

*Collected Poems*

**David Borodin**

# Collected Poems

David Borodin

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David Borodin

P. O. Box 1429

Rathdrum, ID 83858-1429

Cellular (and only) Telephone: 215.205.0167

E-mail: davidborodin.org@icloud.com

**\*Poetry Website: davidborodin.org**

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**NOTE:** See pp. 3-9 for the Table of Contents and pp. 431-71 for notes on the author and the work (including original presentation inscriptions and a collation).

**Cover Illustration:** Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632-75), *Brieflezende vrouw in het blauw* ("Woman in Blue Reading a Letter"), circa 1663 (oil on canvas, 18.3" x 15.3", in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), a painting that inspired my poem, *Woman in Blue*, which may be found on p. 31 of this volume.

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## **I. One Hundred and Twelve Sonnets**

## I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art)

[**Note:** see pp. 436-71 for the original prefatory inscriptions and notes to *all* the poems]

*Mühlfeld's Clarinet*

Another year wanes slowly toward cold sleep.  
The leaves turn, tinged in sunset-toned regret  
For all that youth's hale summer failed to reap  
(And all life might have been now in its stead).  
Sometimes a certain quality of sound,  
A tint or shape perceived in such a light,  
Can wake from resignation's bed profound  
New savor of old loss, a heightened sight;  
As if the brilliant green of things possessed  
Were seen now in the subtler liquid hues  
Which memory's soft lens makes manifest:  
The amber of experience, suffused  
With wisdom's warmth, like that distilled by earth  
From tears the forests shed towards their rebirth.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Why We'll Always Need Schubert*

Because we're here too fleetingly on this  
Rare habitable speck amidst vast death  
To feel the wonder of life's blessed kiss  
Without the terror of its final breath;  
Because contentment's tranquil surface is  
So vulnerable to rupture by the chance  
Uncovering of some remembered bliss  
That stings us with its absence as we dance,  
Possession of this world is savored more  
While sung transposed into the key of loss,  
In which it is our *longing* we explore,  
Not some success that measures effort's costs.  
So long as bitter tastes are found with sweet,  
Life's deepest lived where joys and heartbreaks *meet*.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Poems without Words*

How can vibrations coaxed from tightened strings  
Against a ground where others have occurred  
Engender such intense effect as brings  
My body to these heights without a word?  
The narrative unfolded here in sound  
Collaboration of the unexplained  
Expands my hold on life's dynamics found  
In *feeling*, prior to facts ascertained.  
A phrase shaped like a promise now is bent  
To disappointment till resolved in bright  
Concordance with compassion's warmth and sent  
Relentlessly cascading toward delight.  
And in the nuance of this wordless state  
We read the subtlest values we create.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Chamber Music*

I overheard a conversation deep  
Amid some strings that left me changed: a phrase  
Confessed by one whose secret wouldn't keep  
Was answered in the empathy that plays  
By heart unspoken things until a third,  
Enticed by intimacy's trust, proposed  
In rising confidence a theme inferred  
From what they'd both avoided. This enclosed  
The group in warm accord against some dark  
Catastrophe sensed gathering near, which soon  
This fourth had sweetened into love's bright arc  
To soar, sustained, above what fear had strewn.  
And once these passions shared had ebb'd till spent,  
I rose in tears, more tuned to life's event.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Six Quartets*

I found him while examining my life  
One day (the day that God had died and I  
Became a man). His song unveiled, like knife  
On nerve, the surging pulse that drives a fly,  
Turns stone to sand – those sounds earth's process makes.  
He sang the music in each germ that swarms  
In its economy with chance and wakes  
To life in rhythms of evolving forms.  
While on his walls, where others hang their saints,  
Gleamed relics of his walks to find those odd  
Old sounds that further spurred him break restraints  
And recreate our world without a God.  
His art reveals vast mysteries that lurk  
Within each grain of nature's gorgeous work.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Mit Innigster Empfindung*

The pain recedes, and in its place ascends  
A slow, unearthly feeling of release.  
It gathers new-found strength from those frayed ends  
Where suffering dissolves into clear peace.  
And now, from out this deep, protracted night,  
Vitality bursts forth within a trill  
As buoyant as a sudden urge toward flight  
Into the vibrant skies of healing's thrill.  
And what remains is bright-lit hope, serene  
As that celestial light that breaks the cloud  
With slanting shafts of revelation, keen  
As organ pipes proclaiming thanks aloud,  
Transcending the despair of anguished days  
In an apotheosis of high praise.



I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Written Just for Us*

Sometimes we live within a work of art  
So deeply that it's ours. Its secrets hold  
Our own so knowingly we feel a part  
Of what's revealed beneath the story told.  
This happened long ago when one whose love  
Was uncontainable sat down and wrote  
It out: desire's map, from anguish of  
Pure self into love's rapture, note by note.  
And then we came and found what he had left  
Us both: the sound of our own desperation  
For each other's touch; the warp and weft  
Of want, with which to weave love's exaltation.  
Now, we hear the yearning in these lines  
And know it's *our* embrace their search defines.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *An Exquisite Sadness*

At times, the deepest love can taste like grief,  
As when our happy hold on what we prize  
The most seems lost to our worst fear's belief  
That it won't last, and we rehearse goodbyes.  
It is that haunting sense where beauty stings  
Us with the dread of evanescence, keen  
To what is missing in that vowel she sings  
Relentlessly in search of hope unseen.  
And as we listen to this wordless text  
That reads like our empathic need to feel  
Each other's pain, we savor the complex  
*Convergence* of emotion that's revealed.  
For here, distilled from *all* the heart's affairs,  
A yearning aches to suffer love's great cares.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Borodin in Love*

The chemistry between two beings bound  
By love's exhilarations can be heard  
In these complexities of nuanced sound  
That interact with feelings beyond words:  
As if the laboratory of the heart,  
In which we test affinities we crave,  
Reveals its best-kept secrets through the art  
Of organizing pitches upon staves,  
Inviting us to gauge that appetite  
A body suffers for connection deep  
Within another's yearning and delight  
Upon those pleasures found within its sweep.  
And in these fluid properties explored  
We find our *own* bond strengthened in accord.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Barcarolle*

We wake to opalescent mornings high  
Above the water's scintillating span  
And feel within its gentle pulse the ply  
Of time unweaving rock to windblown sand.  
From out this measured current we can hear  
The primal urge towards boundlessness take flight  
And soar, transcendent of the wide blue sphere  
Where rainbows merge, dissolving back to light.  
And as the evening gathers up this day  
In slowly deepening shadows, we above  
Who watch these fluid processes at play  
Can see in earth's affinities *our* love.  
For, like resolve that's sought through ebb and flow,  
We find our concord *sharing* this day's glow.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Solitude*

Alone amid the universe of my  
Experience (the only one I'll know),  
I search these four bare open strings to pry  
Out truths too personal for public show.  
Like nerves stretched tight across my life, they throb  
Full resonant with what I've lived and plumb  
Those introspective depths in which a sob  
Is valued more than comforts coined to numb.  
This deep soliloquy I hear arise  
From out the wilderness of self, explores  
The authenticity in which art cries  
Our meanings out of what the heart endures.  
I am what happens on these strings: the feel  
Of life's each sting a beauty to reveal.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Lines Composed After Revisiting  
The Diabelli Variations*

He heard rare worlds potential in the void —  
The charged, expectant space between two tones —  
Like that in which two anxious words employed  
Against a silence can ignite what hones  
(Within their potent union from the rest)  
Such truths as spark a poem into life.  
The miracle of reason into flesh,  
And then to bread, reveals an act so rife  
With mystery, it might have been achieved  
Via art this high, where the primordial urge  
In which the planets turn is found conceived  
In smallest seeds, like worlds begot by words.  
We witness through these strains a patch of sod  
Teem lush from out the logic some call “God.”

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Ruminations in C Major*  
*On the Sublimity of Nature*  
*(In One Movement)*

A pulse upon the perfect membrane of  
Non-happening, and suddenly the dark  
Is rent by faint reflected glow above  
Earth's edge: a sky predicted in a spark.  
Emerging from the depths, the fiery source  
Of all desire ascends in slow, sure blaze  
Of majesty, inspiring life to course  
Within its warmth and gather in its praise.  
Cold sleep gives way to rivulets of flow  
That yearn towards coalescence in the vast  
Crescendo of life's flowering while low  
Beneath is pressed its dead into the past  
In strata resonant with that first urge  
That broke the void and bore, sustained, this surge.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *The Art of Saying Farewell*

I dreamed that when I died, I found it good...  
Until, that is, a memory intervened  
To show me what I'd left behind, what could  
Not be again without this veil between.  
And then the cataclysm came — it broke  
Upon my bliss like lightning breaks the night —  
The horror of being free now from that yoke  
Which proved sole instrument of all delight.  
With absent arms I senselessly reached out  
To grasp at what I'd lived, to save some part  
From fading on the nerve, like faith to doubt,  
And each thing held struck rapture in my heart:  
After a life dreamt yearning to transcend  
This world, I wake now clinging at its end.



I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Concerto for Composer*

Take any random intervals on hand  
And treat their newfound kinship as a theme  
Predicting, through meticulous command,  
A drama as emotive as a dream.  
For here, upon a wordless, makeshift stage,  
An opera of great tragicomic sweep  
Unfolds, revealing off its chiseled page  
Precision so intense one can't help weep  
Vicarious with joy at all the force  
Imagination wields from out the whole  
Of its confinement. *This* then is the source  
Of all great art: that rigorous control  
Of formal means that sets invention free:  
The *discipline* of spontaneity.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Count Almazova's Armchair*

In this great chair the master sat atop  
His world (before it fell) and let his will  
Grow hungry for his privilege. No mere prop  
Could hold so much real life, nor hide such ill.  
For here he hid from his own marriage bed  
While she, whom he'd so craved when she was young,  
Was left to eat her meals alone. (Instead  
Of passionate they came to be high strung.)  
Yet in his absence, love would come and perch  
Here, warbling raptures soaring over sin,  
Till he returned to find each fear he'd searched  
For, one by one: behind, beside, within.  
It seemed some desert tree in sudden bloom,  
Sustaining all man's love life in one room.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*The Don's Eternal Appetite*

Discord breaks upon the curtained calm.  
This is the sound a culture makes when torn,  
When its worst appetite roams free upon  
Its reason till the fabric is outworn.  
We hear desire riding hard across  
The shimmering innocence of quickened trust,  
Which soon is plucked and tasted for the sauce  
Served up by vengeance in its own hot lust.  
Yet, all the while that knock of conscience pounds,  
Ignored, beneath the haunting ravishments  
Of art – the lush, intoxicating sounds –  
And in these poignant strains our selves are sensed.  
It is our *hunger* Mozart heard so well:  
Our greed for life's exuberance, our hell.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

## *The Dark Side of Success*

Or

### *That Most Dangerous Wager*

The saddest story ever told is not  
The one where youth succumbs to early death  
But that in which we live to find we *got*  
The thing we chased so hard with captured breath—  
Yes, *won* that which we hadn't wanted, save  
As useless proof it could, if wished, be ours—  
And all for nothing but a wager braved  
By pride, which hails love's wounds like battle scars.  
For, knowledge dark as this is bought with fear  
That never will return to pay the cost,  
While all those gorgeous harmonies we hear  
Berie harsh truths of innocence long lost.  
And when the curtain plummets down at last,  
Our lovers brace themselves for love that's passed.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Maestro di color che amano*

You left this earth in a fiery blaze of fame,  
The greatest farmer Italy ever knew.  
Now we, rich heirs of your bold harvest, blame  
You for the lengths you'd gone toward the rave review:  
For the hokey heart-string tricks and big-tent thrills,  
The potpourri with a pinch of God thrown in.  
O Maestro, forgive us! Your art instills  
This score with that transcendent sense no sin  
Of bourgeois taste can taint: a prodigious zest  
Of life gleaned bursting ripe in brassy glare...  
Yet rotten to the core when ills infest  
The strings with yearnings dark, intense as prayer.  
O grand old man, you're just too big for this!  
What use are words to trace the Moor's last kiss?

