning their backs on evil men,
And long past forgotten battle days.
One by one they spoke and then,
Assured her stark and puzzled gaze.

"Yes, Sarah dear, from our spirit banks,
Accept these crosses as ersatz bouquets.
As a gesture of our humble thanks,
For your warm, thoughtful and caring ways.

Our night's a vigil, for many wars to atone,
Our deeds will live by your concern.
Our actions and heroism will be known,
By kindly thoughts that you and the living return."

Then through the misty spirit throng,
Two silver specters glide as one.
Bodies gaunt with war, and visage long,
Each smiles warmly, as her loving son.

Drawing near they all embrace,
As John, her eldest, dries her eyes.

As James touches her hair and face,
Sounds like murmurs from the mist arise.

A shiver chills all those spirits 'round,
And they begin to blur from Sarah's sight.
And all become as silver and golden as the two,
Then the entire throng fades into that hallowed night...

...The coming sunrise hints boldly of the day,
Among fading mists, streaks of gold rise anew.
And along that endless Sepulveda way,
Sarah's face gleams, she dries her tears –
And becomes as fresh as is the morning dew.

Remembering her two hero sons,
She thought she'd never see again.
The fading night defers to newborn suns,
Then Pacific breezes uplift our spirits and,
Her soaring eagles of a reborn spring remain.

Part 5, Sarah's Hymn for Peace

Spirits of the Universe,
In your endless firmament above.
Grant widows comfort,
As others grant peace and love.

Help us remember through the night,
Our love of life and strength of will.
And support us with heaven's might,
And through our dim lit morning's chill.

Lend us your benevolence and grace,
Help us forget our hidden cast of fears.
As we walk to a soldier's burying place,
Amidst our uncertainty, and tears.

Give us comfort in our last good byes,
Much more than any boundless love.
Waving mothers with their lasting sighs,
Hoping each soldier will return,
With a blessing from above

In your vast infinity of knowing.
With a dying soldier's forehead kissed,
To keep our love forever growing –
Help him rest in night's silent mist.

Assist Sarah's mourning day and night,
Help her kindly to dismiss.
Fade sad memories out of sight,

While she forgives war's many things amiss.

And by your wisdom of the stars,
Protect and keep Life from the abyss,
Sarah's sorrows, just as ours,
O' mighty Universe, to dismiss.

U.S. National Cemetery, Los Angeles, California, 2006

In remembrance of Private, Otto Lyons at Arlington, D.C.

“Elegy for Sarah” Back-story

One spring evening around 6:30, after finishing a college class at the University of Phoenix in West Los Angeles, I decided to take a road less traveled. Rather than getting on the San Diego Freeway at Wilshire Boulevard and heading north with the throng, I decided to take a more quiet path home. I'd take Sepulveda Boulevard to San Fernando Valley.

Driving up the Boulevard past the Los Angeles National Cemetery, I glanced to my right, and through the cemetery fence I saw a dignified, well-dressed lady in black attending a nearby grave. She had a veil over her face, and was placing flowers at the base of a solitary cross among the thousands. It seemed nice of her to spend the encroaching evening with a fallen son or friend.

Remembering my Uncle Otto, who is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C., the scene caught my imagination. Hundreds of crosses commemorating men and women who dedicated a portion of, or in some cases, all their lives to the military of the United States of America. An echoing thought held me as I drove up Sepulveda; these heroes rest quietly in honored repose amidst a world of continuing conflict.

An overpowering thought took just an instant and held my imagination. Long rays of twilight casting shadows along the boulevard and into the cemetery; the interplay of descending sunlight amidst the crosses and cast iron fences made quite an impression after a twelve-hour work and school day. That scene was so poignant and unforgettable; shivers go up my back whenever I think of it.

I drove north back up to Montana, which was the first cross-street with a traffic light along Sepulveda. Turning around to drive south and back into the cemetery parking lot off Constitution Avenue, I let that scene's impressions build in my mind. As thoughts departed heroes replaced the cogitations of the day, a nebulous idea for a narrative poem arose.

So often, it is hard to tell how a poem gets started but with my preference for 19th Century Romanticism anything can happen. In those short moments before plunging back into the suburban commute, my thoughts rushed headlong before reason. Quietly sitting in the Sawtelle parking lot kept me focused on all those crosses. There, in that special place was so much bravery; a final resting place of peace. That was something I can never forget; there were so many crosses.

Writing a poem about this subject, especially about fallen military heroes was not too far removed from my background. Perhaps it was remembering my uncle Otto, who was wounded in the Anzio Beach landing, and was eventually interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Perhaps it was the thought of my dad in the US Navy in China at the tender age of seventeen that got me thinking about the reasons men to go to war.

Remembering these two adventurers taking up the call to arms in time of war, kept me full of honorable ideas; valorous military men, and how they served the concept of a free country;

each in his own version of a world at war. I never had any doubt that these relatives were two of my idealized military heroes. One other hero was General Omar Bradley, a hero of World War II, who visited a client of my dad by the name of Fred Vogel, who lived in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. General Bradley left behind a plastic raincoat, and because Mr. Vogel knew about my penchant for military hero worship, he suggested that the raincoat be given to me.

My mother cut the raincoat down to fit me, and I wore that during rainy weather until it literally fell to pieces. "No, dear, you can't wear it anymore; it will not keep you dry," was her kind way of saying the souvenir had to go. Putting an end to it, I relegated that tattered remnant of World War II hero to the trash bin. There was no ceremony, but in my young naïveté I thought there should have been. Sad, but that's how it is with young a headstrong romantic.

After writing down a few notes in the cemetery parking lot, I drove up into the hills toward home. The twilight and quiet of Sepulveda, as it winds through the Santa Monica Mountains, kept that scene in my imagination with a possible title. Something along the lines of "The lady with her flowers and all her fallen boy's crosses," held my attention as I drove.

Knowing this was not the way to drive, I stopped in a coffee shop on Ventura Boulevard in the Valley, with the 'lady at Sawtelle' still in my mind, I quickly jotted down some more ideas to lock them down. Actually, I was hoping that coffee would be like a catharsis, freeing me at least temporarily from the responsibility of the evening drive. I certainly did not want to attempt the Ventura Freeway in my 'condition'. A highway is not the place for less than one-hundred and ten percent concentration.

With all those impressions fresh in my brain, later in the evening I roughed out "Elegy for Sarah." Expanding my thoughts about her honoring those who gave the last full measure of devotion, and their final resting place with its encompassing, silent elegance filled my mind and blurred my vision late into the night.

I have done this sort of thing before, after encountering a chance thought about the day, I usually wrote out the words later that evening when everything was quiet. In the case of 'Elegy for Sarah' after my thoughts and little gems of verse, conjured at Sawtelle, were locked on paper I breathed a sigh of relief late in the night. I was always a bit gun shy of losing powerful and important impressions; of course the next day's pressing rush of living and working changed my perspective on the spirit world and faded Sawtelle from importance.

A few days later as I reviewed thoughts and impressions of that brief encounter the poem's shape and form as an elegy came into view. And, as the then current news of the three-thousandth UN-Coalition death in Iraq pervaded the media I finished the poem. The multitude of stories that could parallel the story of 'Elegy for Sarah' and her fallen sons reflect in a dark mirror, as it were, on all of what we loosely refer to as civilization.

“Sarah’s hymn for Peace” at the end of the poem is a serious pleading, to search for common-sense alternatives to war. As the Twenty-first Century develops, we must do all we can, diplomatically, internationally, and personally to keep heartless entities from taking control of any nation’s communications. But we must accompany our words with strong, decisive actions; this is the key to maintaining freedom. Observing tyrants as they rise to unheralded power, studying their actions carefully and not allowing ourselves to be swayed by empty words is our only bulwark against untoward aggression.

If tyrants, petty despots and dictators get to rule the day, Sarah will be shedding her tears repeatedly throughout the centuries. Here is hoping that future cemetery scene impressions will not be necessary and future imaginations can dwell on peaceful world.

The pride and honor a free country and its society needs and deserves will always produce a soldier who willingly does his duty. A small bit of this poem reminds us of the dedication and sense of honor running through military families.

Thoughts that pervade the mind, and tug at the heartstrings, when re-reading this poem, are the elegy’s most important elements. Standing in the parking lot of Sawtelle once again after a week of composing and feeling strong emotions toward this poem, a shiver rises from the depth of my being. Everything I believe in goes out to those who lost family members, loved ones, friends and acquaintances because of war and insurrection.

And after is said and done, the sight of that lady and all those crosses lives forever

U.S. National Cemetery, Los Angeles, California, 2006

Elegy for the Healing Arts

Ἰατροειδέ

Banish the Art of Medicine,
From the temple of Hippocrates.
Cast it footloose among.
The mindless throng of process.

Ruled by Rubric,
And Mindless Dogma.
The savers of the flesh become,
Feasts for bean counting morlocks.

The ragged survivors lost and apart,
Their pockets dry and eyes red,
Join alchemy's secret clans,
To continue in their helpful art.

Medical Masonry resurfaces,
To remember our past.
And hold those ideas that brought,
Us out of the Dark Ages at last.

Yes, bequeath our healing artists,
A sentence far from the quality of a life.

Line them up against the walls,
Of stone hard uncivilized strife.

Where the forces of process,
And commercialism take their due.

Then Healthcare demons,
Tells them they are through

Laying in dogma's blood soaked stains,
And the ruin's of rubrics road.

Feelings run high as,
Disaster takes on the reins.

Work and be concerned for us;
Succumb to our Schedule of Strife,
Let the calumny of our restrictive gall,
Take the essence of your health saving life.

Or

We can set up a scheme of our own,

And then abandon a sad sick-room politic.

Dumping avarice and greed overgrown,

Practicing humble honesty, cure the sick,

To a healthy, caring future of our own.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1979

'Elegy for the Healing Arts' Back-story

I wrote this poem in 1979 to highlight how precarious business was getting for the self-sustaining professional physician. The attempt to introduce the European model of healthcare was threatening America's physicians. Physicians were paid fixed capitation fees, by contract, which was related to the number of patients diagnosed. This put a doctor under the capitation plan at greater risk than if he or she was in a fee for service plan.

Incrementally, healthcare maintenance companies reduced allowed expenses, lowered authorized charges and raised deductions for specialized services. Physicians were on the road to becoming nothing more than salaried employees of the healthcare industry.

Today, one look at what is going on now in 2010 and beyond, can show how the situation has descended into chaos. The healthcare industry is participating in the destruction of the art of healing without any idea of what can replace a professional doctor. Now we even have robot doctors servicing hospital patients.

This poem recruits sarcastic irony to highlight the danger of killing the healing arts. Thus the term *ιατροκίδη* (iatroicide) which is analogous to patricide and genocide, could wipe out the entire healing profession with a legislative stroke.

Other civilizations, fed up with the ruling elite, have just given up the rituals and rubrics that held their cultures together, and just walked away.

Before they realized what had happened, the ruling, caste stands in a vacant courtyard with empty hands and coffers. This could happen in the healthcare industry. The physicians will say, I don't want to be part of the system. The decline of neglected culture can be cold and swift.

With all the problems we are having with healthcare today, those in the medical profession are taking a real monetary thrashing.

The costs of performing the whole range of the healing arts are constantly going up. Adding to this burden is the steadily decreasing reimbursements for equipment, medical supplies, drugs and support for this noble profession.

The entire affair is scandalous and unless something is done quickly to stop the humiliation of the medical profession. America, which has had up to now, the best medical facilities in the world, will be heading for a pending healthcare oblivion.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

Elegy for a Librarian

I am more powerful than black magnetite stone,
Stronger than mountains, aloof, alone.

I am the light of direction,
Pointing away from Chthonian places.

And toward the realm of,
The greatest of Apollonian graces.

I am the string of Theseus –
In the labyrinthine darkness,
Leading from the Minotaur of Ignorance.

To the spark that kindled the Universe,
When Mind echoed our greatest verse.

I am Flame of Renaissance –
Lighting every Mind in a distant brighter time.

Ardent fire, in our brains ensconce.
Build and cherish, our Omphalos of the mind,

I am Understanding,

Chapter 3 The Odes

Introduction

The poems in this section are in the form of odes, and as such are somewhat intellectual and imaginative in nature. I did not intend to follow strict classical forms, but rather tell an interesting story in a lyrical fashion.

The Greek odes were originally lyrical or musical in character, written in praise of someone, or dedicated to a hero or heroine who inspired the Greeks to battle or to some heroic deed.

Based on the Greek odes, the earliest of which is the Pindaric Ode, which in itself reflects on the art of poetry and the poet's role in ancient Greek literature. Pindar was considered during those times as the greatest lyrical poet.

The more modern form of the ode became classical in length and rhyme scheme. Knowing the proclivity of poets of the Romantic Era (1805-1840) to fly on the wings of inspiration, the concept was paramount, and strict rules followed.