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*A Late Self-Portrait of the Artist*

He stands before the world he makes in paint  
And fixes his uncompromising eye  
Upon the truth some lesser brush might feint  
In serving up some lesser art its lie.  
Just as the poet might take words benign  
And, by arrangement, hear them turn corrupt,  
The painter can watch pigments redefine  
The values of that world *they'd* draw up.  
This man, on whom no glint of light or love  
Was ever lost, confronts his self (and ours  
Whom he has taught to see) in shadow of  
That arc of his career lost in full powers.  
Yes, there are things the highest art can't fake:  
Like love and, oh, the simple look of heartbreak.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Woman in Blue*

Against the backdrop of a realm ideal,  
Where distances are conquered at a glance  
And suffering's never seen, she stands – so real,  
Perhaps because so vulnerable to chance:  
A piece of paper came, and he had gone;  
Another now appears to tell of things  
Fate charted for him since, and she feels drawn  
Behind this nib, which probes hope's nerve and stings.  
And yet a radiance like expectation  
Heralds something sacred here; amidst  
This halo, shadowless, she reads elation  
In a word and glows, in light transfixed.  
Had Gabriel come himself to bring this news,  
She wouldn't've been conceived in holier hues.

I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

### *Sculpture at an Exhibition*

We walked into a little room and felt.  
This simple yet profound event, above  
All else, seemed *us* – the way two people dwelt  
In one another's truth as well as love.  
To enter here together is to share  
The artist's grace – that range of heart where pain  
Is evidence of life, for which we *care*,  
Not shun – that taste for where we're most humane.  
The sculptor left *her* care upon the wall,  
Envisioned into cold dark bronze from out  
The loss she'd heard beneath a trumpet's call –  
And we, before it, lived the more devout.  
For, here we found life's sacred state most real:  
To learn *another's* truth, and through it, *feel*.



I. Sonnets, group A (on music and visual art), *continued*

*Preface to the Poems*  
*Composed at the Orchid Pavilion*

The most accomplished writer on this earth,  
His characters were drawn with such intense  
Vitality they might have given birth  
To their progenitors. Such was the sense  
We had who watched him, poised with brush in hand  
Above blank paper, waiting to begin.  
Posterity would come to understand  
How it was but from this deft brush the wind  
Itself would take its form, as too the necks  
Of geese, the roots of trees, and insect wings —  
The whole of nature's rhythms he selects  
To wake from latency as living things.  
This genesis we witnessed was that start  
When handwriting became the highest art.

## I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art)

*The World Savored in Words*

Each time I bite into a word, I feel  
My appetite for life expand to meet  
The physicality of thought made real,  
The flesh of utterance conceived complete.  
I read upon my lips, teeth, palate, tongue,  
A revelation of community:  
Our urge to save what we have felt, thought, done  
From time's digestion through shared memory.  
For, what I taste within this bitten fruit —  
The knowledge of some thing remote unbound  
Into immediacy — proves but the root  
Through which our world is traced in nuanced sound,  
As if between a plosive and a trill  
A paradise were found or lost to ill.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued*

### *A Poem Defined*

A poem is a world made from words —  
A cosmos formed of connotative sounds  
So patterned that its music-making herds  
Its meanings out past denotation's bounds  
Into that heightened meadow of the mind  
Where wonder grazes upon reason's green,  
Digesting each inferred event (combined  
With remnants and emotions sight unseen)  
Within the protean chyme of memory  
To be transformed as meaning something more:  
That complex distillate of sensory  
Experience and thought in metaphor  
Exploring how life feels upon the heart —  
A world of language heightened into art.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued**Making Poems in the Sun*

When you and I conspire at times to doze  
From out the wintry gray of northern skies  
And wake into the bright warm life we chose  
Of sun-drenched ease beyond our clients' cries,  
I thrill to find those poems I'd long lost.  
These creatures of my feelings, though, had not  
As yet been born, of course; for they would cost  
Much careful labor too. But here I'd spot  
Upon the beach of our remembered peace  
A shard of some forgotten past – and know  
It as my own. And as my world decreased  
Around this glinting form, I'd watch it grow  
Important, till it would, by slow degree,  
Exceed the weight of the surrounding sea.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued**Why I Walk My Poetry*

Whenever my good muse commands, “Go walk  
Your poetry,” I tend to acquiesce,  
As she knows *exercise*, and not mere talk,  
Best limbers feet made clumsy by their stress.  
I take some line encumbered by its rhyme  
(Such that it seems confined to something short  
Of what I want) and walk with it a time  
Along some quiet beach or ruined fort —  
Till, slowly, I discern a change in gait  
Among its graceless feet — more limpid, say —  
Enjambed now where it had but crashed its weight  
Full stop and burned but earlier that day.  
Some things just can’t be found upon a chair —  
Like those right words, for which one needs fresh air.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued*

### *The Art of Reading*

The rise and fall of Rome can make me nod,  
Ill told, while through an artist's touch, some dope  
Returning home with a bad tattoo of God  
Can wake my inspiration into hope.  
For what mean more to us than mere events  
(Called "real" because of circumstantial proof)  
Are those illuminations we can sense  
Reflected in imagining their truth.  
And when the writer chooses just that word,  
And not another, to complete the feel  
Of life examined so, the values heard  
Implicit in that choice become what's real.  
So, let's embrace this world but pay great heed  
To art, through which life grows so rich to read.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued**God and the Rednecks*

You call it Grace when a man's reason breaks  
And all he's left's the Lord upon his back.  
Or when a woman's shot, for goodness' sake,  
To save her, yes, redeem her bric-a-brac  
Existence for the point-blank stare of Truth.  
Can those stigmata smoking on her chest  
Reveal His *love* who chooses the uncouth  
And blazing ignorant to know Him best?  
O Mary, look what horror you've conceived  
For us in your despotic, needy God,  
Intolerant of everything achieved  
With open mind – that He'd have done in blood!  
Yet you are right in your fierce glare of art.  
Without your faith, how *can* we plumb your heart?

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued*

*Pandarus Beneath the Palms*

When Troilus knelt to beg Criseyde's heart  
And Pandar ran to bring a cushion for  
That knee, we laughed through tears how well could art  
Tame words to capture life at its last pore.  
All ears were fixed on what our author did  
And did not dare confide about these lives,  
And we learned well to heed omissions slid  
So deftly in where irony best thrives.  
So, when the doorbell rang and we awoke,  
Confused, from Troy and recognized the smile  
Heralding the *perfectly* poached yolk,  
We saw how art and life turn well on style.  
And when we raised our cups and buttered toast  
We knew life read *and* lived was life lived most.



I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued*

*Menelaus and Helen*

*Darby & Joan*

Our histories record for us the dreams  
And aspirations of historians  
So keenly we mistake for facts their themes,  
Which serve as worldview emporiums.  
Conversely, enter poet, singing how  
It feels to live amid some given “fact,”  
Revealing themes eternal in its now  
To last on lips past countless Troys well sacked.  
How can we then retrieve the lived event —  
A woman’s beauty, an ensuing doom —  
And not mere souvenirs of what it meant  
Or felt like to the ones who kept its tomb?  
The truths preserved in history and art  
Are products of a culture’s self-regard.

I. Sonnets, group B (on literary art), *continued*

### *My Spiritual Journey*

I woke to find myself awake amidst  
A dark wood bedroom suite in some motel  
Halfway between my lust and what it fixed  
Upon: a gorgeous woman, hot as hell.  
I knew I wasn't sleeping anymore  
Though, since this beauty I'd been kissing proved  
None other than the one I heard now snoring  
Soft against this shoulder I'd not moved.  
And then it was the reason had occurred  
To me just why conjugal intercourse  
Like ours might cook still with such heat, though stirred  
By reproductive instincts reinforced  
*Well past our procreative age: Above*  
*This waste of seed prevails the boon of love.*

## I. Sonnets, group C (on love)

*Economics 101*

In my economy, you are the gold:  
You are that valued good round which is turned  
The raw commodity of my most bold  
Desire into satisfactions earned.  
I set my currency with worldly things  
To that high standard of your wisdom's range  
That gleans the moral grain impatience flings  
Aside in search of pleasure's pocket change.  
You are reward supreme for time well spent  
Appreciating what's most real and true.  
And so, in practicing my best intent  
I but accrue still deeper love for you.  
For this there is no cost too high to pay;  
I profit by your presence every day.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued*

### *Taking Inventory of My Love*

I itemize the world to find my way:  
To clear a path for recognition's light  
Throughout the tangled, seeming disarray  
Of boundless matter and event in sight.  
Each day I live thus, with a list of things  
Conceived articulate against the blind,  
Rapacious din our earthly process sings.  
This way I glean what's me from all I find.  
But when I try to frame my love for you —  
Yes, name into significance each part  
Of how I crave you — I am lost anew,  
Like when we pit the brain against the heart.  
For, love is *felt* when known, not understood;  
I feel your beauty like one knows the good.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Our Life Together*

When we're apart, the world makes little sense.  
Its things impinge upon the nerve and prove  
Existence in my brain, but as events  
Unweighted by significance or truth.  
I listen to the sounds the treetops make —  
That clamor of community we've heard  
As evolution's voice — and can't help take  
It in as noise: loud bourse of bug and bird.  
When we're together though, my love, instead  
The world seems my mother tongue. I know  
Its idiom like thirst knows drink. What's said  
On every leaf I read in love, and own.  
Life shared with you reveals my deepest dreams:  
Those visions of fulfillment where life *means*.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Your Body as My World*

There is a landscape closer to my heart  
Than any on this luscious earth — terrain  
I yearn for like a nourishment, to start  
My soul toward its most sensual domain.  
It is a country ample of the lush  
Enticement nature wears to urge her own  
Replenishment — the ripe, ecstatic blush  
Of springtide's sway — conceived as flesh and bone.  
It is your body, love, I worship here;  
Your substance *is* my world. Each gentle curve  
Of you forms my horizon, bounds my sphere,  
Wherein my deepest being is preserved.  
Your body is the landscape of my lust;  
In its soft warmth I come to find my trust.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**The Anatomy of Love*

I love you with my body, dear, because  
That's where my flesh resides – the *corporal* me  
(The *only* one) – that place your being gnaws  
At mine with physical intensity  
And proves the source of everything I feel:  
The all I see, hear, taste, smell, touch, am, know  
As meat of my engagement in the real  
Live world of what our nerve cells undergo.  
Yes, this, *my body*, is the engine of  
All predicates and subjects we construe –  
The carnal truth of how I am and love –  
The all I yearn to merge with what is you.  
Your lover is no ghost in some machine  
But that real corpus built of world and gene.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Let Eros Make Our Bed*

To sleep (perchance to *dream* of sleep at least)  
Is deathly dull employment of a bed.  
Let ours be first that sanctum where we feast  
Life's deepest appetite aroused instead.  
For sleep will come, eventually, to all,  
While love's delights, deferred, are but bequeathed  
Directly to oblivion. So, sprawl  
Luxurious upon my love unsheathed,  
My love! Let's leave this bed as evidence  
Of life lived in exuberance, for two;  
Of pleasure's evolutionary sense  
In bringing flesh to thrill at rendezvous!  
Let Eros make our bed for more than rest:  
For waking us to life's profoundest zest!