The great Romantic poets such as Samuel T. Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Thomas Gray, John Keats and Percy B. Shelley wrote odes to various subjects.

These authors provided many pleasant hours of reading and reciting. Selected poems of Percy B. Shelley and Samuel T. Coleridge provided excellent recitation material.

Ode to the Art of Poetry

O'Thought: the priceless treasure of a man,
Conjuring bold images beyond the day.
Lead us to another time and plan,
And with your infinitude of thought,
Lead us to the poetic way.

Questions

What shall be a poet's place,
Amidst kind-mannered hearts and sighs.
Or on a blood-stained battle space,
Where the body, not Honor dies.

Find it a castle or a simple stable stall
Cocktail set, or Rampart's mission,
What shall be a picture of us all,
And, tell best of our condition.

Perhaps a rough and tumble social scene,
Where common, vile thoughts,
Bring all down to the floor.
Sweet tasting social kisses,
Sometimes bitter and mean,

In its all consuming scheme.
Then as the gild wears off their words-
Eschews members forever more.

Or shall he rest in calm stillness then,
And reside in poetic word's delight.
To muse, and rhyme, in a quiet den,
Within the silent cloak of night.

Where shall his greatest pleasure be,
In a graceful Mozart quartet,
Or a racing Beethoven symphony.

What will make each and every one of us,
Tell him stories that tug his noble heart.
Read his word and then discuss.
As their thoughts become the greater of his part.

Then taking thoughts to the universal Minde -
And reflecting in the simple pleasure of a sound,
Create a World of a smoother kind -,
By building poems with rolling rhythms round.

Where shall he find his destiny,
His paramount poetic abode?
What concept should he strive to see,
To build a celebrated Ode.

Should the quest be to know-
How many tears were shed,
When Hate near crushed all civilization-
As it proffered false prophets-
And annihilation wherever it led.

And then by rationale and logic,
They swore to stop this abomination.
Then with force of honest men in arms,
Stripped his scourge from Earth forever-
And gave life to each warm and giving nation.

And can poetry show us,
The heart and soul of Man,
Born of freedom's thirst and Godly might.
How it can hold the breach against tyranny's plan,
And express the triumph of the right.

How far to quest for poetic light,
That dims even the living Sun.

Where to search for the Taoist man,

Or even find the universal One.

And what of use his dreams of youth,

As he faces each challenging test.

Can he construct his search for truth,
And help an eager reader find his very best.

Requirements

What could be a poet's baptismal font:

A wild Caucasian mountain scene,

A quiet place or a lonely Paris pont,

Perhaps some place he's never been.

Which fetching smile will his inspiration be,

Or convoluted allegory will he find.

To make and mould a master poesy,

And complete his searching mind.

How far shall he extend his earthly grasp,

To gain a bold universe of thought.

Which pope or prophet shall he ask,

Amid the ravages they have wrought.

Like Greeks heroes at Thermopylae

Shall he stand firm,
As his shield and resources,

Protect him with a multi-mythic vision.

With literature's poetic forces-
Stand him safe from cold derision.

In his bastion of words and rhythm,
In his quiet den of reflection and wit.
With his muse in concordance with him,
Spinning and weaving words well knit.

With these heroes of poesy's throng-
He could converse, debate and linger,
And dream of great poets gone.
Eulogizing the departed audio singer,
While singing his sweet parting song.

Encounter

Then as closing Day becomes tomorrow,
Forces of barbarism's darkest night.
Reveals its denizens of hate and sorrow,
As Editors battle Metaphor and Rhyme-
In a bloody verbal fight.

But the Davidsbunde of Schumann's dreams,
Marching as culture's warriors brave,
With lyrics overcame those verbal Philistines.
Trumpeting, "This poetic art we shall save."

Then critics, thought thoroughbred,
Their cutting words forced down to defeat.
Severely marked and remaindered,
As their bloody forces are sorely beat.

There dark schemes of prose and curt reply.
Marked as despicable,
Then sent down to Ennui.
Once again on metaphor and poetry rely,
The poet, celebrating his lyrical victory.

Can the poet on his own, stand victorious,

Against such a verbal Tsunami tide,
Beat down arrogance, vainglorious,
Over brimming with Vanity and Pride.

Will he be free to wander in poetic solitude,
Seeking life's lessons in word and rhyme.
Touched by heart's intent or action's magnitude,
And discover thoughts more than just sublime.

Wondering what to share his passion 'bout,
What words give a touch of tear'd emotion.
Which phrase will make his condition stout,
While penning a hopefully poetic notion.

Promises

So he made paeon to Mythos fair,
For a chance to see beyond his view.
His poetic pleas were answered-,
By a ghostly apparition there.

To help him learn and discover,

Poetic things that he must do.

To help poesy arise and recover,
Its power and strength anew.

Then by chance realizing.

At a crossroads in the darkest part of night.

The lifeblood of poesy recovering,
A quiet Orb came into sight.

The Orb, like a shiver or distant feeling,

Felt on a wind swept hillock high.

Conjured hidden secrets lost,

Then saved for this revealing,

Thoughts we are sure we know,

Thoughts and feeling, long overdue

Amidst an evening's last twilight glow.

And somehow we're sure we always knew.

Fantasy

The poet asked, "Can you help me spirit:

To find mankind's forgotten poetic light,

And those perfect words that help him-

Spin delicate webs of poetry at night."

“If you seek the essence and rhythm of man.
Let your vision and bicameral mind join-
To meditate and sing you a poetic plan.
The story, meaning and meter-
Your poetic rhythms will enjoy.”

Seek the embering glow of human fire,
That kindling spark within us all.”
The wispy Orb gave him words to inspire,
“Come, travel –
Beyond the den, your home, this wall,
See the world anew, be there and see it all.”

The Orb raced ahead and faded-
Like a cloud descending below a rustic hill,
A shiver ran cold though the poet –
As warm night faded into chilling midnight blue.
Is this a test to sense my strength of will,
Will I have the courage to see the questing through.

Wanderings

He found himself abandon and alone-

Lost amid a hundred wild mountain dells.
Feeling like Earth's last forgotten man,
Facing Dante's fate in a multitude of hells,
There, questioning literature's grandest plan.

Where is my genius Orb,
And what is his master plan?
Eager, like a sponge waiting to absorb,
Yet vulnerable, alone as a hunter's hunted stag.

Now, a slave to the concepts he had wrought.
He wondered, why should a poet verse at all?

When words like the morning dew.
Vanish as a bleary morning pall,
When all the reading's through.

But thinking bold as his hero Hercules
Becoming as a bold impassioned mind,
He knew his poetic quest was right,
Steeled as with Tiresias' vision of the blind.

Armored with bold Apollo's visionary light,
Liberated Romantics from dark obscurity.
And foresaw a future bold and bright.
In building a World of poetic purity.

He brought down Prometheus,
Still chafing from his chains,
Never again the harpies would abuse.
Poetry's blood running through his veins.

He spoke of Knowledge and Experience,
Paid for by his sacrifice and tears.
"See the world through logic and common sense,"
Discovered in his many imprisoned years.

Then poet and his demi-god,
Traveled far beyond the pale,
Wandered the world fetters-free,
Across numberless mountains, cities and dale.

Conversing on the mind of Man,
How his gifts of self-knowledge-
Taught us to live by our own decree,
And find the promise,
Of humanity's grandest plan.

His Orb joined our wondering clan,
Like a mist rising just before us.
Giving shape to conversations between-
Towering demi-god and questing man.

Like towering trees in verdant forest.
Then old and hoary Prometheus,
After suffering his torment forever and a day.
Echoed what he saw of us,
"I gave so much to humanity, and modern man
Then he acts like a spoiled child, and throws it all away."

The Orb draws our attention up,
To the latest evening starry night.
To the grandest point in all the sky,
"Look to the Zenith for Apollo's light.

What moves us, and makes a thought remain,
Is it poems and rhyme, as gifts of quiet night?
Or bow to distraction, and crudely to abstain.
Then freely embrace our verbal spectrum's light,

Then poet's words renewed, now ringing,
Expanding, swelling clear and true.
"Life is the only song worth singing,
Till breath and spark of life are through."

"The reader's the one to verse about," he thought,
"A single body'd mind, or a universe of nations.

Listen for each quiet whisper-
Or a hear the roar of a gathering shout-

The repeating song within one beating heart-
Or echoes reverberating from all relations.”

Lost

The mountain passes give a paternal sigh,
And, show him the majesty of the starry night.

To the grandest point in all the sky,
Where Apollo directs him to the Light.

The poet’s mind flashes as the dawn,
Floods his semi-conscious being.
Those experiences can’t be wrong,
When they conjure universal meaning.

Perhaps the answer’s waiting there,
Beyond his sheltering door.
Among the wind-swept mountains bare,
Or hiding on a lowly valley floor.

Eschew the warmth to wander thus,
Searching the Versifier’s Grail.
From snowy far Hindu Kush,
To a cot beyond Dublin’s Pale.

Universal

'Round every aspect of the swirling earth,
From parched desert to fetching shore.
This globe becomes his test of worth,
His mind, his psyche, and more.

He wandered roads barren and sere,
Searching for his *raison d'être*
With Endymion and Selene shepherding near,
Giving all his mind to repay his poetic debt.

Consigned wander and write what he sees,
About the why, what and thereof,
And why we cling to an idea or disdain.

Poems and rhetoric and songs of love,
Become the promise, or then he should please -
Forget it all, and then from thought abstain.

Seeking universals in the dust of earth.
He sweeps this World for its newest notion,
All the while, testing the mettle of his worth.
And keeping his pen in author's motion.

With great pity his Orb appears again,
And takes on the search with him.

Helping without critique or blame.
Spirited that poet through mountains foreign,
Driven by thought alone,
The answers always the same:

“Love the doing,
And, when all is wrought,
Contemplate your written words
Amid a search for deeper thought

Then searching with a verbal looking glass,
From the depths of his poetic quest,
On a mountainous roadway pass,
Like a mythic Herculean test.

His thoughts tumbled over wit,
Like a recreational repast.
The sudden appearance of all of it,
Seemed abrupt, crude and far too fast.

Before him, chapel bells that quiet Sunday morn.

Peeled a loud proclaiming call to Mass,
Where faith and truth are born.
And, from life-to-life the sacrament is passed.

His ghostly Orb turns the poet to spirit wind,
Flowing swiftly past the faithful few.
And makes the altar stone, his prison inn,
And the golden tabernacle, his silken pew.

Within that blessed rock,
The poet partakes each rubric sound.
Then above the granite altar's oaken rail,
Feels the weight of the chalice down,
And, feels the touch of an unfamiliar grail.

This chalice holds another light,
A golden promise and a plan.
This one holds steady and true,
For all the ages of the universal man,
Brings us to the Teacher of the Right.

Search sallow eyes of the parish priest,
Gazing down at this poet's stonework tomb.
Seek better revelations than the least,
Who hopes to find salvation in a granite womb.

The padre's look in stark surprise,
Revealed by the poet's upward glance.
Sensed with grey disbelieving eyes —
His vision's double take,
Is more a question than a dance.

Devoutly in that granite space,
As water and wine poured in.
Into that silver sacrificial place,
The poet's psyche is white of sin.

He mingles down with blood and wine,
Drenched in a new Apollo's Light.
He saviors future ends of time,
After the parting Chthonian night.

Wild thoughts beyond the rubrics stream,
Beyond the altar rock below.
Then whisk him from that doubtful scene.
"Was what I saw: the truth,
More than this poet will ever know?"

Then the Orb whisks him away,
From his sacred rubric dream,
He flew back to his highway path.
Freed from that sacred chalice scheme,

And spared its prayerful aftermath.

The open road welcomes his racing heart,

As miles meld through land and shore.

The road becomes his better part,

And, he becomes it more.

And then at once he's all of it,

From coast to a distant mountain.

The rolling thunderous call of it,

Drenched in its concrete fountain.

Feeling a millions miles long,

Its tangled ribbon strength beheld.

Wheels rolling their thunderous song,

As an infinitude of stone and concrete meld.

Being everywhere at once,

His poesy gained life anew.

This questing not anyplace at all, he said,

It's in the dreams we do.

As he approached the edge of the earth,

The Orb sensed fear, and urged him even more,

"You have done well this far, my charge,

The sea is greater than any land.

Poetry ties up a fancy string of words,
Always hoping for one bit more,
Stretching across the vast intellect's open world,
Upon the sea of mind, with rhetoric as its shore.

The poet crossed life's ocean,
In one gigantic stride.
Then he flew with rhythm's wind and wave,
From land to sea, and oceans wide.
Spreading thoughts in rhyme that humans crave,
Sowing words of nations and their people's pride.

And with each revelation done,
A new poet awakens and arises.
A new day begins as new rhythms come,
Bringing joy and literal surprises.

Catching words in rhythms of our thoughts,
Casting them in phrases to make a rhyme.
Touched by all that we have wrought,
Concrete actions now, then ideals for all time.

This is where Intellect's answers lay,
Not in places, but in peoples and their time.

But on pages that cast dour hearts-
Up to an infinite and glorious sky.

Where quietude drowns ignorance bare,
He finds a contemplative spot.
With ever more experience to spare,
His poetry can forever be his lot.

Perceiving ideas, from some distant time,
Capturing each morning's golden part,
Wrap it in mist from a temperate clime.
And write the words for a searching heart,

The poet feels his pages gently turn
Writer and reader know the pulsing thrill.
Treasure upon treasure make us yearn.
A touch of humanity only the intellect can fulfill.

Resolve

Finding delight on finger worn pages,
And now an then a knowing smile –
Far from 'civil' civilization's rages,
Quietly and gently, read with us awhile.

Beeston, Nottinghamshire, England, 2008

'Ode to a Poet' Back-story

This poem is a question asking: What is the value of the poetic arts in our culture? When Science, Mathematics, Philosophy and Rhetoric explains things so accurately for the former two and so broadly for the latter two, what is real need for poetry.

If all we need is an explanation of why we are here and what our purpose is, then why bother with anything less than science? Isn't poetry just some dilettante-style icing on life's cake?

Can we learn anything from poetry; or more to the point does anyone want to learn anything from the vast realm and complications of prosody?

There can be some doubt in a poet's mind as to why he writes poems; is it just for entertainment? Will somebody ever read them. These are the questions I asked myself before I really dug into the art of writing rhythmic, rhyming, poetry.

Rather than asking all these questions, and risking internal confusion and halting dilemmas, I just sat out in the backyard of my sister-in-law's house, in the warm summer sun of Beeston, Nottinghamshire, and wrote out this poem

I just let the words, meanings, rhythms and the sounds of it take me where Intellect wanted me to go. I pictured myself in the role of the wandering minstrel.

Searching through hill, mountainside and dale, in quiet churches, and even beneath the earth to look for the rationale and reason to do poetry.

In the final analysis, between the story, its rhythm and movement, in that warm sunshine and clean English air, the poem gathered its strength from the part of us that is sensitive to *à haute pensée*.

Beeston, Nottinghamshire, England, 2008

Ode to the Mother of Knowledge

Στους Μάϊα Σοφία

Alone, poised aloof, alone,
Through Dark Ages of usurpation and demise.
For our shortcomings you atone,
At our temple of unknowing,
Your heart sadly cries.

More than the mother of our earthly gods:
Demeter our life spring of hope,
Athena bold, fearless and most wise.

You fairest dreamer of spirits,
And sprites undreamed,

A comfort of king,
Philosopher and common man:

Drawing your power from Apollo above
Bring us a promise of eternal life through your plan.

You bearer of bold beginnings:
And brilliant dreams renewed.

Lift us away from formless thoughts and curses,
Fade our petty thoughts, and lesser things reproved.

Make our dreams and promises to pledge,
Direct our hands with your overwhelming heart.

Nurture us with discovery and knowledge,
A strong defense of intellect to us impart.

Guide us gently to all known universes,
Mother of Mankind's overflowing Mind.

You most profound of nurses,
Nurture us, and join us together,
So that man and thought shall never part.

Los Angeles, California, 1978

'Ode to the Mother of Knowledge' Back-story

The quest for knowledge is so rare these days, and unashamed intellectualism is rarer still. We are living in a borderline Dark Age; denizens of a world with very little intellectual direction or drive, make major pronouncements that shape our lives.

In Russell Jacoby's "The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe" he offers that, "We get to the crux of our problem: a contraction of the public intellect".

Creating a quick new jargon term, although it works for quick media coverage, this remains a lessening of our intellectual capabilities to create and receive knowledge. This is a sad picture across all age groups: easy thoughts and soft news.

The shorten semesters, cutting teaching schedules to the bone, brief school essays to ease teacher corrections loads, and paper mills for hire cut a student from the broader aspects of learning.

Breaking up written material into short paragraphs so as to protect the reader from having to face a wall of words is unsupportive of intellectual growth.

The survival of intellectualism becomes a frightening path to demise if a reader cannot carry a thought or theme through a one-hundred-word paragraph.

But reading statisticians say: Paragraph breaks are fun; they give the reader a breathing space, and a bit of time to breathe. In actuality this is an example of a broken thought train (*cognatus interruptus*).

I'm not sure if the art of aimless leisure in our convenient-content media culture is beneficial in the long run. Reliance on entertainment diversions or walking the path of least resistance is so enervating, that it flattens passion and kills drive. And even more dangerous is an open acceptance of this intellectual decline.

Sometimes one gets ensnared within a tangled internal world of negative thoughts. Unresolved conflicts feed the frustration of live-in dilemmas. With nihilism and negativity as solace, the mind grows weeds.

I hope that someday, a teacher or professor will gather a select group of students and assistants who feel it is necessary to dig deeply into a subject. Not only for grade points but also for those pleasures that only a free-thinking mind can discover.

If you care to follow your cognition, creativity and conceptions to grow a new intellect for the 21st Century, I offer you high praise and encouragement. Use verified information from every source for sustenance as it is the milk of the mind.

Seek your fountainhead of knowledge to construct a new temple of the intellect. And as you build, use only the best information as your fountainhead. As the title implies in its Greek dedication go to her and seek the: Στους Μάϊιά Σοφία, (to the good mother of knowledge) and then accomplish great things.

Los Angeles, California, 1978

Ode to Number

Part I

Think of the concept number:

Countable number:

Friends, riches, kings,
Tyrants, or a googolplex of stars.

Or inestimable quantities,

As you fall, off to sleep.

In peaceful, numbing slumber:

Dreaming of molecules on Mars.

Sand's shifting grains,

Ocean's bitter waves.

Particulates in our rains.

Drenching remembered graves.

Reflect on exasperating number,

Within war's avalanche of fears:

While in a halcyon's quiet slumber,

A bullet writes an obituary in tears.

What is this constitution,

We have boldly put together?

With metaphor's substitution,
While number goes on forever.

At its end arriving,
Without limits to encumber.
And then going on forever,
Beyond an infinity of number.

Using tools for counting,
Accepted in any place or clime,
High conceptions gloriously crowning.
Bolder than a theory is sublime.

Stuck in numerical consideration,
Between space's vast eternity,
Questions pondered in moderation,
Is this all there'll ever be?

Consider other thoughts of quantity,
Friends on Facebook and Twitter,
Or TMZ's list of stars,
Endless streams of cigarette litter,
From lots of 'must-have' cars.

Or ponder inestimable quantities,
As part of life's infinite realities:

Society's success amidst human frailties,
Or Man's losses from war's many fatalities.

Humanity's survival by random chances,
Or Success's resounding cheers.
Life's struggles and advances,
Across three-hundred million years.

Or reflect beyond society's influential pale,
On many bleak and lonely frontier,
In some meager, stubble-grazing vale.
Many a wretched subsistence life
Where death is ever near.

Trudging through a blazing sun
With head and arms and backs all bare,
Under war's apocalyptic avalanche of fears.
Taking cover and hiding,
Against that moment, where
A bullet, bomb or mine writes an epitaph in tears.

Facing life's stark realities,
Amid its ever onward strife
Against our quick side-glancing blindness.
Between the subsistence crumbs of life,
While searching for the bread of human kindness.

Think of the years that reason,
Through its Dark Ages was exiled,
Destroyed by guile and treason,
As intellect was summarily defiled.

Men of mind, battling disabuses,
Ravenous, reviled alone.
Lost in the wilderness of excuses,
From many a majestic kingdom's throne,

Part II

Measure a quantum's never ending scene,
Lost amidst its infinitesimal immensity.
And find near nothingness in between,
And now and then discover
Pockets of immeasurable density.

Contemplate a singularity
With its ever attracting spiral array,
Where, within its infinitesimal extent
Stars stretch and suffocate,
Then quickly die away,

While even their is gravity lost and spent

In some wild conversion,

Of an astronomical design,

Where even time is changed,

Or is lost to us forever.

And matter ascends by infinitesimal combination,

To substantiality in its universal climb.

Ever growing by gravity's augmentation.

And builds stars and their globe,

To start the cycle of life anew.

Then shelter life in the evolution's robe.

And, give the world,

Of hominus maximus another grand debut.

Like a mountain headland meadow's,

Springtime with its rosy morning glow.

This all we will ever truly know,

Pure hearts build strength and intellects to grow.

Rather than plain and ordinary number,

Think of more sophisticated things we know.

Remembrance's happy feeling,

Of some long-remembered bliss,

Like one friendly smile,

Or the touch of a new lover's kiss.

Think of the grandness of: Valhalla,

The Tao's pure and simple way.

A poet's questing, the all and Allah,

To lift kindly spirits, and gently make the day.

Then comes from the mind: Iceland's Althing,

Justice, born of frost and snow.

Shrink not to smallish thinking,

When your raging spirit bids you go.

Inquire of everything above,

As well as that, which lays beneath

Touch the sky of knowledge and love,

Our evolution's kind bequeath.

And then grow to be,

Whatever you inquire about.

And celebrate this becoming,

With freedom's rousing shout.

Warm to the unnumbered plights of man,

Content with quiet knowing.

Assist when you can,

And keep the civilization growing.

Then go beyond ego's thin shell,
Or cognizance or number.
Reach as far as you can above,
Beyond mind's existential slumber.

Be like a quiet hero, when full esteem,
Quietly as the sun, after a solar plage.
Live in Apollo's halcyon dream,
And, reject Hades' hopeless rage.

Go beyond life and love's
All-encompassing passion,
And think on sacrifices made,
Rather than swiftly fleeting fashion.

Seek a brilliant resurrection,
In the rekindled light of Mind,
That portends a quiet greatness,
Of a distant future kind.

Part III

Where your silent strength of understanding,
Will help keep your fate; withstanding.
Then driven by your deep and wide perception,

Lead us far beyond ego's willful self-deception.

Show us Mind's lost oasis,
Where quiet intellect is staked.
Away from ignorance's basis,
Where all our thirsts are slaked.

Beyond the quest of Midas,
And Pecunia's golden urn.
Where an avaricious adventurer,
Will stop and gaze and turn

Toward geld-eyeing prophets,
Selling his avaricious goal.
Turn away; don't look,
Lest salt permeate your soul.

Brush that quest aside,
And avoid its trampling giddy rush.
Which taints by its limits,
And dwells in the small of us.

Look far ahead perchance,
To an age of sophisticated being.
Give the mind itself a glance,
To provide a better form of seeing.

Will our quest for a future world,
Bring forth a wondrous future mind.
Where Knowledge and Truth's banner is unfurled,
And become an intellect's paradise of a golden kind,

How many centuries, hurts and sorrows,
Does this earth really need.
To make a questing for perfection,
A liberal society overriding need.

Perhaps this will come to pass,
In one century or two,
Tomorrow will bring peace at last,
From today's things we do.

All our good will and good works intact,
Whispers, ghost like, with quiet simplicity.
And magnifies civilization's impact,
A fleeting chance at immortality.

The real power of modern man,
Is our potential for good and its legacy.
A pleasant smile born of love,
And a universal humility.

Move our existence forward,
Disregard ancient battles fought.
Struggle for movement upward
Sustain all the goodness that we have ever wrought.

Gently reflect on the One,
Gracious in her Infinity.

A kind and simple thought:
Thank you dearest Gaia,
For our One Humanity.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

'Ode to Number' Back-story

This is a poetic contemplation on number: small, large, astronomical and philosophical. Our world is intimately tied to numbers but there is a metaphysical world of number, and this poem attempts to discover its secret caverns and hidden alcoves.

The poem came to mind when I was trying to explain the concept of large numbers and infinity to my grandson visiting who was visiting for the day.

After I took him home I thought about our discussion, expanded our thoughts a bit more, and then developed this poem.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

Ode to an Italics Pen

I found you fat friend,
Long time no see.

You were such an upper-crust pen,
Are you still scrolling free?

Your bold lines more true,
When Biro pens won't do.

Or when scribing long lists,
Of Sanskrit is bliss,

And when turned on your side,
Crisp Italics you glide.

We'd write grand poems for while,
Of words to make someone smile –

On parchment or good linen weave,
So don't go away, I need you today.

And in some other pocket you leave,
Or if by fate or a plan, as one might say.

Chapter 4 The Paean

Introduction

The paean is a poem of high praise for those doing a special or beneficial deed. It can also be a hymn of hope to improve someone's life; we can equate a paean to that which we call prayer.

The paean was used in ancient Greece to praise and honor a person, deity, hero or heroine whose actions rise above ordinary.

It appears that there was less separation between an action and its result; between the person giving praise and the entity receiving it.