I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Pleasures of the Flesh*

Upon your lips I find my paradise —  
That earthly banquet of delight our flesh  
Is heir to naturally: to best entice  
Itself towards life against the blank of death.  
Yes, in the luscious bounty of your kiss  
I taste the sweet oblivion I crave  
To sate, alive between love's thrill-clutched hips,  
And savor its *free* bliss in which we bathe.  
For, this rich hunger's *ours* and needn't wait  
On superstitions of the starved, who're taught  
To spurn all food that might but stimulate  
Their appetite and lead them into thought.  
Yes, we who think fear none of life's allure,  
Which slakes that emptiness beyond death's door.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Between the Sheets*

We know each other best between the sheets  
Of this choice volume of our life we share,  
In which is bound with trust the fleshly treats  
That reinforce through lust this love we bare.  
Concupiscence regilds the dull routine  
To which the binding of two lives submits,  
Illuminating once again the keen  
Cohesive pleasures chasteness soon unknits.  
This gathering of leaves of love, fresh pledged,  
Within the spine of ever-livened want,  
Preserves for us attachment's precious edge,  
Which negligent re-shelving would wear blunt.  
The library of our connubial bliss  
Holds as its greatest treasure our *next* kiss.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Sleep & Love*

Each night, as life's great bounty grows too much  
And we lie down, unburdened of our hold,  
To grasp at recollections of its touch,  
We lose our selves together in love's fold.  
Within this nestled warmth our snug embrace  
Affords we drift away beyond the laws  
That govern day to roam that inner space  
Where things once lived appear without their cause.  
But though this ghostly realm is each our own,  
We find it nightly via one shared bed,  
Which ferries us to folly and back home,  
Restored, into each other's mind and stead.  
And fresh from our re-membered lives we wake,  
Emerging into treasure to partake.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Married Love*

We married one another to lay claim  
To that great bounty of attraction's force  
That brought our boundaries to converge and frame  
With meaning how lust's pleasures feed love's source.  
The maps we used to find this place were those  
Our ancestors had modified through their  
Success, despite vast differences imposed  
By new terrains. Yet, here we can forbear.  
For, though our circuitries evolved to spur  
Us on by way of novelty's ideal  
Toward wider fields to sow, we who demur  
Can stay and reap those satisfactions *real*.  
Thus, innate cravings for the ever new  
We've tamed into *attachment*, tried and true.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**The Magic of Your Voice*

When through the rude, cold, brash, hard, mindless noise  
The world's commerce makes, my tired ear  
Perceives the love-warmed wisdom of your voice,  
I feel my spirit glide into the clear.  
At once, the strident uproar churned between  
Antagonism's treacherous banks gives way  
As I am carried safe to the serene  
Unhurried confluence where trust holds sway.  
And well behind me now the sirens' cries  
Grow faint in their sensational appeals  
Competing for consumers as I rise  
Into the sensual splendor love reveals.  
For here within the timbre of your care  
I bask *companioned*, past temptation's snare.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued*

*Why This Day Is So Very Special,  
Like All Others*

This day, when birds come down to choose their mates  
And humans pause to love amid their fuss  
With lesser things, I once more celebrate  
My constant joy: our *daily* choice of *us*.  
We need no martyr's anniversary  
To feel this exultative state of heart,  
This flutter of soul's wings; the cursory  
Can have no place where life is lived like art:  
In mindfulness, that is, in slow, sure, prayer-  
Like vividness of thought which consecrates  
Each *moment's* grace, each life-rich breath of air,  
Each taste of food that nourishes, not sates.  
No calendar can keep such reverent sway;  
My love, I choose you now *and every day*.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Not in My Wildest Dreams*

Of all my dreams, this one I live with you,  
My love, eludes interpretation best.  
It yields to all analyses no clue  
Beyond its truth: that love wakes life to zest.  
There is no sage on earth can come and read  
In it but myths that rhyme with his beliefs,  
As its most human logic will exceed  
All numbers summed, like facts by joys and griefs.  
It seems I'd slept till meeting you and lived  
As large as this but only while I dreamt;  
For here in love's embrace I wake to give  
Sleep's madness chase, as if from death exempt.  
Not in my wildest dreams had I foreseen  
My life so wide, exuberant, and keen.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Words, Words, Words*

It's said that words cannot express the real  
Experience of LOVE: those tongues of fire  
Licking at our reason till we feel  
Hot desperation for the one desired,  
*Or* then, later, that more temperate kind  
We wake to once these waxed psychotic thrills  
Have ebbed and left us focused with near blind  
Affection that attachment's sense instills....  
It isn't true. These mere voiced signs, *once coined*,  
Become the very currency that buys  
Our visits *back* to these spent feelings, joined  
Now with new *values* their belief implies.  
So, when I say I love you, dear, I *feel*  
How much I do, since words trace what seems real.



I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**The Magnificent Accident of Us*

That you and I exist at all is rare  
Beyond conception in a cosmos vast  
As this, but that we'd come to meet and bare  
Our lives to one another's love counts past  
All odds of destined ends. For, these must heed  
In their trajectory no compromise  
With those diverse events that would impede  
Their goal. And this ignores what underlies  
*Becoming*: we're the level outcome of  
Time's sands of interactive happenstance,  
*Which could have settled otherwise*. Our love  
Then is a process bodies make with chance.  
This key to life dispels the myth of fate:  
The accident of us we *help* create.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Waking Up in Paradise*

I woke this morning into paradise.  
A flock of geese had called me from a dream  
Of lives unlived, of joys long sacrificed,  
To witness the eternal in a gleam.  
For, past our nestled feet I saw the sun  
Light up a sudden slope of brilliant pine  
And stone arising from a surface spun  
In sparkling calm. It shone outside all time.  
And yet, our window opens on a splendor  
Beyond *this* each day we wake up side  
By side. It opens *inward* on what's rendered  
Memorable by how our hearts confide.  
That Eden of mythologies, my dove,  
Is merely this from which we draw our love.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**At Home in Paradise*

Four years ago, I woke into a dream  
Of life with you lived high upon the calm,  
Where sparkling water bound by soaring green  
Would soothe our city nerves in cooling balm.  
This dream was ours together, like the sky  
We'd watch each night dissolve into our love.  
To enter its rare light, we would belie  
Our knowledge of unrealized hopes above.  
Yet now I wake to find our vision real —  
Perceived directly from the world below  
Where diamonds dance on ripples to reveal  
The paradise that stokes the fancy's glow.  
We dare to dream because we dare to live.  
Without our trust in love, what dare we give?

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Admitting Our Impediments*

Let's talk of love, but not that ideal stuff  
Of stars and ships and well-fixed points beyond  
The reach of time. No, I mean love that's tough  
As life, admitting faults through which we bond.  
It is a thing we make — a thing of nerves  
And not some disembodied force that moves  
The planets. (That's called gravity.) Love serves  
No greater outcome than to help us choose.  
And that's where our impediments come in:  
Because it *can* be lost, our love must hold  
The all of us, and not just traits that win  
Our favor. These will sag as we grow old.  
Let ours be that true marriage of two minds  
Embodying the real in what love binds.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**First Anniversary Sonnet*

One year ago upon this sacred day  
We changed the world forever with a kiss.  
The ambient love released, just as we prayed,  
Lit up a moment's dark to mystic bliss:  
A shiver like a splinter of the sun  
Singed quick each spine, yes woke each life, around  
The epicenter, where we stood – where, one  
With all abundance, our new life was crowned.  
And now, this glorious day, we look back out  
Across the year we've kindled with our love  
And see it glowing still, beyond all doubt,  
Where *now* is that eternity above.  
Each blessed day this past year has unfurled  
We've better served each other – and the world.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Leaving Our Heart Upon Taishan*

The millions who'll make pilgrimage to climb  
Mt. *Tai* will gain upon its lucid peak  
A vantage on a world unchanged by time:  
That state of reverence brought by all who seek.  
They'll feel what countless souls who came before  
Had left of *their* enlightenment here: a sense  
Of permanence in flux; the evermore  
Within the ancient moment's present tense.  
And higher yet than this, they'll find our love:  
Bright joy in living in each other's eye  
And earthly appetite. Who climbs above  
These racing clouds tomorrow will espy  
Upon a chain around a sacred rock  
*Our* reverence, symbolized by a heart-shaped lock.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Within Some Other Age*

Had we encountered one another's love  
Within the boundaries of some other age,  
We might have passed it by, untasted of  
This joy, between some drudgery and its wage.  
We would, perhaps, have turned and looked, but then  
Pressed on towards satisfactions safe (those far  
Enough from what our smarting hearts could ken)  
And missed *today*, where luck holds its bazaar.  
For love first must be *possible* to thrive —  
The consequence of physics, laws, and chance  
No less than soul. (A body cannot strive  
To love when dead in *best* of circumstance.)  
So, let us savor, dear, good fortune's role  
In our great love and keep it as our goal.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Love & Time*

From that bright moment we first met, till now,  
When we look back across the splendor born  
Of its event, time seems *itself* endowed  
With that exalted feel of love fresh-sworn,  
As if the very *measure* of love's bond  
Becomes at length the matter it would gauge,  
Providing passion's sustenance *beyond*  
Attraction's force, which *first* had set love's stage,  
As if duration's steady trial of trust  
Can render stronger what survives its test  
By weeding out the fleeting in our lust  
To leave just what erects the surer nest.  
Yes, time reveals to us love's *mounting* bliss;  
So, come, my love, extend it with a kiss!