Where in our culture cause and effect is very well powerful in explaining things and ideas, ancient Greek culture, there existed a smoother continuity between common life and heroic actions by famous soldiers, kings and gods.

This is evident in the modern sense, where most British citizens can feel a strong connection to their monarchy. This is a remnant of that type of thinking, which provides a less distinct separation between the objective (royalty) and the subjective (common man.)

The paean was also used during illness or plague to act as an intermediary between man and the gods, or before military action to summon up those best parts of the soldiers and leaders, in hopes that the paean would bring victory. And after a battle was over, it was chanted or sung during the ratification of a peace treaty.

Paeon to Poets

Στους Ποιέ ειν Αληθια

Engulfed in the rising warmth of morning,
On the first of the lovely month of May.
Serenaded with mockingbird's repertoiring,
Like a muses singing a paeon to the coming day.

Surrounded by this my garden's music streaming,
Springtime parading its verdant splendor,
Forgetting cold Winter's solstice scheming.
And, awaiting summer's warm surrender.

Wondering from whence the morning magic,
Poems and paeans in charming rhythms bold.
Rhythms, rhymes and sounds choragic,
Sing praises of poets from ages old.

From Agamemnon's daughter Electra
And the Dionysian Bacchae of Euripides,
The furies of Aeschylus called Eumenides
Brought Clytemnestra's wrath upon Orestes.

Poets unacknowledged, that we praise,
Shelley's 'Legislators of the World,'
As from each bold pen would raise –,

A flag of freedom's strength unfurled.

Perhaps those who beg us, please,
Make sounds echo your worldly sense.
Helping meanings flow with poetic ease,
From A. Pope's gifted recompense.

Or from Keats in his rest sublime,
Beneath his Roman wedge of stone.
Gave us an "Ode to a Grecian Urn" in rhyme,
Our Adonias of the scintillating elegiac tone.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2008

'Paean to Poets' Back-story

This paean leads with the Greek for 'Poetry is Truth', describes my admiration for some of the grand masters of poetry, as a way to reveal truth through the music of one's philosophy.

It is a song of praise for those, who in searching for truth through their poetry, planted the seedlings and rootstocks of Western Civilization's literature: The philosophers, critics and poets of ancient Greece.

The tree of prosody has grown into a mighty oak of literature in all these 2500 years; highlighted by: The Renaissance and Enlightenment poets and the Romantics.

The branches and twigs of Western literature are so numerous, that my view is limited to just a small portion of this great poetic edifice. Those highlighted in this paean are my personal choices for a quiet night of reading and an exciting day of reciting.

In summation, poetry is the result of a conversation between your inspiration (μουσo, music) and philosophy (φoσφiα). Therefore, we can say: Poetry is the music of your philosophy.

If the poem is true to your ideals and ideas, then you will discover a bit of truth about yourself. In addition, if the poem contains a universal truth, then it is possible to discover more about the world, in which you live.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

Paeon to the Quiet Sun

Στους Πάχισ Σολάρισ

Sing a song of the Quiet Sun,

Warm and mellow

All tumult done,

A pause, a rest,

Artless, composed,

Civilization at its best.

No horrid death or rampant fear,

Within your glow,

Peace and life dwell here.

Heaven like, perfect bliss.

A waking dream,

Apollo's kiss.

Beneath your cosmic sphere,

The voices of Mnemosyne.

Revive us and for a time be near.

Beyond curses of wanton destruction,

Blood and fear, and cold dark night.

Past of the pawl of insurrection.

Make our earthly stay perfected.

Bathe us in your golden warmth,

Our strength grows, as you are collected.

A Hymn

May we be for now be greater,

And our lives that much sweeter,

Praise to you, our solar creator.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2008

'Paean to the Quiet Sun' Back-story

This is a theory that can gain some consideration every now and again. Well, once every ten years to be more precise. That's because a noisy sun can affect our lives, and it gets quite dangerous on a periodic basis. We have been in a quiet solar period since this poem was written in 2008.

During the high solar activity period solar flares and disturbing radiations bombard our atmosphere with all sorts of strange particles. There is a possibility that, these events can disturb the human psyche, and be strong influence in our activities.

This disturbance only arrives on a eleven-year cycle. Between these tumultuous periods, during quiescent part of the cycle, cooler heads can prevail.

The theory is that a quiet sun with less coronal mass ejections, solar flares and heavy sunspots allows the human mind to be less agitated.

On the other hand, during a period of the noisy sun, those within less stable societies, having no strong political restraints, like a strong Constitution, are more likely to get out of control or go to extremes of conduct.

They start accusing and attacking every shadow and imagined enemy around them. If the stress becomes too great, they might attack neighbors across borders. Internal dissidents or those with ideas that conflict with the status quo might be attacked during such stressful times.

Thus, wars arise, occur are resolved with some regularity. Since this current cycle is very quiet, we might be able to get our lives, neighborhoods, communities, and counties back on an even keel.

Perhaps our thinking will become clearer; creation of new ideas can be facilitated and debated in more genteel manner. Political systems can will be created and those in existence, maintained without dire circumstance.

Of course, its only a theory but this quiet period has proven to be a friend in deed since 2007, and if you discount the rabid individual terrorists inflicting and attempting to inflict isolated attacks of violence on innocent people this pax soleris has been fairly quiet.

If we keep our guard up we might be able to respond to difficult situations during a high sun spot period, and cut off irrational actions before they get out of hand. If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, then keeping an objective eye on those times when the sun starts behaving badly and rains on our pax soleris parade.

In a historical note, there was a period from 1804 to 1845 that produced very little solar activity. This also corresponded to a great flowering of cultural, scientific, social advances and general peace for forty-one years. Q.E.D.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2008

Paean to the Prince of Palatine

Part I

There be but few a wandering star,
Though trackless spangled night.
To stop and lend pure promise,
Of his gift of knowledge and light.

As a child relies on a parent's trust,
To a winter's bedside rail:
Sharing kind words to help us,
In the distress of our travail.

Your knowing light helps us to advance,
Beyond Earth and its discordant sphere.
Through your honest grace and countenance,
Lead us to world peace, and life devoid of fear.

Part II

As life moves on below and above
Rekindles an eternal flame.
The eloquent light of peace and love,
The re-enactment of his name.

Return of elegance,
Will this quest now be right?
Will his star defeat hate and indifference,
With an everlasting light?

Newbury Park, California, 1973

'Paean to the Prince of Palatine' Back-story

I met Richard Duc de Palatine in Hollywood in the seventies. I was in stunt man school, taking voice lessons and generally working the rounds of agents and studios. Richard was a Christian mystic who worked his skills during a time of Christian liberalism. His association with several priests and bishops who were attempting to establish set a broader views of Christianity.

He and his associate, John, helped many young struggling actor. He gave them money, advice, food and at times a place to sleep. His studio was a regular actor and writer hangout. He was a good judge of people, and could tell if a career path was in a person's best interest. You could always meet someone interesting at Richard's place.

In addition to stunt man work, I was studying the area of symbolism in western thought, as part of my college work. Richard's comments and hints about use of symbolism through two Millennia were very enlightening.

The concept of the Christos (cristos), as the anointed one was getting a good deal of examination during this time, as part of the rediscovery of Dead Sea Scrolls in Jordan, which shed some light on the precursor of Christianity: Gnosticism.

There were many discussions with Richard about the new information leaking out of the discovery sites about these newly discovered concepts. Much of this information was revealed and expanded through the work of John Allegro, one of four scholar-members of the international team working on the discovery, recording and translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The translation and release were rife with controversy, which stemmed from the attempted control of information flow about the scrolls. The current religious powers of Christianity could not stop the translation of sensitive parts of the scroll material, but they could, to some subtle extent, try to control it.

They told Dr. Allegro, "Andante John, andante." As in go slowly, don't release too much information right now. Information handed out to the public too quickly could upset the religious status quo.

Gnosticism is derived from Gnosis (gnosis, knowledge/mind/will/judgement, from L&S) was a philosophical and religious movement of the First and Second Century A.D. Concepts extending the above by

This philosophy had many adherents in the years prior to the Council of Nicaea in 250 A.D., where Roman Christianity was declared orthodoxy and all other religions were declared anathema (heresy).

Before 250 A.D. the major religious and philosophical groups and their interpretations of spirituality were based on Hellenic, Egyptian, Christian and Persian Gnosticism.

With all the different versions of Gnosticism in existence after 250 A.D., the Romans had quite a bit of work to rid their empire of this conflicting religious scourge. Therefore, they just used the technique of the Greek appositive, which places an (a) in front of the word to conveniently create the opposite (agnostic).

Thus they easily negated the most powerful and liberating philosophical belief system of the last two Millennia with one letter.

Basically, as Richard pointed out, the church used symbols to control the devout flock as well as hide esoteric knowledge from those trying to penetrate doctrine.

Anyone attempting to go beyond established philosophical horizons had much work to do. Of course that is the route to liberation.

Be that as it may, this poem summarizes the interesting things I discovered within myself and the metaphysical world of the early 1970's with the help of Richard Duc de Palatine.

Newbury Park, California, 1973

Chapter 5 Hortatory Poems

Introduction

The hortatory poem, usually written in a light, yet ironic manner is a exhortation to a reader or a request to do something noble. It is comparable to a modern-day 'shout out', as in Emerson's "tear her ensigns down" in his poem, "Old Ironsides."

The hortatory can be thought of as an encouraging statement or poem that implies a sense of urgency. It is a strong request to do something with or for the person making the hortatory statement or poem.

Harassment or satirical or biting comment on something that was not done, and perhaps should have been done is sometimes evident in a hortatory poem.

This type poem is sometimes salted with cutting wit and a sense of sarcasm. If this type poem is intended for someone or some group with overly sensitive temperaments, this type of poem should be used cautiously. The hortatory is analogous to letting off steam in an e-mail; the consequences are unpredictable.

The hortatory is a little bit less strong than the imperative, and it is definitely a subjective approach to getting something done or getting a person inspired to do something beneficial.

A Different Question

Have we tempered will and heart,
By fervent mindlessness,
Into an austere over-zealous,
Sense of kindness?

And left all chance of new expression,
Silenced by a growing PC obsession?

Has our bold and hot blood cooled,
Into a tasteless consommé of rules?

Is our submissive life of mindless conforming,
Excluding escapade and eccentric performing?

Are we so afraid, challenge and every odd pursuit,
We will walk like zombies,
On the safest conversation route?

Then we get frustrated,
By taking less than quiet umbrage,

Or give vent to our emotions,
In an acts of brash unsettling rage.

If we differ slightly from narrow minded PC,
We can life with expression,
And talk more pleausurably.

So think carefully about your words,
And create a communications renaissance.

Say things politely, and let language fly free,
Say it with eloquence, and not just to agree.

Give bare communications,
More than a fighting chance,

And make straight talk flourish,
Then all of us will grow and advance.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2008

'A Different Question' Back-story

This hortatory poem, with a bit of subtlety, asks the reader contemplate politically correct thinking and speaking. By blindly accepting the wisdom of treading lightly on our sensibilities, we lose the spark of intelligent communications.

And telling someone his or her thoughts and wording is not politically correct, we are replacing conversation with consensus.

The world is not perfect, people are not perfect and the possibility that sugarcoating things rather saying them as they are, limits interaction. Both sides of the discussion feels better but at what price.

Communication that is more open can be beneficial. Making a person

feel that euphemistically, nothing is wrong, and going along to get along is nice but it is not a viable growth path.

The possible long-term danger of politically correct thinking is a return to another Dark Age, where a whispered phrase in public or even among friends can get one in serious trouble.

The Twenty-first Century deserves better personal, group and mass communication and interaction, if we are ever to utilize the full potential of the Internet to lead us to a new Renaissance.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2008

Children of Helios

Long ago in a distant time,
When a dark ruler's rabid glance.
Convicted innocents of no crime,
As infant Justice looked askance.

Then the earth was grisly gray and cold,
Sulphurous clouds blocked the limped blue.
Brazen beasts ate young and old,
And ragged men knew not, what to do.

Then one milder wind-swept spring,
When winter's last howling died.
A crack of knowing sunlight ring,
Gave hope to tempers tried.

Gathered up the bravest and best,
Fathers and families, all beings bold.
Searched a place far from the rest,
Five billion or more years old.

They dreamed of it, then talked of it,
Planning through an iron-willed night
About the day to make that risky split,
The travelers gathered all their might.

From each to each: promises free to give,
To stretch across the wretched history of time.
Casting their future and honored lives to live,
Far beyond consequences of that regal crime.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1999

'Children of Helios' Back-story

This poem is contemplation on our high state of civilization, and our relationship to darker ages of mankind. Consider where we would be if at Runnymede the nobles of England had not forced King John to accept the will of his nobles and subjects? Would we have the Rights of Man, constitutional forms of government and individual freedom?

It is so easy plot behind closed doors or incite a mob to torture or burn a free thinker, but it is impossible to replace the liberation and emancipation that person might have espoused.

The only real form of governance before 1215 A.D. was edict dictum, the divine rights of kings, religious control and tribal ceremony.

Moreover, kings and overlords manipulated the church to their ends. In addition, to resist this control tempted fate and often brought on incarceration and death.

After Runnymede, English nobles gained the upper hand over rule by decree. As time and legislature passed, laws by statute, and laws of Constitution and Amendment secured less restrictive governance and rational freedom.

Freedom is not absolute. We, as a species, are not at the stage of cultural, political and perhaps even biological development where governance is obviated.

Perhaps in a million years, if we survive that long, we will all be philosopher kings, and will be able to rule ourselves in a civil manner. Even our current governments are having difficulties in this endeavor.

No government can grant liberty or prosperity; it must be earned by acts of conscious intellect, rationality and common sense. If too one-sided, sacrificing this group for the sake of another can diminish everyone.

Oliver Cromwell and his Parliamentarians in 1649 set the trend toward self-governance. The English Parliament was the place to make the rules for Britain. After our Declaration of Independence and US Constitution, the US Congress became the place to create our rules of governance. Through debate, rational discussion, and compromise, both systems work.

Finally, after centuries of struggle, demise, and success, our duly elected officials have become our representatives; we elect them to serve our requirements for rational governance. This is the way it was written, and this is the way it must be done.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1999

The Parting

My warm and tender love, I leave you,
With your sad and sterner measures.

To wander mountain paths,
Seeking not gold but richer treasures.

Your glistening gilt-edge plying,
Continuous from days of old.

Have left my eyes still welling,
No, flush, no spark, just cold.

Greater gifts so easily taken,
Until my body racked with craving.

My soul and spirit and will,
All broken.

Sets my mind to rampant raving,
Of treasures promised, but unspoken.

In the bosom of the Cornucopian horn,
Of tricks and double deception.

I cast away your madness.

Your antiquated rules,

And move,

My love to fields above,

And, let you lie with fools.

Newbury Park, California, 1997

'The Parting' Back-story

Late at night, after everyone has gone to sleep; I'm up and writing poems of unrequited love and rejection. Perhaps I'm overly sensitive, but it seems like people would rather stay together and let a problem boiled up inside them even though things don't feel right, rather than taking a break.

It doesn't do anyone any good to suffer inside. Resolution, either by sharing the problem and resolving it, or making a clean rational break in a relationship. If absence makes the heart grow fonder, perhaps the time apart will show the way back.

The system is conservative; the individual is a liberal free thinker. Without a great deal of help from the right source, it might be difficult to pin down where the concept of 'quiet suffering to save that which has been joined together' is derived.

There is a possibility of it stemming from our tribal and religious roots. Without this inheritance, we might not be here to contemplate the dilemma.

Newbury Park, California, 1997

The New English Game

Well K.M. you really have done it,
SNAP, the ball, and by God, run it.

Brilliant fakes thrown,
To the English team,

Eager wordsmiths punching lines,
Through their defenseless theme.

Words like cleats digging in for the bite,
Make plays forged hot in the sweat of fright.

The academics try end plays,
And mad run around rushes.

Standard English sweeps them aside
Like cleaning a sidewalk,
With big brooms and stiff brushes.

Trying sneak in word play,
And stuffy tricks of old.

Making points like blackguards,

Brazen, daring and very bold.

They taunt:

We've taken you so far,

With standard rhetoric.

You better get on our bandwagon,

And make it quick.

Your Freedom and Tightening,

Will never do in the thick

Don't sweat that English team,

Phooey, they only look frightening,

And the K.M. chases them,
Down the field with a stick.

Feeling all their morning oats,
They're quite proud of complaining,

The gauntlet is thrown by a 'no sweat' bragger.

His men: Generalities and Reduction,
Smile, strut and swagger.

But faced with your fullback Fab Realities.
They cringe and cower and melt and freeze.

Now the huddle,
Where all the training comes in.

The secrets of Standard English,
Shows his old ideas,
With the power to win.

Creative and Critical to work side by side.

Large Meanings and Repetition,
Taken down in their stride.

Sound and Voice to smooth the way,

Nothing can stop you now,
You are heading for your best of days.

The scrimmage, the line,
The growling, the fear,

But the Standard English rushers,
Are through like a spear:

The forty, the wind,
The thirty the speed,

The twenty, the thunder,
The ten, and he's under.

The crowd goes crazy,

They rip up their seats.

They carry off K.M.,

After his Olympian feat.

And, the sad little English,

Floats belly up in defeat.

Thousand Oaks, California, October 1972

'The New English Game' Back-story

In an English class at college, the professor K.M. tried to introduce a new more easily understood form of International English. Some of the class didn't like the whole idea. Adding to the problem, the class confused pronunciation, and it came out 'English'.

This approach was similar to some attempts to introduce changes to Standard American English in order to facilitate scientific and proposal writing in other languages.

This change would expand knowledge, and make the words of a document more understandable to a wider range of global readers. Standard American English, stripped of its idiosyncrasies, supposedly would make everything easier.

Of course everyone was confused, and thought the form of English we were using was just fine.

Formal English grammar and syntax is good enough for the subtleness of poetry but engineering requires a higher degree of precision.

The required exercises, which were like playing with colored tiles and strips of cloth, set me off on a quick and quirky poetic quest for a perfect hortatory poem.

Thousand Oaks, California, October 2010

The Bigot

Beware the bigot's prejudice,
Powered with ink-black lies.

Trusting with self-serving injustice,
And closing observant eyes.

Tormenting the quiet lily,
For the sake of the thorny rose.

Drawing deep from dark superstition,
First, slowly, then stealthily it grows.

New Jersey, 1964

'The Bigot' Back-story

I had a run-in with some politicians during an election where bigotry and limited thinking had the potential to thwart the electoral process. It seemed as though no candidate was good enough for the election committee, except the one that was in power.

Youth wasn't good enough, a fresh approach to political problems was not good enough, having endorsements from some of the younger business owners in our area was not good enough. When I ask someone what made a candidate good enough, the only answer I received was silence.

That to me is bigotry, and a limited sense of what makes government effective, and something the voters want to get behind. It's just one of our learning-curve items that we haven't conquered yet.

Give us another hundred years, or maybe one or two more election cycles; we'll figure this one out.

Be that as it may, the poem tells it like it is. We need more young people, open candidates, and fresh, workable ideas. Anything less than that is a travesty to the American form of government.

New Jersey, 1964

Phantasmagoria

While lost in a barren land,
Of blowing smoke and burning sand.
Blazing hues cloaked an empty sky,
Roaring winds did make me cry.

No smells of earthly castes,
Just cardboard creatures from stolen pasts,
Ringing and singing true to form,
With paper sketches to pretend the norm.

Time after time when I could not fight,
Monsters came to take a bite,
Of my poor body, thin and fair,
Hoping to find enrichment there.

My robe in rags, and hopes well spent,
They took my food, my books, my tent.
"Give up, succumb," said they,
I could stand no more.

I fled that retched eye-searing spoor,
Safe and sound I slammed my door.
To bed to read, perhaps to dream,
Far away from that phosphor scheme.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1980

'Phantasmagoria' Back-story

As I sat in my bathrobe watching boring late shows almost through the night. In their incessant demand for my attention, between scenes of the movie "The Seventh Seal" by Ingmar Bergmann, they seemed to suck the life right out of me.

The movie was scary enough that the commercials were really annoying. I didn't know which was scarier, a commercial or a chess match with Death. This poem is the result.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1980

A Modern Hero

He rose in New York's morning splendor,
And savored the Atlantic's whisper'd breeze.
His dreams of being innovation's defender,
Made appropriating cowards stop and freeze.

His bankers told him nothing new,
With their eyes of steely gray.
They smiled and said no thank you.
While they plotted his soul away.

Nicholas walked bravely into their meeting,
Full of creativity's strength and life.
He knew their plans were failing,

They were reluctant and obstructed
By fear and over-babbling strife.

“Dear Nicholas my friend, so real,
What would you like to say,

Have you a video game we can steal,
Or perhaps twist and crush today.”

“For you today, I have nothing to sell or offer,
Fortune will not wait, as you so carefully ponder,
You will not produce the game my way,

Which I offered you a year ago,
You just cared to dawdle and to squander.
So now's it's my time to pick up and go”

With this notice, I quit your corporate crying,
And taking good ideas to dust.

Your methods lack ideas,
Formation or even trying,

Moreover, all you give is headaches
And assurances no one can trust.

A Modern Hero' Back-story

Anyone concerned about appearing intelligent and creative, would not chance their careers by 'rocking the boat.' Yet not having any ideas, of their own they definitely need heroes.

The challenge to any organization is that heroes and entrepreneurs d tend to rock corporate boats. The business world produces management policies that generally suppress the care and feeding of contemporary genius.

Heroes are our bold knights on their silver charger called Toshiba, and brandishing their Excalibur of the creative mind.

The team, on the other hand, needs the group to bring success sub rosa, rather than have any single member shine. Nevertheless, this conundrum shows that successful people become so through innovation and stubborn resistance to naysayers.

It is easier to say no than to say yes, there is two letters in N-O. Quickly uttering the word no means you can relax, or go home with a job undone and hopefully do it right the next day. Yes is commitment, and means there is some more work to do. You might even need to stay later.

The Power of Y E S

There are three letters in Y-E-S, and these three are the most important a creative person needs to focus their energy on:

Youthful Entrepreneurs Succeed in other words a youthful attitude works wonders.

A few years ago it might have been easy for a manager to say, "Oh the hell with those prima donnas, who needs them. Heroes and entrepreneurs are an unnecessary anachronism. If we do the job the scientific way, and move step by step together, we will all succeed."

However, when somebody looks at the rise of independent innovators, producers and designers, the

reality slap can be devastating.

The single person sitting at his computer, designing video games can be more powerful than a conference room full of executives who couldn't create a new idea if their lives depended on it.

The potential rise of heroes real or imagined can be observed in video game creation, where players take on roles as knights, villains, and masked avengers to win points and prizes. These dedicated gamers then play and test the games for literally days on end.

Those Gothic quests wrapped in foreboding darkness are telling stories about heroes and heroines, but they really are a reflection of the game creators.

Those talented individuals are recreating reality according to their own values and judgments.

Because the subconscious mind doesn't know if a combat scene is real or imagined, these young inventors can develop a whole new cadre of heroes, on the computer screen.

The Power of a Creative Imagination

There is a powerful attraction running through a child's imagining and pretending. The open minded, non-judgmental actions of a person freely associating can parallel a child at play. Experience the child, smile then accomplish the challenge with a smile.

One might say, "Of course it's the challenge itself that keeps people interested." I'm sure that's true, also, it is also the internal self-challenge. That works wonders. Being in a situation completely different from your the daily routine freshens your outlook, and keeps your spark plugs flashing.

The most important exercise is finding your own path. Building video games is incredibly rewarding, but there are many other ways to find the hero within.

Develop your own internal hero by really get involved with some of the poems and essays, or find some item in this book that says that which is overwhelmingly important to you.

Then work it as hard as you can (read, recite, sing or shout it). If nothing here suits your fancy use the reference material listed on page two. Try to 'know,' 'extend' and 'conquer' the material as a training exercise in liberation.

Give this approach the same non-judgmental chance you would give a new video game; then see how good you can be at finding all the points and extra credits along the way. It might be possible to become your own hero of your imagination and desire! Hopefully you then could win big at this game of life.

Most school systems from kindergarten to twelfth grade, up through university and graduate school, can do a great job in teaching you concepts and how to fit into the system; now let's see how good you can be at 'extracting' yourself of those well-meaning but limiting structures.

Because this book is only a guide to what you could be, I'm sure you will burst even this tome's bounds. Once you have achieved these poems and essays, and understand some of the esoteric thoughts, breakthroughs will come fast and heavy.

From that point onward, looking back only in warm remembrance, you will go beyond the horizon we euphemistically call life; and become what your dreams are made of.

Before starting you on your quest, let me describe some thought experiments that could help you think a bit differently.

These are just introductory questions to set the stage.

By offering some new ideas concerning heroes, we might be able to show by analogy and correspondence (a fancy phrase for describing a parable) how the process works.

Heroes and Heroines - Old and New

Chapter 6 Song Lyrics

Introduction

The ancient Greeks were always singing at festivals, funerals, before, after wars and any time things either went good or bad. A song or lyric was a high point in an event.

Flute songs and lyre songs and hymns to various gods of Delphi and the Apollo all involved singing either by a single person or a chorus.

Athletic games, which were so much a part of the Greek education were opened and followed by hymns to the gods. The gods of Delphi, Apollo or Demeter of the Eleusian Mysteries were evoked and praised with poem songs or lyrics.