I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Lovebirds Refurbishing their Nest*

A pair of aging lovebirds made their nest  
Upon a paradise of trust. The house  
They'd called their home was fine...though not the *best*  
They could conceive toward sharing with a spouse.  
And here were they forewarned by seasoned birds  
Whose rebuilt nests had brought *their* love's demise  
(When costly strangers came in noisy herds  
To pry their world apart with compromise).  
Yet *our* pair, confident in what induced  
So strong a bond as theirs, would go select  
With pluck the fabric of their ideal roost  
With high-priced contractor and architect.  
And once all done, though *fiscally* quite poor,  
Their *love* cooed deeper, richer than before.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**The Language of Love*

I often hear some couple suffer words  
With one another that provide, it seems,  
Safe distance for respite from wounds incurred  
In trespassing their partner's self-esteem.  
And I can't help but sense in every blow  
Of hurtful comments proffered their high need  
*To take another language up; yes, throw*  
Away these sharpened phrases and proceed  
In softer, warmer, more inviting sounds  
Through which their vulnerabilities are bared  
So dangerously that both seek grounds  
To be protector of the other's cares —  
Till, soon, like us, they find themselves in bed,  
Re-conjugating risqué verbs instead.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued*

*Romeo, Juliet,  
Lytton & Carrington*

To want what one can't have can forge that bond  
Surviving reason's most persuasive proofs  
By focusing priorities beyond  
The comfort of convention's feel of truth.  
It is to sacrifice the ease routine  
Provides formality, so as embrace  
The precious burden of what lies between  
Two lives long shaped by different fears to face.  
To love someone enough to forfeit hope  
Of ownership is to fulfill our lust  
For deep attachment in that richer scope  
Where intimacy lines its nest with trust.  
And it is this I want for us as well:  
That what we have in love is where we dwell.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Sharing Our Fortune*

The wealth of nations is no match for ours,  
Which is derived not from commodities  
Agreed to have fixed worth but by those powers  
Trust invests *past need* of guarantees.  
For, goods are only made to be consumed  
And services to be enjoyed, but trust,  
Love's bond, grows most abundant when it's used  
And stays, through vulnerability, robust.  
Though, fundamentally, all love may be,  
Like money, but a matter of belief,  
This doesn't lessen its authority,  
As hormones ply where even faith is brief.  
Our fortune, love, is vast because we care  
More for *each other* than our market share.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**This World of Ours*

Each being that has ever been, has changed  
The world at least some particle's amount:  
Its interaction there had rearranged  
Those grains of time supported on its count.  
Yet, no one mind can matter all alone:  
No nation can be founded out of one;  
It takes the both of us to use what's known  
By each to mean a thing that either's done.  
For, reciprocity dissolves from "self"  
That feeling of completeness we perform  
To seem sole agent of our fortune's wealth...  
While merely subject to some greater norm.  
And this lends life that sense of our endeavor:  
Our world is what we make of it *together*.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**A Sonnet to My Muse*

My muse, I've called to you these anguished years  
To teach me how to sing the world anew,  
To find that voice in which our hard-earned tears  
Might nourish joyful reverence for what's true.  
And though I'd thought you couldn't hear my call  
(Because this voice I seek is yours), I see  
Now that you'd never left my side at all:  
You are Love's genius come to set me free.  
And now I see you everywhere I go,  
My love: each port at which my ship arrives.  
I find you in each eye I meet and know  
You in the beauty of all seas and skies.  
I burn to taste the wisdom of your lips  
And learn the world with my fingertips.

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**Feeling a Tad Psychotic*

I met you in the afternoon of this  
Well-reasoned life I'd led while occupied  
With cogent, philosophic thoughts. That kiss  
I dreamed of from you thereon in hog-tied  
My analytic strengths and left me drained  
Of focus toward my tasks, like tying shoes  
And finding words. But this was well explained  
By natural brain events, which was good news.  
For, were I really nuts I wouldn't know  
"Reality" from what I merely dreamt,  
And I knew *well* this difference by my show  
Of apt responses to your lips, which tempted  
Me to see them in each evening sky.  
And I knew too that SUNSETS DO NOT LIE!

I. Sonnets, group C (on love), *continued**To the Tenth Muse*

When Zeus, great king of gods, was pressed to furnish  
Celebrants to sing the Titans' fall,  
He sped to Memory's dark bed and burnished  
It with godly light full nine nights long,  
Till she'd recalled to sudden birth their nine  
Inspiring daughters: goddesses through whom  
Mere men might gain their claim to the sublime.  
Then *you* came, love, who've made men *lose*: yes, room  
For thought of rest or food. My muse, you've changed  
Each man who's called *your* name, inspiring him  
To wax indifferent to his sleep, estranged  
From earthly nourishment until quite thin.  
And I, who've shed enough to be obscure,  
Find my fulfillment fed on your allure.



I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day])

### *Our Brain on Brahms*

The Feel of Art on Life

Through art, we better understand our selves —  
And one another — deep beyond ideals.  
For, these are but the predetermined shelves  
On which a brain arranges what it feels.  
The artist, though, explores the overlap  
Between ideals and life's real pulse and saves  
For us those ambiguities that map  
The subtle shades in which a body craves.  
Our expectations, met or missed, come wrought  
Toward feelings of reward — past reason's schemes.  
And thus, great art reveals what can't be thought  
So much as fathomed, just as in our dreams.  
The wistful edge of beauty renders more  
Than even our best logic can ignore.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Maslow's Hammer*

I mostly find what I am looking for  
And not those things I'm unprepared to see.  
For, seeing's made of *expectation* toward  
Some thing *our forebears* recognized as key.  
But these rough tools bequeathed to us to tweak  
Our inner model of this world's advance  
Were shaped in that economy that seeks  
Sufficiency from out the hand of chance.  
It shouldn't be surprising then how blind  
We are to our own blind spot's missing light;  
Our inference-making brains evolved to bind  
The best they find and *think* it perfect sight.  
When all you have's a hammer in your pail,  
You'll find each problem looks just like a nail.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Extrasensory Deception*

A neuron either fires or it doesn't.  
The all of who we are and what we know  
Depends on this. Yet, we pretend there wasn't  
This connection lending thought its flow:  
As if a signal's energy can prove  
Itself the very matter it controlled;  
As if what's left of heat once you remove  
The fuel is not dispersed into the cold.  
Still, we persist in this delusion of  
A life experience laid down then heaved  
Aloft beyond its sustenance (above  
The circuitry in which it was conceived).  
Ideas cannot exist outside live brains:  
Of what are they composed in such terrains?

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Mysticism Explained*

From out the soup cooked up by ancient earth  
Evolved a competition to exist  
Through which economy emerged great worth  
In navigating between food and risk.  
And as some life forms changed and better vied  
For their success in passing on their genes,  
Elaborate brains accrued that best supplied  
Coordination of these complex means —  
Until such busy organs lost their sense  
Of merely *being* (hid within what's used  
To digest benefit from such expense)  
And came to reverence what they had confused:  
*The primitive with what seems infinite.*  
Now, *this* is mystical; the rest is shit.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

*Proof that Dreams are Real*

First, take a brain and steep it in a world.  
Then, lay it by a while to set. Next, go  
Reduce the voltage till the waves unfurled  
Are quicker paced and nothing's felt below.  
Now, activate some cells, unlocking stored  
Emotions and events as they'd appeared,  
And watch the nonsense loosed excite a score  
Of pathways making these stray bits cohere.  
Yet, this state dreamt was but a *new event*;  
It "happened" like those "real" ones we'd espied –  
Remembered, from the world – yes, *underwent*  
As if *it too* were input from outside.  
Thus, the perceived and dreamed, seen close enough,  
Reveal that *they're both made of that same stuff!*

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *From Matter into Mind*

I found the universe within my brain —  
Not writ in code or mirrored in a thought,  
But real, as flesh: in atoms I retain  
Of stardust and the start of time from naught.  
Yes, underneath this integrative state  
In which I know I “am” are but the chance  
Selections and connections that collate  
Inherent values with found circumstance.  
For, all this matter generating “mind”  
Evolved (from out a mindless past) as means  
To map environment: to match and bind  
In memory how each perceived thing seems.  
I call this firmament of function “me”  
Though substance-wise, no separate entity.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

*To Dream, Perchance to Think*

In the beginning was the dream-state brain.  
For, long before the word (and with it, God)  
Evolved on earth to stake out man's domain  
There first emerged a state in which brains nod.  
From out the neural populations urged  
By amines or by cholinergic sway  
A climate formed wherein these two diverged  
To shape contrasting dreams of night and day:  
The first as atlas of the world outside  
On which to read (and write) our way; the next  
As what we find out there (once it's transcribed  
In that same ink in which is writ *both* texts).  
Hence, input from outside *and* in were wrought  
Commingled as one mind, begetting thought.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Goodbye, Dr. Freud*

Respects to Doctor Freud, for he is dead!  
When Hobson came to take Freud's pulse, he found  
Beneath the shroud an empty couch: that bed-  
Like craft in which he'd ferried souls around.  
(For fee he'd guide them through their childhood murk  
Of violated memories, where crimes  
Of parents toward the infant self might lurk,  
Repressed, till He read meaning in their signs.)  
Then Allan shone some science on this tomb  
And saw that it could never catch a dream  
That wasn't rigged; that here lay souls for whom  
The doctor's wish fulfillment was their theme.  
And in this light, we see our dreams reveal  
BRAIN PROCESSES, not laundry to conceal!



I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Manifest Latency*

I had a dream. Revealed in it was me:  
My cargo's manifest, compiled weird  
From out the flotsam of my memory  
Washed up by waves unease had commandeered.  
These rose from that most ancient stem of my  
Mere being (prior to my self) and swept  
Through latent fears, which would unleash awry  
Diverse remembrances where they had slept.  
The chaos patched from this proved my domain —  
The world I am that maps that larger world —  
Composed of those same juices in my brain  
That hold in circuit *every* state unfurled.  
I sing of FLESH, that stuff of which *all* dreams  
Are made, real substance of whatever seems.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Cogitation on Kauai*

I felt a thought arise one drowsy day  
Beneath a fig tree's shade at my mind's end  
And marked its rousing progress through the gray  
Insentience I'd long yearned to comprehend.  
I sensed the rich fecundity of this  
Unbidden cogitation as it made  
Its way connecting remnants of lived bliss  
And pain with innate fears my sleep surveyed.  
But as I mused on how my nerves re-forged  
These scraps to shape my narrative of now,  
I felt a root desire swell, engorged  
Like sudden fruit plumped out on selfhood's bough...  
And knew at once how all is but one mesh:  
*Enlightenment cannot happen outside flesh.*

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

### *Genesis of Inconsequential Things*

Beginning with that instant's aftermath  
When hot, dense oneness burst into its own  
Plurality of cooling parts, our path  
Revealed inconsequentials to bemoan.  
For, once the chaff of change combined to form  
The currency of universal laws,  
Our earth evolved *its* necessary norm  
Of competition with mutation's flaws,  
In which economy of rule and chance  
Our brains developed such would value high  
Those things with which survival was financed,  
Though paid in those emotions *we* supply:  
We're prompted by rewards of joy and strife,  
Confusing life's *accoutrements* with life.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

*If I Were You...*

If I were you, I'd do things differently,  
I think – a little less like that and more  
Like this, I'd guess – since then, at last, I'd see  
With my own eyes how things should look through yours.  
Yet, *were* I not my own but *your* unique  
Trajectory through habitat and genes,  
I'd then be doing these same things you seek  
As only *you* could do within *your* means.  
This leaves us in that state called Paradox,  
Whose visitors are asked to watch events  
That cannot happen till they've stopped their clocks  
Upon *conclusion* of those incidents.  
And so, if I were you, I'd be *myself*  
And do just what *I'd* do, and no one else.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

*Truths, Lies, and  
Other Fabrications*

The lie I told the other day was true.  
Its parts cohered, with joinery so tight,  
No peep of inconsistency shone through  
To contradict what we agree is right.  
I'd often vouched for *facts* that had far less  
"Reality" about them than this fiction  
Did: the ones that passed truth's strictest tests  
*Except* that deep-felt glow of firm conviction.  
So, when I learned my lie had come this close,  
Unwittingly, to how things really were,  
It seemed the *lesser* narrative — at most  
A mirror held to what we think occurred.  
For, "facts" — reflections of a flesh-made mind —  
Depend on how brains choose what *they've* defined.

I. Sonnets, group D (on consciousness [i.e., dreams of both night *and* day]), *continued*

*Truths, etc.*

*Revisited*

I like a thing well made — be it a book,  
An altarpiece, or just some basic truth.  
It matters not the high ideals forsook  
In making it; the *craftsmanship's* the proof.  
When I confront a crucifixion, say,  
And find it executed with great care,  
I'm moved far more by how its parts will play  
Toward great effect than torture, faith, and prayer.  
The same for any truth, which must reveal  
Conformity with what our brains predict  
Is out there in the world, fine-tuned as “real,”  
And not those specious comforts hopes depict.  
For, all we'll *ever* know are but these dreams  
Well-made from instincts tweaked by how life seems.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason)

### *Recipe for Religion*

Begin with dread of death and that daft dream  
Of living past our brain. Next, add the need  
To valorize one's self through group esteem.  
Dissolve stray bits of doubt with mumbled creed  
Till reason is replaced with want, endowing  
Nonsense with the feel of virtue. Hence,  
Infuse with stalwart ignorance of how  
We came to be. (Use myth at truth's expense.)  
Throw in a despot parent we can't see  
Whom we can grovel to (lest our reward  
Be punishment). Reduce until thought-free.  
And now shut mind, say Grace, and drink as poured.  
Though what you've swallowed here may be explained  
As by-product of ancient skills retained,  
*This doesn't make it any less insane.*

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*The Problems Gods Must Face  
In Worlds Such as Ours*

The reason that things work the way they do  
Is just that otherwise they'd function quite  
Befitting features consequently true  
To *other things*, for which *they'd* then be right.  
In other words, the things we find around  
Us now are but the way they are *because*  
*They got that way*: developed as they're bound  
By competition of unyielding laws.  
To intervene in such a fabric's weave  
Would be to get between a cause and its  
Effect without the slightest trace of heave  
Left whereof join of warp and weft admits.  
And this would take that special type of god  
Who'd leave no change upon the world he'd prod  
...WHICH IS *SO* FUCKING POINTLESS WHEN YOU'RE  
**GOD!**



I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *The Last Great Mystery of Life*

The mysteries of life were many once:  
Before man had the science to distill  
Real reasons that things happen, any dunce  
Could find these questions answered in God's will,  
In which black box of sovereignty all lust  
For knowledge is taboo that threatens blind  
Obedience to this *unknown* thing we'd trust.  
Yet through seditious inquiry we've mined  
Such truths that helped us learn away the shroud  
Of myth until enigmas were explained  
That long had held our ancestors so cowed...  
*Except*, that is, for one that *still* remained:  
JUST WHERE THE HELL MY MUSE HAD LEFT HER PHONE!  
And *this* seems something only God has known!

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *The Beauty of a Purposeless Existence*

The plausible illusion of free will  
Thrown off as by-product of complex brains  
At work in navigating worlds instills  
In them a trust in “purpose” at their reins,  
As if their evolution here on earth  
From simple cells to circuitries immense  
Progressed toward some great goal of future worth  
Instead of from past benefit’s expense.  
So, why can’t we who *are* these brains rejoice  
In having drawn such splendid maps of our  
Terrains and not pretend that every choice  
We make derives from a designer’s power?  
Yes, you and I, my love, are both effect  
*And* cause; we’re *governed* by what *we* select.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *Why We Are Here*

The reason we are here, my dear, and not,  
Say, over there, is that the place to be  
Can never fall precisely in that spot  
Another is already: it's not free.  
But furthermore, this "there" we speak of now  
Is always *here* when *we* are there. And thus,  
Regardless of position, we allow  
That "they" remain peripheral to "us."  
Yet really, what the question asks, my sweet,  
Is how our predicate and subject would  
With this same copula be made complete  
*That, in itself, cannot be understood.*  
So, next time you are asked this, give it pause;  
The only valid answer is: BECAUSE.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *Why I'm Skeptical of Santa*

Our ancestors were those whose brains could map  
Their world sufficiently to live in – long  
Enough to pass on genes. For, any trap  
They dodged that proved but scraps proved not *as* wrong  
A guess as made by those who saw the trap  
As scraps – and therefore didn't live to spawn.  
Now, brains constructed via genes that tap  
The value of traps seen are prone thereon  
To read in emptiness some entity  
*Unproved* – a by-product, where trap and scrap,  
Reborn as fear and lust, are rendered free  
Of their old usefulness *and now worth crap*.  
Yet, once conceived, these frauds without a cause  
Live on, tax free, like God or Santa Claus.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *Ye Olde Christmas Virus*

For centuries, a deadly virus spread  
From mind to mind of innocent consumer  
Buying immortality with bread  
Sold as His flesh, seduced by brain-jacked rumor.  
Each one infected came to find the same  
Brave virtue in believing what they're told  
On faith alone (lest they *too* feed His flame).  
Then all succumbed to drink this Kool-Aid™ cold.  
By this is meant that deal cut where this son  
God offered up for eating would be born  
On that chill day His rival cults had fun  
(Thus selling in the name of love mere porn).  
Extorted sentiment is widespread now:  
This Christmas business proved His *best* cash cow.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*The Devout Atheist at Worship*

Our human brain evolved to such a stage  
As to conceive of its authority –  
The cause of how things are and why – to gauge  
The reason granting us priority.  
We learned to read in nature's laws our own  
And bend in dread before the awesome force  
Of our conception, blurring the unknown  
With fear and lust, engendering our source.  
And yet beneath this cloud of superstition,  
*All* are moved by that same appetite:  
Attraction's primal quiver of ambition,  
Stirring the innate towards life's great flight.  
I find this thrill *not* in some God, above,  
But deep within a trill, a gleam, a love.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

### *The Beauty of Profanity*

The only language too obscene for *me*  
To bear is not fuck, cunt, or prick but plain  
Old “Oh my Gosh!” For, this means one’s not free  
To take some made-up despot’s name in vain,  
Thus letting fear’s subservience demean  
Our human dignity. Why forfeit true  
Expressiveness for some sham sign, scrubbed clean  
Of sense, that fawns around some fool taboo?  
Instead, let us *communicate*, not hide  
Behind minced oaths, which merely urge us try  
Emotions on, like envied clothes our pride  
Will not accept for what they might imply!  
Yes, unlike speech *obscuring* how we feel,  
The beauty of foul language is *it’s real*.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*This, Too, Be the Verse*

Our father and our mother both bequeathed  
To us, through their coition, *our* brain's lust  
To feel its own erotic itch relieved.  
And thus, the kingdom of remorse, disgust,  
And penance that religion built and honed  
Toward its control of pleasure's hallowed worth.  
For, though this thrill through which our parents moaned  
Had but delivered us upon this earth,  
Our daily debt to it found full support  
With those astute custodians of myth  
Who knew each trespass of it might extort  
Obedience to foolishness forthwith.  
Yet nerves are made of sterner stuff than lore:  
Our fucking parents proved this when they scored.



I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*Always Start with the Big Bang*

There are those days the world's grown too big  
And brash to live in with sufficient grace;  
When I'm afraid to fail, or truth seems rigged,  
And meaning has eroded from my chase.  
But then, when I recall just how obscure  
Those chances were that managed to arrive  
At me, I feel again the privilege, pure,  
*Of being here at all* – and, quick, revive.  
I start with time's inception in that bang  
From which a singularity became  
So much and marvel how from this point sprang  
The possibility of life's vast game.  
And then I know the *roughest* day I'm here  
Lends better use of chance than failure's fear.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*Leaping from the Flaming  
Tower of Psychobabble*

The warm and fuzzy thinking found expressed  
By fantasists of disembodied thought  
Collects that lint of high-flown nonsense blessed  
By experts nervous of what they've learned and taught.  
"Obliteration" has that special ring  
That wakes the strictest scientists to search  
For loopholes in their findings they can cling  
To over the abyss. This leaves the church  
That quantum stage where physicist and priest  
Perform in one shared language known as HOPE,  
In which rare theorems prove we're what's *released*  
By death and not this flesh that *is* our scope.  
To me, eternal life without my brain  
Is not worth dying for as my domain.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*Freedom...from Coherence*

I only need to hear the word and feel  
Me reach for my composure. Yes, the ring  
Of “freedom” on my ear has no appeal  
Detached from circumstance, that state of things  
Distinguishing whatever we avow.  
A liberty is framed as such by tight  
Constraints: competing laws that can’t allow  
For one speck more than earned within their fight.  
So, disregard of context for the ease  
Of sounding deep sustains that dim abyss  
Where “good” and “bad” are *forces* to be seized  
Instead of *values*. Life, though, shows us this:  
It’s not just what you’re dealt, nor how you play,  
But how both *interact* within the game.

I. Sonnets, group E (on religion v. reason), *continued*

*Journey to the Center  
of Absurdity*

or

*A Zygote's Rights*

I dreamt I lived in such a world where things  
*Potential* matter more than those we see —  
Where each mere seed that nature's excess flings  
At chance is valued greater than the tree —  
As if some image fashioned by a brain  
Could be more real than what it represents  
And worth full privilege over its domain,  
Though impotent to earn its vast expense.  
I felt myself assembling to wake out  
Of this delirium but couldn't find  
A path that wasn't cleared by the devout  
Toward options that must all be chosen blind.  
And then I knew this hell I'd thought a dream  
Was, rather, idealism's dark regime.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings)

## *Constitutional Scripture*

Or

The Religion of Originalism

(A Sonnet Contemplating God's Creation of  
Our Nation's Highest Kangaroo Court)

A word is just the sound that's left behind  
To replicate the process of a living thought.  
Once written down, this recipe for mind  
Becomes a fossil of some bit of life we'd sought.  
Respect for such an artifact's career  
Reveals what did and didn't work long past,  
But *worship* of it, like some souvenir  
Of faith, ignores the reasons it was cast.  
Thus, all men really meant white males with land,  
Though read as sacred text, we're prone to bow  
To it as if what's writ is our command,  
Submitting to old wrongs inapt to now.  
And thus, religious thinking taints it all:  
Words viewed as scripture keep us in their thrall.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings)

*A Closer Look at*  
The Religion of Originalism

(And How Religious Thinking  
Contaminates Even Our Most Secular  
Aspirations Toward Reason)

Our urge to *worship* an authority  
Is old as superstition's furthest reach,  
Where true respect (without the groveling)  
Is feared inadequate toward our beseech.  
This abject deference to command is seen  
Extended even to the written word,  
Which, though mere *record* of a thought, we deem  
That hallowed thing *itself* to be preserved.  
But words *evolve* in meaning through their use  
And often lose their relevance to *now*,  
Where living needs, undreamt of then, reduce  
To less regard than *sounds* to which we bow,  
Till relics of our language are worth more  
Than what speech was developed to explore.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings)

### *In Praise of Plain Pornography*

A Meditation on Smut

I think that I shall never see a tree  
As lovely as a woman's ass. No shaft  
Of wood with twigs and leaves could ever be  
As stimulating to my manly grasp  
As woman's plump round rump, or bouncy breasts  
The firmness of ripe fruit. Or shapely legs  
Which taper down, down, *down* to ankles blessed  
With tiny feet. And when some hot babe begs  
My fierce attention from the TV screen  
Or printed page as keenly as from life,  
I find it good to not resist, obscene  
As some may find what's done without one's wife.  
And I know God would not make fools like me  
Respond to smut if He did not agree.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *Rounding the Square*

Each place where people come to live in close  
Proximity reveals an open space  
Wherein its heartbeat can be heard, a dose  
Of slow amid the business of life's race.  
My muse and I pause here in such a square  
To clear our mind; she'd watch the different ways  
Men lose themselves while I, who come to snare  
Fine rhymes, would meditate on women's legs.  
Or else we'd walk its outside round and round,  
Exultant with high pulse and dappled light  
And distant squeals of young explorers bound  
For dogs, inspiring birds to sudden flight.  
But what at last we find here is our soul:  
That center we had bargained for a goal.