Music was as much a part of the substance of ancient Greek's lives as it is ours today. Music and later the plastic arts gave a metaphorical shape and integrated life for the ancient Greeks.

As far as I can see lyric writing for music today, it hasn't changed a bit from ancient days.

We use the singing and choral arts for:

- Entertainment
- Integrating our lives
- Pulling a family together
- Finding friends
- Making up with parted friends
- Having a good time
- Being nationalistic
- Praising someone
- Looking for love
- Suffering through unrequited love

- Happiness in all its forms
- Love and marriage

The list is far from complete; there are as many reasons to sing as people who like to sing.

Here are seven songs that I like. The reasoning and background are in that list above.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

Song to Conejo Mists

Misty rain caress our faces,
Move us from hard concrete places.

Take us to a forest glen,
Shower us with life and then.

Free our heart from shells of steel.
Fade their clamor to less than real.

Rainbow dew upon our coats,
Drops like diamonds about our throats.

Remand us to a softer past,
Show us greatness in a blade of grass.

Spring the eternal goddess send a kiss,
Meld us with your embracing mist.

Let us smile as two morning flowers,
More like blossoms in a verdant bower.

Quietly beyond cities' din unknown,
We take our rest in rye half grown.

Lethe's tears,
Fall as rain.

Melt stone and steel,
And let us live again.

Newbury Park, California, 1971

'Song to Conejo Mists' Back-story

The poem 'Song to Conejo Mists,' attempts to encapsulate a time and place, and perhaps a few thoughts from the semi-rustic atmosphere of the Conejo (*rabbit*) Valley. Open fields of rye and sagebrush in the early '70's, supported sheep, cattle, horses and of course rabbits. Chasing these quick little critters was my dog Nellie's favorite treat.

This was long before the development of the area as a residential housing and light industry location. Now, amongst our light industrialization we still have special places to walk and think of beauty and life as it once was. Our area is termed an *altiplano* (trans: *high plain*) so we don't get much rain.

Years ago in the early '70's the view was easy on the eyes and psyche; homes on one side of the valley and usually a flock of sheep on the other. Walking in the area these days, one can no longer see the wide open fields and grass; just industry, homes and shops.

Thankfully, now there still remain a few open fields and pristine Conejo treasures, as untouched as the day the Spanish explorers walked the El Camino Real and happened upon this pristine valley. A few fields and trees have been saved by the Thousand Oaks Master Plan, which limits construction and housing tracts.

Living here, as the transition from farming and ranching into clean industries progressed was comfortable and easy.

Getting away from Los Angeles had its pleasures and drawbacks, but these were diminished as the city, gradually over a thirty year period, came to us.

Still, with all its progress, the Conejo is a nice place, and an occasional light rain or a shower every now and then impress poetic sorts with its soft caressing mist. This song rhapsodizes about those impressions. Walking these special fields brings back special places to remember.

Perhaps, when you visit, a moist, errant cloud, sliding up over the Conejo Grade will provide some misty rain to gently wash over you and inspire a golden reverie.

A Song of Life

If birds knew only air and sky,
And man's freedom, a mythic thing apart.
If woman knew only less than love,
And romance: an empty dream of the heart.

If a song was only flowing notes,
And rapture dwelled only above.
If dreams were only resolve of day,
And consciousness' many coats.

If a heart was only flesh and time,
And a body's flowing way.
If a man knew only gold and strength,
And battle's blameless day.

I'd write a poem of gentler Worlds,
Where all of life was - Love.
Teaching and singing ecstasy,
The birds would bring her, from above.

We'd love each other till freedom's flag was furled,
And have Nature there with us too.
Our love would make more sounds to the sky,
Than the Universe might try do.

Our minstrel singing would,
Make even joyous songbirds cry,
To live love, give full of it,
And then we'll never die.

'A Song of Life' Back-story

This poem is one of many songs from the Night Watch, the place and time where the mystery of love and creation arise out of their sleepy abode and tell stories about the very rhythm of life.

When we listen to stories and dreams of the quiet night, we discover ways to make life wonderfully fulfilling in the days ahead.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1988

To Joan

Dry scent of earth and Eucalyptus all are past.
Into your sweet salty bosom I cleave fast.

Among your caresses and waves of love,
I seek much more than which guides from above.

Being together, our sinuous thoughts entwine,
Seeking my strength, you grant me faith in mine.

Urging up, surging in,
Entangled in a lovers spin.

Our hour together, an hour to teach,
Accepting bodies, giving love to each.

The boyish adoration upon my face,
A calm mirror to your charm and grace.

Let us spend our precious time in dreaming,
Far from petty, thoughtless scheming.

Among nymphs and vistas like the sea,
Thank you that I might again be with thee.

Of the two that delight my salty frame,
Yours is the depth that reveres Poseidon's name.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1982

A Woman's Mirror

Man is a mirror to a woman's soul,
And when the World's put right.

He'll toss away her looking glass,
And reflect her through the night.

When morning comes she'll rise,
She'll be fresh and full and fair.

Then her morning mirror'd gaze,
Will find her adoring lover there.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2001

Song to Easter

This poem of sorts	Though in two parts,
I hope, brings joy	Into your hearts.
Rebirth, rebirth	A rite of spring,
The robin finds	New songs to sing.
Dreams of winter	Are put away,
Lost in warmth	This Easter day.
In this celebration	Of life and giving,
Best regards to	Your good living.
A Savior new arisen	His banner unfurled,
A prayer of hope	For all the world,
Life	Love,
Sky	Above,
Spring	Possibilities,
A fresh year	New realities
New life	And then
Peace	Amen.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1983

'Song to Easter' Back-story

This poem was originally composed in the form of an egg with a wiggly line down the center. Each of the two halves were given to my wife, Joan and my daughter Lisa.

The instructions on the envelope for each half said to put each part together with the other, which when read as a whole, gave a little poignancy to an Easter prayer.

Thousand Oaks, California, 1983

To Joan: A Birthday Song

You were always with me,
I knew you would be, even at the beginning.
Even when the mundane world started,
Your ethereal form, urging my life to be.

You gave strength as no talisman or idol could,
Beyond my static, infinitesimal knowing.
Your perfect gift was more of becoming,
My psyche was granted more than I ever would.

The only bargain you held me to was: Love,
That promise, even in the primordial time.
Rung clear and strong like a crystalline bell,
Its intonating resonance sounded here as above.

I struggled to believe in your dream of hope,
That promise was the best offer Gaia ever made.
My refusing her gift, and belief in static states,
Blurred, but never narrowed your vision's scope.

I then found success in your smile so fair,
The Universe, at last, glowed a rosy hue.
Reluctant things sprang full grown,
Out of water and earth, from fire, and air.

Two radiant orbs that momentous day,
Glistened among bright, flowered fields.
Yours red, warm; mine blue, a doubting heart,
And then love melded us in a quiet perfect way.

Energy, once scattered far beyond intimacy,
Now held by your perfect face,
Created shapes, and beautiful forms.
Growing progressions undreamed in our primacy,
We became as one, reaching into space.

As its children and inheritors of the Sun,
We bask in its love glow and ever granting life.
Beyond mere being into realm of exaltation,
Its energy empowering works to be done.

Now feel the breath of life coursing and strong,
Driven by energy far beyond the atomic shell.
Transformed through nova burst and rebirth,
From a singularity to our love's living throng.

Annapa Marina, Channel Islands Harbor, CA 1978

Song for Young Hearts

Please, please open your heart to me,
Don't be afraid my darling, you'll see.

I'll come to you all the day and the night,
With your arms around me our love will be all right.

Please, please let me be a part,
Of all your tomorrows and your tender heart.

I will tell you words you like to hear,
Caress your lovely hair and kiss an ear.

Let your love flow to me like a river wide,
And your body will move me like a rushing tide.

We will find delight in the final hour,

We'll live forever in our lover's tower.

And you will be forever mine,

And forever I will be thine.

Annapa Marina, Channel Islands Harbor, CA, 1978

Joan My Love

My love, as though a morning star,
Had settled gently on your face.

The glow of happiness shining in your smile,
Keeps me going from day to day across many a mile.

And, if I to travel to the ends of the distant skies,
I could not find a fairer look of love light in your eyes.

I count your happiness, as a miser counts his coin,
Those lips the touch of which beckon ours to be joined.

My love, I will never ever be so loving and fond,
After seeing your smile of eternity and beyond.

The power of your love grows stronger each day,
The blush of your cheeks makes me know the way.

Hold me fast in your heart,
Make love in your eyes.

And we will never be apart,
As we build our earthly paradise.

Annapa Marina, Channel Islands Harbor, CA, 1978

Chapter 7 Potpourri of Poems

Introduction

This section contains miscellaneous poems that do not conveniently fall into categories listed in the table of contents.

The Night Stalker

Beware the night seeking Boojum,
Racing through night's dark ways.

Freely roaming at speeds,
That Indy would dare not do on good days.

Steering as though by night blindness,
Or more as a mindless blight.

Careening off high-speed embankments,
And generally disturbing the night.

Los Angeles, California, 1972

'The Night Stalker' Back-story

Working the second shift an electronics plant in San Fernando Valley can be a quiet occupation. All the office crew have left and its just the radar systems and the troubleshooters.

Generally, the day crew would leave the toughest problems for later. That meant the second shift would be picking up the slack, and then when morning comes, all the nasty problems would be solved. Nice deal. Well at least it was quiet so I could figure things out.

This evening silence was broken, by a group of motorcyclists who found the dry riverbed behind the plant, and decided see how much noise they could make. There was drag racing and attempts to carve up the concrete. All of this activity created such a racket that it moved me to poetry.

As far as the reference to the Boojum goes, it is an ugly cactus growing in the driest parts of the Southwest desert. I imagine the motorcycle crew looked every bit as ugly as the Boojum.

The only problem with that analogy the sound the cactus in question makes is a gentle swish as the western desert breezes caress its branches and thorns. Other than that, it does not make a sound.

Los Angeles, California, 1972

Word Images

A baby born,

A young child walking,

A girl radiating beauty,

A boy seeking freedom,

A young man seeking fortune,

An ascetic seeking Nirvana,

Good casting out evil,

Karma melting revenge,

A man seeking a woman's love,

A woman's Aphrodite discovered,

Lovers' ecstasy,

A saint's rapture.

Me, when you come my way.

Newbury Park, California, 1975

'Word Images' Back-story

This little poem is another effort from the night watch. My ability, or more accurately my tendency to get up in the middle of the night with a poem fully formed in my head is something of a delicious curse.

Whatever it is, it has helped with solving some very difficult engineering problems and has paved the way to this moment.

A pure existential thought but it is true nevertheless.

Thoughts along these lines enviably brings up the P. B. Shelley poem: "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." A few lines always sends a shiver up by back in their eloquent depiction of a poet lingering on the edge of metaphysical darkness, and trying to make the breakthrough to a side of life, to which a privilege few attend:

...I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave:
They have in vision'd bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatch'd with me the envious night
They know that never joy illum'd my brow
Unlink'd with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,

That thou, O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express...

Thoughts about subjects described in the lines above shows how powerful poetry can be to illuminate the life of the mind, and cast us into new directions of thought.

To illustrate, consider a few more lines of the same 'Hymn:'

...Doubt, chance and mutability.
Thy light alone like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream...

Newbury Park, California, 1975

Smoky the Hunter

Roaming late after midnight,
Bathed in the Moon's luminous glow,

Looking for a meal that's just right
Searching for a meal: high and low.

Quickly moving through the house,
Graceful and quiet as a stealthy mouse.

Wait, what is it a mouse I see,

Oh yes, she found one under the house.

She checks out each terrace and balcony.

Stalking her late night repast,

Her manner is as dainty,

As her deadly claws are fast.

Newbury Park, California, 1975

'Smoky the Hunter' Back-story

A poem about Smoky our cat with her hunting antics. Invariably, she would bring us a present. Our doorstep would be a mouse or rabbit. That was her gift to the home.

Smoky arrived one day by surprise. The neighbor across the street had a female Alaskan Malamute dog, who was quite willing to devour all three kittens in a flash. Luckily, our neighbor was able to save them, and asked if we wanted to keep one? The other two went to neighbors down the street. We heard they lasted about twelve years.

All three were no more than a handful. We took the largest one; the fuzz ball that looked like a little tiger. We brought the kitten home and fed her with an eyedropper.

Reflections in Rhythm and Rhyme (Poetry and Essays)

Since we lived just below the crest of a large hill that harbored all kinds of animals including mountain lions, she would sometimes come home a little beat up. She was bitten on the back once, but generally was in good health.

She kept us company for eighteen years. In the end, her kidneys went, and there was nothing the veterinarian could do. As long as Smoky was with us she gave us much pleasure.

Newbury Park, California, 1975

A Little Metaphor

I am a little Metaphor,
I can help you,
Tell so much more.