I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *Visitor from Another World*

When I consider how my interest wanes  
In things that matter much to most good folk —  
Like where some ball must fall such that it rains  
Prestige and wealth down on some practiced dope —  
I realize how my visit on this earth  
Is spent *but looking in* — yes, on the odd  
Conventions forged to codify man's worth  
By cheerleaders of Country, Sport, and God.  
But as expatriate from custom, here  
Amid the riches of *not fitting in*,  
I'm free of those distractions to give ear  
To my keen muse, who lends my earth its spin.  
And blind to things most men are trained to chase,  
I find, *through feeling*, life's deep thrills to trace.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *This Day*

Today we are one trifling increment  
More distant from the stupor of our birth,  
When we were plucked from ignorance and sent  
In search of our own meaning of life's worth.  
Let's not wake dull upon *this* day and see  
It as some gloomy symbol of things gone —  
Of all we'll never have again or be —  
And miss the sunset, keener than the dawn.  
For, growing old's a great rare privilege they  
Who've ceased to live can never *ever* know;  
Life's luscious kiss grows sexier each day  
It proves itself our best *and only* show.  
And so, let's value this day's date no less  
Than as high sign of our most key success!

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *Annus Mirabilis*

Go scoop a year of time from out the flow  
Of its events and watch it trickle through  
Your grasp of its significance, as though  
In meaning's gravity, truths bend askew.  
This seems to happen in my measure of  
That special year in which you had emerged  
Into the light of my potential love  
And lived your life towards mine till they'd converged:  
Within the circuit of my memory,  
A moment in some far-off family's life  
Becomes a golden age I tend to see  
Predictive of our bliss as man and wife.  
This year that gave me you is but cold time  
That meaning's heat has raised to the sublime.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *The Mellifluous Sound of Silence*

The workings of our world emit such noise  
As drowns out certain workings of my brain,  
Like those in which some buoyed concept, poised  
For harboring, submerges unsustained.  
These auditory bits of life's debris —  
Like litter one can hear — accrue around  
My aim before it reaches its free quay,  
Obscuring it beneath dull heaps of sound.  
But further out amid that quiet space  
Revealing far horizons of my thought,  
I follow each slight sound at its own pace  
Till full subsumed in what my art has wrought.  
And I return to port but seldom now,  
So smoothly through the silence glides my prow.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *Jungle Reveries*

The gnarled roots of paradise reveal,  
Beneath this order's magnitude, a state  
Of hellish chaos based on how to steal  
Survival from a neighbor's (stolen) plate.  
Perhaps this "harmony" we think we find  
Here then is just some gloss we're born to see  
Upon the wreckage of lives redefined  
As food and translated to cheap debris.  
For, benefits and their expenses, viewed  
From far enough away, will look like parts  
Within some larger pattern *we've* construed...  
Because they're that as well. It's where one *starts*  
That best determines the observer's truth  
Emergent in the jungle's reddest tooth.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *At Home on the Roam*

That journey we now share upon this earth  
Between two places we have made our home  
Reveals to us with each new year the worth  
Discoverable in learning how to *roam*:  
Yes, travel *indirectly* — *past* the route  
Efficiency prescribes — to view what lies  
*Between* those compass points of our commute  
As *new* horizons to survey and prize.  
For, all those little rituals we call  
Our life include the ways we soothe our fear  
Of change, though these buy satisfactions small  
Compared with those that thrill the pioneer.  
So, let us keep our destinations set...  
But just *defer* them, *past* routine's regret.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

*As Advertised*

The same old words we use to buy our bread  
Or make a poem sting enough to glean  
Some grain of truth are also found refed  
To us, stuffed new with business to convene.  
Their savvy handlers know the way a sound  
Or image rings desire's dinner bell  
Long after vital nutrients were ground  
From them and then replaced with what to sell.  
Thus, articles of service, goods, or faith  
Are made to taste like foods we really need  
Once packaged as that sustenance we crave,  
Though satisfying less the more we eat.  
Grind just the *husks* of meaning as your grist  
And all that life's left missing is its *gist*.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

*Mr. Morgan's Pleasure-Dome*

In coffered solitude he sat, a prince  
Entombed among his conquests of old worlds.  
For here where Madison meets Thirty-Sixth  
Had he decreed great plans to be unfurled:  
A marble dome would he erect, construed  
To house the very best which man had wrought  
(So that no native of this land, still rude,  
Need board a ship to find great art or thought).  
Yet when the New World sought him here and knocked  
(With panic in its eyes), and he put out  
Its fears amid great puffs of smoke, he locked  
The doors once more. And none who'd paced about  
These august halls those nights would ever know  
The lonely heart behind the lofty show.



I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

***6 Days, 9 Hours, 11 Minutes & 41 Seconds***  
***With Our Darling Grandkids***

Cacophony performed without a score,  
Or break, upon our furniture and nerves:  
This *minimally* describes the grisly war  
Of egos waged in our once-calm preserves.  
Shrill shrieks ascending from the one who fell  
From his forbidden climb are heard between  
The other's spasmed cries of WHY?!!!, while smell  
Plays prelude to our second movement's scene.  
More pyrotechnic tantrums of fierce greed  
Next syncopate our fool attempts to form  
A finished thought – like *what in hell to feed*  
*Them that they'll eat!* Then, our FINALE'S storm!  
Yet, once they're gone and we're left clutching drinks,  
Our loving thoughts return to...what *still* stinks.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *What the Water Tells Me*

I find myself while gazing out to sea  
Immersed in instinct deep of the sublime,  
The vast primordial maternity  
From which earth's life emerged towards death in time.  
As if her child prodigal I come,  
Returning from my squanderings, to draw  
From her abundance — yes, to scan her sum  
Of countless suns reflected in my awe.  
For, in her voice I find my own: that force  
With which her surf is cast into my song  
Predicts that ancient urge to love our source —  
*Recurrence* — cause for which we ever long.  
And often lost in inessential things,  
I'm found replenished, whole, in what she sings.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *The Word Known to All Men*

Not beer, nor bait, nor ball, nor buck, my love,  
Will satisfy this question long proposed:  
That there exists on all men's tongues, above  
Pronunciation's turn, one word he knows  
For his most crucial drive upon this earth;  
That where these other sounds men make rely  
Precisely on their accident of birth,  
This one's conceived before their primal cry.  
Yet drinking, hunting, sport, and money – all  
Mere condiments at evolution's meal –  
Are skipped without the species' life forestalled  
(As they're not sex, *whatever* their appeal).  
So, if one bit of speech unites all man,  
It must be, love, his term for building clan.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

*Letting Go of One Who Had Let Go*

You lost her all at once that day she threw  
Her gorgeous life away (and part of yours  
As well) in her despair to quick undo  
The blackest hell a human mind endures.  
She couldn't see that you, or anyone,  
Were there awaiting the impaired to mend,  
So dark becomes the world in which a gun  
Proves one's most trustworthy and faithful friend.  
For, she'd misplaced her instinct to survive  
Somewhere among the clutter of a brain  
No longer filing right — let go her drive  
To find her self distinguished from her pain —  
And in a rash of blindness left askew  
The lives of all who'd watched her lose her "you."

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *Retiring Beauty*

Since girlhood's pinkest blush, my love, you saw  
In every clock a challenge to come brave  
The span of its unending job and draw  
Your future out of what hard work might save.  
And while you bloomed in beauty, you still kept  
Your gaze fixed on this threatening face that warned  
Of fearsome poverty for those who slept  
In place of paid employment to perform.  
But now, full radiant in womanhood,  
Yet rich to that wise measure of your life  
Ahead, you've chosen to embrace that good  
One feels through helping *freely* – without strife –  
And wrest your eyes from time's uncaring dial  
To alight on those drawn round your smile.

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *The Gift*

It seemed an angel touched you, passing through  
Our hectic life, and left you changed for good –  
As if her presence had awakened you  
To your own lust to live right where we stood.  
She searched you out among the crowd and gave  
Her death to you to hold. And you could see  
Your dearest losses weighed against her grave's  
Impending gain. This gift had set you free.  
For, like one startled out of deepest sleep,  
You woke to this harsh wisdom with the wisps  
Of old complacencies dissolving deep  
And quick around you like unheeded risks.  
She gave you, love, a vision huge as earth:  
A glimpse of life *as measured by its worth.*

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *A Bad Dream Sonnet*

For My Son, Daniel David Borodin, then Age 5 ½

(Dedicatory Sonnet to *Chasing George*, a Poem in 24 Books)

O give me those bad dreams of yours, my sweet,  
For you're too young and innocent to need them.  
Give me all that at your heart would eat  
(And steal from you soft whimpers while you feed them).  
If only I could catch such monsters for you –  
Kiss them from your forehead to my palm  
(Where they'd dissolve) – thus leaving Sleep to lure you  
Out to meet me on bright waters, calm,  
Where we'd then sail together in the sun,  
Reciting poems, petting splendid fish,  
And gliding on desires, one by one,  
Until tomorrow opened like a wish.  
O let me have those fitful moments, Treasure,  
Leaving on your lips a *child's* pleasure!

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

*A Sonnet to an Older Daniel*

This morning, while you fished from off those rocks  
(Where only yesterday you would have held  
My hand), I woke from years of sleep to watch  
You grown from me – to see you as *yourself*.  
Was this the little monkey round my neck  
I carried high above what life might deal,  
Who now stands proud and calm before its depths,  
Intent on snagging innocence on steel?  
Where did you find such savvy while I slept  
(Immersed in that paternal myth where sons  
Are our disciples)? I laugh now how adept  
You've turned at all I've overlooked or shunned.  
And when I stoop to want things otherwise...  
I learn I *am* the luckiest man alive.



I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

*A Prayer for Safe Passage for My Son*

Your ship, my son, has veered into rough seas.  
I wait in anguish on this distant shore  
Toward which your course is set (I pray). May ease  
Prevail to guide you back to me once more.  
I long stood watch at that same captain's wheel  
You clutch now (far too soon for your own good),  
And when I disembarked in search of keel  
More even for us both, you understood.  
Yet now you've woken to a new demand:  
A guilty burden hung around your neck  
To placate wrathful Neptune, whose cruel hand  
You pity while it steers your ship to wreck.  
You are too young to sacrifice yourself  
To angry gods. Come back, my son, to health!

I. Sonnets, group F (on assorted musings), *continued*

### *The Awakening*

I felt my life expand last night to hold  
Your revelation in — to comprehend  
The vastness of the space you found and told  
Us of, where YOU decide your limit's end.  
You sat before us like a break of cloud,  
Illuminating with great beams of sun  
The landscape your self-mastery endowed —  
That place in which you woke from things undone.  
For, here you'd tossed amid the dark of fear  
Where failure makes its bed, until you saw  
That doing's worth the stumble, making clear  
How there are things of wonder where you fall.  
This truth you bravely shared woke *me* as well;  
I rose inspired, richer, where *I* fell.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #1

*Just Change Your Woman*

Villanelle: A Man's Approach to The Mid-Life Crisis

Man's happiest who *changes*, not says "couldn't."

Nothing but real *transformation* serves.

It's easy, this new life: just change your woman.

Time comes when every man asks why he shouldn't

Have what he has chased, as he deserves.

Man's happiest who *changes*, not says "couldn't."

He'd spent his youth like any healthy hoodlum,

Braving lack of feeling with strong nerves.

It's easy, this new life: just change your woman.

At some point, though, he learns he really *wouldn't*

Want the object of his aim, and swerves.

Man's happiest who *changes*, not says "couldn't."

He sees now had he tried and understood one

She'd have proved far more than mere hors d'oeuvres.

It's easy, this new life: just change your woman.

So, exchange her for a really good one

*Or transform her*: fix her so *she* serves.

Man's happiest who *changes*, not says "couldn't."