But I am tricky,
I'm not exactly what I seem,
I often talk in pictures,
And, sometimes make a scene.

I can stand in for words,
When writing gets a little rough,
By giving a different meaning,
For a idea that might be more than little tough.

Just list the many things,
You are trying hard to say,
Then find new meanings,
And make them match in a different way.

Get the dictionary or Roget's Thesaurus,
Whatever work best for you,
Look up each reference, such as trees or forest.
Mix and match the meanings,
Then test when you're through.

I have another friend with a tiny name of 'As,'
He fills a story full of zippy words and pizzazz.

Even a tale of dark and stormy weather,
Stories get easier to tell,

Chapter 8 Juvenalia Poems

Introduction

These poems were written for and sometimes with my daughter Lisa during her early childhood.

Remembering her laughing as we recited them will always be part of the precious moments of parenthood.

The pleasure I felt when writing stories in a rhythmic, rhyming style, interested me in pursuing the art of prosody.

There is no palpable excuse for their existence except as a break from the routine of engineering work, and have a little fun with my lovely daughter before supper.

Lisa's Trip

A rooster crowed,
The red Sun rose,
Beyond a misty mountain's rim.

Daisies sweet,
Awoke from sleep,
Greeting the noisy station's din.

By a breakfast hearth,
In the Sun's new warmth,
Lisa sat dreaming of the day.

The fire's embers glow,
Did make thoughts grow,
Seeing her mother with a tear'd eye

“Eat up; with this trip’s length,
You’ll surely need your strength.

And staying with Auntie Lou,
Will be a treat and good for you.

In this town days quietly idle away,
You’ll learn less here if you stay.”

...Each station called,
Baggage hauled,
And; noisy trains...
Away

Newbury Park, California, 1973

‘Lisa’s Trip’ Back-story

This poem was the start of a larger story on a child’s trip into a fantasy adventure. The metaphors concern being away from home and gaining maturity as child grows.

At the time I wrote the story as prose, but with learning more of the art of prosody, and production of this book, my next project will be to extend ‘Lisa’s Trip’ into a book-length fun poem.

Thousand Oaks, California, 2010

A Poem Written with Lisa

I am a little flower seed,
Water and earth are all I need.

I'll grow up my happy way,
And smile on a summer day.

I'll fold my wings as clouds roll by,
Then wait to see the bright blue sky.

In winter we'll curl and sleep,
Beneath the snow, so very deep.

Then I'll get wet with springtime rain,
And in the sun I'll be fine again.

'A Poem Written with Lisa' Back-story

A poem written for and with my three-year old daughter Lisa. Even at that age she realized there was a difference in my wife, Joan's use of various words, as a British speaker of English.

So when I made 'again' rhyme with 'rain', as I read the poem to her, Lisa thought it was hilarious.

One time Joan and I overheard Lisa and her young friend Michelle talking their own language. It was a combination of the English words Lisa picked up from her mother and the word pronunciation Michelle learned from her parents who were from Arkansas.

Words like 'house' and phrases like 'you all' turned into 'hoose' and 'yaawaal'. Their childish laughter in between renditions of these words and others like them was a special treat.

Newbury Park, California, 1972

A Halloween Ditty

Hie hay, this pumpkin day,
A witch on a broomstick blue.

As midnight high jinx,
Bring on scary hoodwinks.

And goblins pull pranks,
Then treats call for thanks.

You bob for apples, and then dunk crullers,
And perhaps a sweet cider with all the fella's.

Fill your yard with a pumpkin or two,
But watch out, t'ween ghosts are out to get you.

Newbury Park, California, 1973

'A Halloween Ditty' Back-story

We were decorating for Halloween with carved pumpkins and old brooms placed by the front door. I remembered the Halloween antics at my house in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts.

My dad would make six dozen doughnuts, and as many crullers. Gallon jugs of sweet apple cider and a tub of apples in water for bobbing would create a festive atmosphere on our front porch.

Appendix

This appendix contains a general description of the poetic forms used in this book, and includes notes on the magic of prosody as a storytelling tool.

If you need any assistance concerning this Appendix to Reflections in Rhythm and Rhyme, I can respond to your questions and comments at: <http://rlyons1.com> or use the e-mail address: info@rlyons1.com

Why Write Poems

We all encounter, as we live our lives, certain events, impressions and stories stick in the mind, and become either immediately important or surface from time to time as pleasant memories. Encapsulating these occurrences into uplifting entertaining poetry can be like an album in words.

What Makes Poem

What are the basic elements that make a poem readable, a joy to recite and a total pleasure to encounter?

- Cognitive Observation
- Impressions
- Contemplation
- Emotion
- Rhythm
- Rhyme
- Structure
- Recital Appeal

Structure and Meaning of Modern Poems

Usually the first quandary is: how do I get some universal meaning from this poem. Currently, poetry is being used as a means of reporting and personal commentary, that might benefit from well written prose.

Framing a report or commentary in short stand-alone phrases or even sentences gives it more apparent power and conviction than if written in straight paragraph style.

If the esoteric symbolism, word arrangement, sounds and structure of current poetry can be understood, then there is a chance that the poem's meanings within all its intellectual trappings might become apparent. Often the poem's specialist jargon overwhelms its meaning.

The problem is this type of poem's esoteric entanglements are not much fun. They might satisfy a higher intellectual purpose, and mystify with their metaphorical madness, but enjoyment appears to be secondary, unless one is thrilled by that form.

A Poem's Larger Function

A poem should be integrative and evocative. Rather than reducing meaning to minuscule units, thus lowering their power of suggestion, poetry should aim its meanings a few steps higher than mere existence; thus, whenever possible, a poem or poetic drama should point toward a universal truth.

One aspect of seeking the universal is to care for the entire range of humanity, human emotions and our capabilities.

The poems in this book seek to promote those thoughts that support caring enough to seek and be the very best.

Therefore, be not afraid of compassion; be brave and seek out paramount ideas. Those gems of thought that reside just below our cultural surface. Then, as you take those first steps on the road to a caring and eloquent society, seek out the touchstone of good poetry.

Creativity

Creativity seems to be somewhat of a mystery. There are extensive questions, and a few theories but practical methods for experiment and discovery are few and far between.

The roots to this dilemma lay in individualism. Too much emphasis is placed on the group experience. This might change in the Twenty-first Century when it is socially acceptable to openly express ideas.

The Quest for Ideas and Meaning

Ideas and meaning, are derived from and powered by several important sources:

- Literary material surround us; the entire planet is a source for the observant poet. I like the 'Art of Aimless Browsing;' I would haunt the stacks of our local library looking for undiscovered gems of intellect.
- Internet is the largest library in the world. Societies, cultures, music, philosophies, and a host of other categories await the Browser and his or her world-wide-web browser.
- The everyday local and practical world contains the roots of creativity; the sensitive caring poet's can find them.

Sharpen Cognitive Recording Skills

Be the observant onlooker, and stay ready for uplifting stories about the human condition (these believe it or not, are everywhere.

It seems that the mass media either cannot be bothered to present them, or would rather go for the spectacular or sensational.

Since the media has ceded their position as reporters, it now is our responsibility to gather the days activities, and edit into a blog.

A handy notebook or electronic personal assistant is a key quick data gathering. The smallest laptop your hands and shoulder spread can manage is the convenient key to good reporting.

Writing Need Love

I was intrigued to find out the Greek word Μαθηματικά (mathematics) means a love of learning (L & S); as in good math skills, good writing can only come from such a love of words that meanings flow in rivers of thought.

Imagine a mathematician covering two or three blackboards with high-level math equations to prove a theory. His or her passion for numbers can be matched with the eloquent skills of Shakespeare. Writing a sonnet or a scene from Hamlet can be as expressive as Einstein's Unified Field Theory.

But slapping some barely intelligible words without grammar or punctuation into a Facebook page or an e-mail is just a tenth of the task. Give your writing some love, as Emeril Lagasse would say about food. The art of writing depends on it.

Just as the mathematician practices and sharpens his math skills excellent writing and authoring skills require a dedication of the professional. I worked for a nuclear physicist who in his off hours did calculus, physics math or statistics at a steady two pages a day (double-sided). So too must the poet, essayist and diarist write good material for himself or herself at the rate of 1000 words (roughly the front and back of a typed A-size sheet).

Power Tools

Another way to capture your 1000 words a day is by using a digital tape recorder. Take notes; become like the reporters who have given up their position, record anything that could help your writing and composing. Your thoughts and opinions are golden; do not lose any of them.

Once an observation has impressed your psyche and found expression in words, your mind is temporarily satisfied. Your 'computer number one' can then file it away in that vast wonderland of the memory and it's done with that incident.

The problem with the: 'Observe and Forget' technique is that the structure and context of the incident are lost. That's where a note pad comes in. A most excellent power tool is: 'Observe it, Note it and/or Record' it.' Then at your convenience dump them into your computer.

If you have written just a note, then translate your handwritten material with Dragon Systems Naturally Speaking software. This program is the tool doctors and attorneys use to capture their thoughts. Put the notes away for a day, and then edit before breakfast; you will enjoy the sense of accomplishment as

thoughts and ideas take on a sense of validity.

The Power of One Thousand Words a Day

One-thousand words a day is a book in a year (approx. 50,000 words) and if tell a good story then, someone will want to enjoy what you have written. Revise your notes, essays and poems as if your literate life depended on it; yes this is your literary life not Tweeting or comments in a Facebook text box. Ensure your writings leave those following you with a legacy.

Much of what we write these days is quickly dumped on to the Internet. One thing the Internet needs is pre-publication filtering. If we filter our own material before dumping it on the Internet, perhaps the system will be more useful.

Stay Hungry and Aware of Your Surroundings

A poet must be like a hungry leopard, prowling the world for story game, the reporter analogy is not good enough, you are not after reports or day-to-day commentary, you are going for big game.

Maintain a rational expectation that a poem is around any corner; ask a neighbor if they have something for you; never give an idea a chance to be lazy and hide under our sub-cultural veneer.

Cognitive Observation

The Intuitive and Reflective Observer

When a poet searches for material, staying intuitive throughout the day, a smart, cogent writer can reveal significant circumstances that others will bypass.

In the night your mind is at work forming ideas into a coherent thought. Something during the previous day said instinctively: this event is important.

At some point in the workaday world the poet might not know what makes an event significant, but if he or she thinks, store this away for later then the magic happens.

As an example, when I drove past the cemetery in 'Elegy for Sarah many times before when going to and from school. I never looked because I was planning my team meetings or homework.

But that one time, by chance I saw those acres of grave sites and hundreds of military crosses my outlook was changed by that singular event. Seeing a woman tending a single cross was another, yet somehow I felt they were important to me as a poet.

At that moment, I did not know what was going on, but it was enough to make me pull into the cemetery parking lot, and just sit there pondering what had just happened.

Impressions

In the hard-as-nails survivor world of today, it is not advisable to be too impressionable. The dicotomy of having a fun time and being impressionable as well as keep our guard up is very stressful. But we need to celebrate our individuallity and independence.

I will add to that paradigm, as far as a poet is concerned, we need to celebrate impressionability. Be open, starry eyed, and care for everyone.

Thoughtful caring about the human condition, having a sort of openness to life is important. This requires cogent awareness of life's events, which can enable a poet to notice and accept inspiring thoughts.

One way to accomplish this is by relaxing the body but keep the mind sharp. If it appears that someone is using your sensitivity to your disadvantage, close close your vulnerability window so fast their head will spin. Oddly enough, keeping your body well supplied with Vitamin-C and B-Vitamin Complex helps in this regard. The mind can remain calm and still be as lithe as a cat.

In our contemporary rough and tumble take-no-prisoners society staying impressionable and and exposing one's sensitivity can be an invitation to catastrophe; or it can be a marvelous experience if done with aplomb. Just walk tall and carry yourself as a successful winner, and let those who want to stumble through life sit by the wayside.

Thoughtful caring about the human condition, having a sort of openness to life is important. This requires cogent awareness of life's events, which can enable a poet to notice and accept inspiring thoughts.

In the rough and tumble take-no-prisoners society of a city, raising one's sensitivity can be an invitation to catastrophe. Be careful yet caring. In so many life endeavours, when the stakes are high, rewards can be amazing. Just walk tall and carry yourself as a successful winner.

Find your Sensitive Spot

Sitting in my car at the Sawtelle National Cemetery in West Los Angeles was very impressive. The gentle evening breezes coming up from the south along Sepulveda Boulevard, birds in flight above me and all those crosses.

The scene and its quiet ambiance charmed my imagination; soon some ideas were scribbled on paper, and then edited after I arrived home.

Later that night after the Sawtelle experience, while I was sketching the poem 'Elegy for Sarah' writing and drying my eyes, I dredged up all the emotion of losing a loved one because of war. Emotion is good ,it gets down to the base. After all, we are humans first.