It's easy, this new life: *just change your woman*.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #2

*Hope in None but You*

An Ekphrastic Acrostic Poem in Forty Lines

Composed in

Eight Linked Quintains\*

[\*see pp. 461-62 for specific technical details]

Inspired by

*Spem in alium nunquam habui*

("I have never put my hope in any other"

[but you, O God of Israel....]")

A Motet in Forty Parts (40 separate voices)

Composed by Thomas Tallis

(English, circa 1505-85)

probably circa 1567-72

II. Longer Poems, poem #2: *Hope in None but You*

## 1

First voice, pronouncing hope upon the void  
Of infinite potential, quick invites  
Responding variants to form, deployed  
Meticulously layered into heights  
Yawned vast as human brains can comprehend,

## 2

Creating in us circuitries of awe  
Accumulating as eight choirs wend  
Rotation-wise in their ascent and fall,  
Obedient to forces that impel  
Loose elements to gather and rise towards

## 3

Behemoth columns of resounding chords:  
Yes, sudden high-stacked walls of sound that swell  
Homogeneous to bear the firmament's  
Expansive vault spread measureless beyond,  
Reverberating out till their events

## 4

Link back again toward that initial bond  
On which was borne that slow accrual of  
Varieties from which the whole began.  
Inhered in this, the elemental stuff  
Now carried in this orbit's weighty span

II. Longer Poems, poem #2: *Hope in None but You* — continued

## 5

Gains impetus towards that from which it ran,  
Held turning then as if by pull of love  
Urged on, though in precision's tightest plan:  
Self-organized, like tendrilled outgrowth of  
Bare yearning issuing from each respond

## 6

Aloft its pillar rising in immense  
Necessity to bear all it has donned,  
Deflecting with intensified suspense  
Diverse entreaties ringing out like bells  
Antiphonally answered back and forth,

## 7

Voluminous, from east, west, south, and north,  
In ricochet off balconies, propelled  
Dynamically around the massive hall...  
Before diminishing, in waves, to blend,  
Outworn, to calm...before those volleyed calls

## 8

Rise high again in fanfares that ascend  
Omnipotent empyreans of height  
Divined by us below while, re-employed  
In fresh complexities, their massing tide, alloyed  
Newfound, comes welling up till ages hence enjoyed.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #3

*Love's Banquet*

## An Epithalamium

## 1

The table has been laid with reverent care  
Befitting this rich privilege we await:  
To witness, honor and, yet more, to *share*  
In that sublimity two souls create  
When they step forward to entrust to each  
The bounty of attention in love's reach.

## 2

Bound in with this attention is that wealth  
Of feeling for *another* in whose sphere  
One can escape the fallacy of self  
And its sufficiency – yes, volunteer  
To live that larger life than can be found  
Where our lone ego sits enthroned and crowned.

II. Longer Poems, poem #3: *Love's Banquet*—continued

## 3

For, we've evolved, developed, and survived  
As *social* beings, not free-standing things,  
And cannot even grow to health deprived  
Of someone else to whom the child clings.  
And thus, to flourish is to *interact* —  
Co-ordinate with whom we would attract —

## 4

Yes, find another who would yearn to live  
Within *our* world and, with us, recreate  
It, customized for two, with all the give  
And take that's furnished by a willing mate,  
And drawing each within *their* circle of  
Shared comfort and support that we call LOVE.

## 5

But let us pause a moment at this word  
That we make commonplace throughout each day  
And savor now that sense of how we're stirred  
Alive by it each time it would convey  
To us this feast held morning into night  
By anyone possessed of appetite.



II. Longer Poems, poem #3: *Love's Banquet*—continued

## 6

This appetite for one another's life,  
With all its cares, is central to that feast  
We call a healthy marriage, where no strife  
Seems too unseemly to be shared at least  
As fully as each joy. And in pursuit  
Of *this* we find revealed love's truest fruit.

## 7

It offers up a nectar sweet *and* tart  
Because it's drawn from that *entire* bond  
Our lovers forge, not just the honeyed part  
The magazines depict with magic wand-  
Like airbrush tricks, obscuring what is real  
Beneath the lure of fanciful ideal.

## 8

But I digress. We're here to celebrate  
That great abundance that is PARTNERSHIP,  
Where contribution toward each other's fate  
Provides the both with so much more to grip  
Of one's existence than is ever caught  
Within the ministries of higher thought.

II. Longer Poems, poem #3: *Love's Banquet*—continued

## 9

This copious variety of chance  
Unveiled to us at love's great banquet leaves  
Us giddy with the thrill of great expanse,  
Like promise of the prospects one conceives  
In the exhilaration of a dream  
Where *and* is one with *or* in how things seem.

## 10

And like this process of a dreaming brain,  
These lovers standing here before us now  
Can revel at love's great buffet contained  
Within each willingness to share in vow  
The truths of two transformed into one bliss,  
And seal it with a most delicious kiss.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #4

*Ode to a Nightgown*

## I: Strophe

## 1

My art awakes and, rousing from my brain  
A sense of wonder, shows how I am drunk  
On life and you, my muse — as if cocaine  
Were emptied in the veins of some old monk,  
Inspiring him to see the stardust in  
His hands and sing enraptured of those things  
Celestial gleaned within his dim-lit cell —  
All this evoked by art, which fashions wings  
From out the plainest words in which we dwell.

## 2

But art alone can't satisfy my thirst  
For your warm gorgeousness, and I am left  
With deep, unquiet longing to be nursed  
To nonsense in the bounty of your breasts,  
Dissolved into the warm oblivion  
Of your allure (from out the hubbub of  
A world boggled by the brashest noise)  
To fade into the current of your love,  
Where I forget the ways that time destroys.

II. Longer Poems, poem #4: *Ode to a Nightgown* — continued

## 3

For, you've become, with me, that great event  
No craft in words can more than celebrate,  
As art can only strive to *represent*  
Those feelings that our eager nerves create  
(To translate life into experience).  
Art measures *how it feels to be alive*  
Within the presence of ideas and things  
And not those things themselves we strive  
To know. And it's from *this* our poem springs.

## II: Antistrophe

## 4

Yes, as the object that this thirst observes  
Cannot be apprehended *in itself*  
(Since written in the language of live nerves),  
I sing in order to explore the wealth  
Discoverable through sounds shaped on the tongue.  
And so, I'll choose a metaphor for you:  
Some figure in our speech I'll use to show  
How you're revealed to me, as if but through  
Its medium alone you're mine to know.

II. Longer Poems, poem #4: *Ode to a Nightgown* — continued

## 5

And what might better serve me as this veil  
Of revelation than that nightgown, sheer  
As exhibitionism in detail,  
You wear in my lust's eye whenever near?  
As if reversing all that went before,  
I now propose to sing the virtues of  
That very obstacle inviting me  
To violate its boundaries toward your love  
And, through it, to exalt what I'd set free.

## 6

Now, to apostrophize some piece of gauze  
In place of one who lends it life may seem  
Absurd to those untutored in the laws  
Of logic your philosophers esteem.  
But I maintain this concept we call "cause,"  
Seen independent of "effect," displays  
To its inquisitor such truths as would  
Lay bare the myths obscuring why we praise  
Or damn the stuff we label "bad" or "good."

## II. Longer Poems, poem #4: *Ode to a Nightgown*—continued

### III: Epode

7

And so, I sing to *you*, my lover's gown,  
Through which I glimpse my view of paradise:  
That garden of delight in which no crown  
Of emperor could ever more entice.  
*You* were not made for reticence, my bodice  
So diaphanously thin. No prim  
And proper prig had ever tried *you* on  
For fun to satisfy some vampish whim.  
*You're* meant to lure an evening into dawn.

8

The magic casement of your plunging neck-  
Line offers me a view of dazzling hills  
Emerging from the valley of her beck  
And call, whence I'm drawn down toward broad-  
hipped thrills  
Ecstatic as a foaming sea, until  
I feel myself full powerless to rise  
From out the heaving tide of our desire...  
AND I COME WITHIN HER GRASP, where thighs  
And cries discharge, then trickle, till expired....

II. Longer Poems, poem #4: *Ode to a Nightgown* — continued

## 9

I cannot see you, rumpled at our feet,  
Where I had tossed you in hot haste back then.  
For you've become, once more, some indiscreet  
Contrivance of a waking dream of men  
That sees a woman as some tasty treat  
*Forbidden till unwrapped in such a way.*  
And you remain, therefore, symbolic of  
The stratagems smart lovers like to play  
In order to keep sex the lure of love.

II. Longer Poems, poem #5

*Darwin's Islands*

Or

*Our Expedition to the Galápagos*

A Poem in 19 Quintains\*

[\*See **Notes** Section, under Longer Poem #5, on p. 454]



## II. Longer Poems, poem #5

*Darwin's Islands*

## 1

When, all aboard the cruise boat with our guide,  
We spotted some rare species on the shore  
That differed from a cousin we'd espied  
Upon a neighbor isle just explored,  
We found ourselves at that mysterious door

## 2

Before which Darwin stood and troubled so  
When he arrived to catalogue the place  
And pondered distribution of each race  
Amongst dissimilar domains, as though  
All sculpted by the place in which they grow.

## 3

For, this volcanic archipelago  
Was formed of islands scattered out beyond  
Migration's easy reach, and came to show  
Secluded creatures changed to correspond  
To the demands of *their* own woods or pond.

II. Longer Poems, poem #5: *Darwin's Islands* — continued

## 4

And though it wouldn't be till his return  
Back home that our relentless naturalist  
Would fully waken from that desperate myth  
Of some Prime Mover who might deign to churn  
Out this much randomness and waste, he learned

## 5

Of such conundrums here that he'd so yearn  
To solve, it could be said his visit to  
This region was the first event that turned  
His mind toward formulating that great clue  
To every living thing that ever grew —

## 6

Yes, how all beings really got the way  
They are today — beyond some fixed design  
Of God's that could not *possibly* divine  
The role mutated replicators play,  
*Reciprocally*, in habitation's sway,

## 7

And how blind processes and their defrayed  
Expense combine to profit from some mere  
Mistake that throws new options to be played,  
Then pruned, in that economy of sheer  
Efficiency that "purpose" *cannot* steer.

II. Longer Poems, poem #5: *Darwin's Islands* — continued

## 8

Yes, it was *here*, in these enchanting bays  
Far off the coast of Ecuador, that this  
Brave thinker first had found himself amazed  
At such anomalies one can't dismiss  
With just-so stories of creationists.

## 9

And lucky us, that *we* might find such bliss  
In sharing life's adventures as to come  
To this historic place that proved the one  
Providing Darwin with the very grist  
For but the best idea that exists —

## 10

The key to who and what we are and how  
And when we got this way, and why our kin  
Includes *all* living things around us now —  
Through common ancestors on foot *or* fin —  
And not just those who can conceive of sin

## 11

Or proud subservience to His least whim  
Whose love we crave and punishment we fear  
*Despite strong odds He isn't even here...*  
Except as whom *we've* conjured up to win  
Parental validation's unctuous grin.

II. Longer Poems, poem #5: *Darwin's Islands* — continued

## 12

Yes, lucky us, whose legacy is free  
Of all this superstitious poppycock  
That sees *our* species as some specialty  
Cooked up, somehow, outside the common stock  
And “made in His own image” — hokey schlock

## 13

Contrived to inculcate a trusting flock  
Toward justifying smug entitlement  
To man's dominion over “brute” beasts sent  
Us for our leisured sustenance and chock-  
Full pleasure — all revealed to us ad hoc.