Empathy and Emotion

Powerful human events that really grab hold of our consciousness and tug at the heart are the keys. A sense of caring for the human condition is primal in us all.

Contemplation

When an idea quietly ambles around through the back hills of your mind it can work wonders. This is the most enjoyable part of a poem and its ideas. Thoughts come to mind about a rather pensive time in the back garden of my sister-in-law Sheila in Beeston, England. I had finished "Elegy to Poet's.

Rhythm

Rhythm is the quiet impulse in us all the beat of our body-mind and every action. Sometimes when you are doing a repetitious task, it is possible to tune your body to the undertaking, and produce some marvelous results.

When performing a mundane task involve your entire body, that includes hands, arms, eyes and legs,

when possible.

If you are working at a computer, get up and make a mad dash around your environment. Do some physical activity or do what is necessary to keep your energy high and help the task flow.

When performing a mundane task involve your entire body, that includes hands, arms, eyes and legs, when possible. If you are working at a computer, get up and make a mad dash around your environment. If doing physical work is necessary to make the task flow, then just do it.

There is a wonderful book called “Flow, The psychology of Optimal Experience” by Mihály Csikszentmihályi, which essentially tells how to get in the mood, set up a productive frame of mind and find your groove so well that you don’t even think about the periphery. Then using the techniques in this book, you can focus like a laser beam on the task at hand, and accomplish it with professional efficiency.

Make the forgotten art of flow work for you, and become so fluid in your motions and coordination that someone watching would think you are performing ballet. Most often, we equate repetitious tasks with boredom, and then fight the process. This unnecessary distraction throws off our timing, and can be quite enervating.

While in deep thought or unfathomable sightless sleep, our rhythm of life goes on. Rhythm is the wave of quiet contemplation as ideas flash instantly across our brain. From the right hemisphere where conception arises to the left hemisphere where analysis tumbles ideas about, to expression by the full brain, bicameral mind, you arrive at the perfect thought.

Rhythm in Action

My favorite example rhythm in action example is:

The Second movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

This piece uses several types of driving rhythms crossing their formal boundaries of triple and quadruple beats to create a fascinating interplay of sound.

You can almost see in your mind's eye, thoroughbred racehorses in a demanding race, jockey for best position.

This rhythmic interplay moves so fast and furiously that, at times distinct sounds blend and cross over themselves. Where a triple beat is expected, a quad is heard, and vice versa. To really enjoy this peice use the flow techniques described earlier, go with the rhythms and sounds; let them carry you to heaven.

The more complicated a rhythm, the more your entire mind becomes engrossed in the process. Try writing or contemplating your notes at a drumming festival or tribal drum exhibition. The results can be very different from sitting quietly at a desk. Just put the drum beat on of your brain's 'channel two', and the result will be wonderful

Rhyme

Rhyme is quite literally, the music of words; the lyrical quality of a poem. Rhyme structures words, related by sounds, strong relationships. Done with panache and wit, common words can for a short time, don a majestic robe, and present themselves to the word.

Common words elevated to universals, politely bow to the reader, and create a moment of grace and charm. It is possible to stretch the rhyme to make it fit the general context of a poem, but sometimes when doing this the sound and rhythm lose their stride.

Rhyme, of course, aids the memory, and adds to the enjoyment of reciting a poem. Memorizing a long poem becomes like learning a song as the rhyme structure builds a mental structure for the reader.

A poem is more easily retained when it has a memorable rhyme scheme. As an example, how hard is it to forget a snappy, well-presented advertising jingle?

Picking the right word to satisfy the meaning, structure and rhyme scheme of a poem can sometimes be an effort usually due to the wide range of a contemporary poem's subject matter and extant wording.

That is the fun of resolving a complicated rhyme scheme.

To some poets the rhymes just fall into place, but a valuable source to help in finding the right rhyming word and the poem's established context is Verse Perfect, which is based on Princeton University's WordNet program. The latest free downloadable version contains a very powerful rhyming dictionary from useful thesaurus.

This comprehensive lexicography tool that not only gives a rhyme for a word, but also provides a contextual word lists, and by means of the 'Hyperbolic Thesaurus provides a graphic visual word/meaning/relationship system. Verse Perfect also provides links to several online word lookup services.

Structure

Structure binds the poem together into a coherent story. The two aforementioned elements rhythm and rhyme introduce a simple structure between the words and ideas.

Structure introduces the reader to the dynamics of a poem giving it a dramatic or emotional aspect.

Concepts like an intriguing beginning, a richly textured middle and a satisfying end also help to shape a poem.

Time, Place and Social Atmosphere

Time, place and social atmosphere also help introduce a poem to a reader. We always need an introduction to a party, a new subject and written material. The TPSA part of your written material sets the scene and makes the reader comfortable.

Time is a strong part of our lives; one feels out of sorts without some reference to time. Possibly in quiet meditation or intense mental activity, time will seem to vanish. But after that a reference to time becomes essential.

A sense of place helps the reader establish his or her perspective. Imagine yourself in a dark room with no clues to what is in the room or the entrance or exit.

Then someone starts telling you a complicated list of commands that you are required to perform. This could be frightening at best. But when the lights come up slowly, you might feel better in knowing where you are, and what is required of you.

When you arrive at a party, unless the host grabs you by the arm and introduces you around, the best move is to scope out the scene and get familiar with the party's social atmosphere. This helps in written material to get the reader familiar with the territory.

The Sonata-allegro Form

The sonata-allegro form (SAF) is an important structure building technique in classical music composition, and its proven techniques can help with structuring written material. Using SAF in poetry and fiction writing imparts a satisfying roundness to the work. Its parts are:

- Introduction
- Exposition
- Development
- Recapitulation

These time-proven classical forms are powerful structural elements, creating a functional word system that help the composer and the writer to build his music, poem or prose into an enjoyable experience for the listener.

My personal preference is to entertain the reader of my poems, therefore using this recognizable system works to satisfy more than edify. There are plenty of text books, blogs and articles floating around from which to learn. But poems and fictional literature are unique treasure troves that must be experienced at the highest level of emotional involvement. And SAF can captivate as well as entertain.

Transposing the system described above into the world of prosody can be a valuable tool. A poem's basic theme and ideas can be produced as a coherent, readable and most importantly enjoyable poem

using the sonata allegro form.

Beginning, Middle and End

In addition to the four concepts of SAF, building a poem or story having a beginning, middle and end (BME) enables a poet or writer to build a richly textured work of word art. A poem or story with a definable BME makes the work more comfortable. Complicated works are great for certain purposes, but telling a good story that entertains requires a sort of 'be kind to readers' approach.

Opening Ideas and Closing Ideas

Finally, the technique of using the opening ideas (introduction) and folding them around to form its closing ideas (recapitulation) resolves thematic issues, reduces tension and provides a pleasant sense of conclusion to the piece.

Tight Story Structure

As an example, notice the all encompassing structure of the metaphor used in the four lines of an excerpt of Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Criticism: Part 2," lines, 362-365:

... "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense"...

Recital Appeal

If a poem reads well, has a sort of musical rhythm and lures you in with a rhyme, sound and sense, then reading it aloud can be an auditory treasure.

First, read it through to get accustomed to the words, then try for power, conviction and an emotional tone. Third, and most importantly, draw out everything the poem has to offer. Dwell on your phrasing; use the power of syllable triplets or quads to flow the words.

Play with the poem like songwriters and poets do, before they present a memorable piece. If you feel like reciting a poem to your friends, classmates or at poetry slam, get it flowing so well in your mind that you can listen to it while performing.

This is where the fun begins, style the recitation for power, drama or delight. One example of a poem that reads well, and sounds great is

Robert Frost's, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening".

The quadruple beats '*I think I know*' or '*the village though*' allow you to ripple the words off your tongue. This poem is filled to the brim with triplets and quads, which gives it a flowing and haunting musical quality.

Vocal Power

To draw out your vocal power of and a sense of emotional triumph, try a poem like "Invictus" by W. E. Henley, who created this poem when he lay in hospital.

My voice teacher, John Bouquet, in San Fernando Valley, California had me read this poem directly to him at his dining room table. Then, he backed away to a corner of his rather large living room; then from that distance, he asked me to say and project the poem to him in as clearly as possible.

After he was pleased with my delivery at that distance, John asked if I would try to reach him as he stood down the hall, which was almost at one end of his house.

I never thought I could reach him at a distance of thirty-five feet, and he understood my trepidation;

he suggested I imagine my voice comfortably reaching someone standing in the back of an auditorium. "Actors did this all the time before microphones and amplifiers," he said. I tried it and it worked.

His encouraging smile reinforced that. In addition, in attempting to extend my voice that distance, as the musical qualities of the poem held my voice steady, all of a sudden I was singing the poem's words. "That," he said, as he triumphantly strode back toward me, "is how true singing comes about."

It was a complete surprise that I could develop that much sound. Try it some time when you are not tired, and feel up to it.

Take a breath, as far down to the bottom of your lungs as you can go, and then speak the words clearly and strongly. Do not strain your voice at all just let it happen naturally. You might like the results.

Personal Notes on the Forms Prosody

There might not be any way of telling if modern rap music, performed with some assistance from musical instruments, attempts to move the listener to an emotional state as a call to action; with some of the extant vulgar rap lyrics one would hope that would not happen. For whatever it is worth, the mention of modern chanting to music shows the continuity of the form.

In actually, composing a song or lyric for singing is almost a primal urge, and each age or era, that finds itself in a position of need to sing their thoughts to rhythm and rhyme will exploit the lyric to the full.

Looking at the hero worship status some current rock performers attain shows the powerful energies their interpretations of the lyric form can summon, and with a commanding performance liberate.

Surely the argument for the power of the lyric can be won with ease by using as an example: 50,000 enthusiasts of Beethoven's singing as one, in a full-to-the-rafters stadium, the Ode to Joy from his Ninth Symphony.

The lyric sung unassisted or accompanied by a musical instrument, such as the lyre, which is the precursor of the harp and guitar, has been a strong means of expression and storytelling for nearly three millennia.

Even though the ages of man have at times raised the lyric to a high point of cultured and then abandoned the lyric into dark ages of neglect. Nevertheless, through the ages, the seeds of the lyric form have been scattered in many ages and cultures; each rebirth reinforces its power to entertain, inform and persuade.

This form remains to this day a poignant method of song writing and storytelling. From the Lyrics or solo songs of Sappho and Alcaeus in the late 7th Century B.C. to the Elegiac and Iambic forms in the 6th Century in the odes of Pindar and Solon around 650 B.C up to the 4th Century.

The Spartans brought this golden age of ancient Greek poetry to somewhat of an inopportune end. But poetry survived that element of laconic stoicism, and blossomed in later times up to the Byzantine period. To judge the quality of the post-golden age, with the bits and pieces available to us is a bit daunting, but it can be done.

Adding to the problem of assessing the scope all ancient Greek poetry is the problem of finding those remnants that were not destroyed by well-meaning clerics. A great deal of material was lost by destruction at the hands of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires.

Some of the remaining extend works were restored in the Monastic Age around the 13th Century. The form was somewhat restored in the Age of Enlightenment and the Romantic Period of the early 19th Century brought the form to its highest state.

Without the finds at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, (modern-day el-Bahnasa) in 1896 under the occupying British, we would have more difficulties in arriving at a more extensive exploration of the lyric form.

The Magic of Creation

Using another metaphor, imagine, you've just awoken, lying calm and still in your bed; around you not a sound to be heard. Out of your dream sleep, you hear a sound. Oh, just a noise, you think.

Nevertheless, there it is again, a sound as quiet as your own heartbeat, urging and wooing your mind from its dreamy meanderings. Tempting you to experience a new day. As you listen and wonder, the beat of life starts anew.

This appears a bit prosaic at first glance but it works a sort of magic that is somewhat frowned upon on these days. Hearing voices is the most heavily annotated part of Julian Jaynes book "The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind."

On one of my aimless browsing trips this book was discovered in a local library to be totally marked up with disparaging comments. Seems to me that a lot of knowledgeable people were upset by Professor Jaynes ideas. I borrowed from the library, and subsequently bought my own copy; I did not have that much interest in removing the comments.

This controversial book discovers the subject of hearing voices as a primitive means of resolving personal and social stress.

Music to Start Your Morning

Music of the baroque era, mostly sonata for three instruments with my favorites are:

- Henry Purcell, Twelve Sonatas
- Johann Sebastian Bach, Trio Sonatas, BWV 1036-1039
- George Frederic Handel, Opus 2, Numbers 1-5
- Arcangelo Corelli, Trio Sonatas, Opus 1-4
- George Philipp Telemann, Canonic Sonatas, 1-6
- Tomaso Albinoni, Sonatas for three instruments.

The simplest sonatas of Purcell are a fabulous way of arising to the glow of early sunrise. Many of the others are also beneficial.