## 14

For, what we see around us *here*, converse  
To all this churchly propaganda of  
Our special right to dominate the earth  
(By writ of one who'd *killed his son* for “love”),  
Is but abundant proof that every dove,

## 15

Hawk, heron, finch, and frigatebird above  
Or tortoise, lizard, ray, and fish below  
Is each, *like us*, a product long bestowed  
By *genes at work within the context of*  
*Environment*, and not some ghost's sharp shove.

II. Longer Poems, poem #5: *Darwin's Islands* — continued

## 16

Yes, Darwin's algorithm can explain  
"God's plenty" so much better than can God,  
Whose FINISHED PRODUCTS must be PREORDAINED  
And, therefore, mere *ideals* — like false façades  
Of saints that hide *real* life, where mishaps prod

## 17

Its replicators through their ever-odd  
And, therefore, *fecund* habitats to yield  
New candidates for competition's field,  
Whose new impediments through which they've trod  
Select them...*unforeseen by even God.*

## 18

And what seems mirrored in this process best  
Is that of how the poet creates verse:  
Where formal limitations will suggest,  
From out a *paucity* of fitting words,  
Some novel thought, undreamt of from the first —

## 19

Yes, one conceived through endless forms rehearsed  
Amid fixed laws, evolving via chance  
Varieties of choices to advance  
That have been, and are being, reimbursed  
In some exalted brave *new* universe.

II. Longer Poems, poem #6

*Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*

A Yuletide Salutation  
in Ottava Rima  
Offered to  
My Own Hale Muse

(Without the slightest hint of apology to Lord Byron)

## II. Longer Poems, poem #6

*Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*

## 1

I want a Christmas present for my muse,  
A not uncommon want for ones so wanting  
In one – be they Christians, Moslems, Jews –  
For Christmas is but *universal*, funding  
*World-wide*, the savvy few who choose  
To make or sell the things we go out hunting  
With our pocketbooks this time of year,  
Our season of deep debt and fiscal fear.

## 2

It isn't just a thing we perpetrate  
On Christians, either. No, I've seen a pale  
Young Buddhist take a Christmas gift once, straight  
In his enlightenment; tore away his veil  
And left him in renunciation. Fate  
Decrees there's no *one* faith immune; a sale  
Put on before the birthday of the Lord  
Will *always* threaten what we can afford.

II. Longer Poems, poem #6: *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*—continued

## 3

*And more.* For many, it's an instance of  
High sacrilege to stay within one's means  
In preparation for this day. To love  
Each other less than we spent last year seems  
Like sheer affront to some, since high above  
The costs of giving rise angelic dreams  
Of proving our most pious gumption  
Via more conspicuous consumption.

## 4

Hence, my present need. For, up till now,  
No poet's been so subtle with his muse,  
In terms of bribery, than I, somehow.  
While others would so shamelessly abuse  
Their privilege with their goddess by endowing  
Her with lavish gifts, like bras and shoes  
And such, in hopes of her support, not I.  
To me this was not art, but how to buy.



II. Longer Poems, poem #6: *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*—continued

## 5

For art, we know, like love, cannot be bought  
Unless the buyer and the seller both  
Are motivated. Economics taught  
The artist early on how much his growth  
In consciousness depended on what thought  
He could afford to spare, being that one's oath  
To art is taken only once there's food.  
And poets sang this truth since man was rude.

## 6

Why yes, the greatest singers of each race  
Have stooped to influence, to purchase her  
Attention towards the beauty, truth, and grace  
Of an accomplished line. They'd try to stir  
Her to their side with sheerest silk and lace,  
And then in colder months, of course, with fur.  
They'd promise her great fame throughout the nation  
By her name placed in their dedication.

II. Longer Poems, poem #6: *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*—continued

## 7

But did it work? you ask. Was the result  
Of all their gifts the vast success they'd aimed  
At? Yes! Of course! Just look at them! A cult  
Now follows each of these who once were named  
Amongst the vast unknown, as if each dolt  
Who came along with proper plea proclaimed  
Could cinch his sinecure and pen some lines  
To win him laurels, women, and fine wines.

## 8

Yes, presents in and favors out. Just browse  
The shelves of any library and read  
The names of all of those whom Fame allows  
Her recognition. Every one indeed  
Had paid his way to that high place with vows  
And costly baubles proffered up in greed.  
They each had climbed to laureate from peasant  
With judicious use of some such present.

II. Longer Poems, poem #6: *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*—continued

## 9

Not I. For someone of such pure ideals,  
For whom success procured in such a way  
Seems near unthinkable, it often feels  
A tad annoying, actually, to pray  
To one who simply doesn't think of meals  
At fancy restaurants, chic hotels to stay  
At...wine, cars, jewelry and lingerie...  
As fitting currency with which to pay

## 10

For something "so intangibly sublime,  
So meaningful and valuable a gift..."  
As inspiration to produce a rhyme.  
No house, nor boat, houseboat, nor dock with lift—  
No villa on the coast—was worth a dime  
To her as payment for her words of swift  
Encouragement, which sent me on my way  
And bent me down to work on words all day.

II. Longer Poems, poem #6: *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*—continued

## 11

And, as fall succumbs to winter's laws,  
I find these words I work on more and more  
To rally round a rhyme with Santa Claus,  
WHOSE INFLUENCE I'D DEARLY BUY TO SCORE  
A PROPER GIFT FOR HER THIS YEAR. My jaws  
Would work to form these words I wrote: "Which store  
Sells things to buy that would impress a muse  
Like mine? Won't someone up there bring me news?"

## 12

"What on earth do you buy a muse like this  
For Christmas, anyway? What sort of thing  
Does someone give a goddess who insists  
There's nothing that she wants? O Santa, sing  
To me of goddess's desires!" This  
Was answered by a silence you could swing  
From; *nothing* seemed my answer. This was it!  
In joy I cried, "I'LL GIVE HER THIS I'VE WRIT!"

## II. Longer Poems, poem #7

*The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids  
With One Hand*

1

Well, speak then, Memory, and tell us all  
About the exploits of the past you find  
For us among those figures you see sprawl  
Across the vibrant murals of your mind,

2

Where they elude, by dint of your concern,  
The dreaded roll call of oblivion  
That many, otherwise, had richly earned  
And would, but for *your* skill, have deftly won.

3

Yes, say just how (and when and where, no less)  
These different lives, with all their varied dreams,  
Acquire on your watch such sure success  
In living on into *our* thoughts and schemes.

4

Yet even you, Mnemosyne, whom we  
Invoke today to help us try and pay  
Sufficient justice to those qualities  
Of Dorothy's we're here to celebrate;

II. Longer Poems, poem #7: *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*—continued

## 5

Yes, you for whom this all-important art  
Of recollection long ago was named,  
*Yourself* seem not to know so much *by heart*  
As Dorothy does, whose stories are so famed.

## 6

Yes, Dorothy, the mother of my love,  
Whom everyone agrees remembers most,  
Remains the one *you* turn to, well above  
All others, when you find yourself engrossed

## 7

In dredging up some date or place or names  
Of folks and their *precise* relationships  
With folks *still* more obscure—those no one blames  
For *anything* these days, so far eclipsed

## 8

From any relevance they'd slipped by now.  
And like you, mother of the muses she  
Supplants as great remembrancer, her brow  
Was once weighed down with all *she* couldn't be:

II. Longer Poems, poem #7: *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*—continued

9

Like *unattached*, for one — yes, free to go  
And study the fine art of *anything*  
That wasn't what to clean or cook or sew  
Toward raising some man-child and his offspring.

10

For, this was generations back, when men  
Were made of women's fortitude and pluck  
And had to merely marry now and then  
To pull off their own fantasies with luck

11

While women were instructed early on  
To sacrifice *their* dreams to men's affairs  
And grow to want what might have made them  
Had they not focused on their *parents'* prayers <sup>yawn</sup>

12

Instead of theirs. Our heroine, meanwhile,  
Whose vast accomplishments we celebrate  
Today, was not the sort to just beguile  
Her way to solace in convention's fate...

II. Longer Poems, poem #7: *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*—continued

13

Though she *would* marry, yes, and mother four  
Great handfuls of responsibility...  
On top of him who needed even more  
Than they: no less than his own devotee!;

14

Yes, showering *him* as well with mothering,  
Though this, of course, but solely on *his* terms,  
Which were that she refrain from smothering  
His manhood, which would always make him  
squirm.

15

But she, like most strong women, figured out  
That secret needed toward surviving men:  
Which is to never give him what to flout  
Of that authority within her ken.

16

And so, she worked her memory each day,  
Recalling all those facts she'd need to run  
Her world efficiently, which is to say,  
By leaving him to think *he* was the one



II. Longer Poems, poem #7: *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*—continued

17

To have accomplished all she ever did,  
Like secretary to some CEO  
Who must be seen to be the one to bid  
Each doing, though it's *she* who'd made it so.

18

For, where *his* talent lies is often more  
The pose his public is conditioned to  
Expect to see proclaimed at power's door  
Than that *key* wisdom hidden from their view.

19

And thus, like this, our heroine prevailed  
In raising her good family man and kids  
By *seeming* to defer to him who railed  
Against those very strengths his pride forbids

20

And keeping him installed as figurehead  
Of this great ship she'd sailed across rough seas  
Without a sailor's training, led instead  
By wisdom's *recollected* expertise;

II. Longer Poems, poem #7: *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*—continued

21

Yes, all that she'd long summoned up from out  
The here and now of real necessity;  
The wisdom called to mind, not from devout  
Conformance to mere blind authority —

22

That stuff we're taught to think will guide good  
souls  
Who toe the line of mere propriety —  
But rather from the dangerous shoals  
One has to navigate upon life's sea.

23

And though our captain never deigned to speak  
In sailor's *talk* — indeed she shunned the stuff  
She'd heard below on deck — there's *nothing* meek  
About the rigging of her stern rebuff

24

To any seaman who forgot his place  
Decorum set for him at table on  
Her ship. No, he would need to learn to grace  
His presence with respect, or else be gone.

25

So, let us bow to this great woman who  
Could raise four kids with one hand while the other  
Manned the wheel from which her consort drew  
His own esteem for this brave wife and mother.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #8

*Epithalamium*

## I

I call not to the muses but to you,  
Our loved ones here, to help me now to sing  
My joy – to celebrate the feeling true  
Devotion to another soul can bring.  
Come friends, come family, come beloved all;  
I summon you to witness with the stars above  
The bounty that is ours at Cupids' call –  
That endless banquet of fulfillment: Love.  
Yes, come and help memorialize this rich new life  
We find laid out before us now as man and wife.

## II

We have been blessed with that most precious gift –  
Unwavering joy in one another's arms,  
In which embrace our nourished spirits lift  
With ease and comfort past all earthly harms.  
For in that rarified existence shared  
By two devoted souls (who yet are born  
Again each day into each other's care),  
No truth need be avoided, none forsworn.  
O come rejoice with us in this unfettered life  
Revealed to us through honesty as man and wife.

II. Longer Poems, poem #8: *Epithalamium*—continued

## III

Yes, here within love's space — that Godly state  
Of mindfulness (of keenest, merest being) —  
We find ourselves without the need of hate  
And its systemic darkening of seeing.  
So clear becomes our vision of the good  
In what we have that we can see beyond  
Our want (where nothing's truly understood)  
To the eternal in our lives: our bond.  
Come, share with us the measureless, this vast new life  
We now embark upon in love as man and wife.

## IV

Ours is the greatest story ever told:  
The truth of how the love two people feel  
For one another can transmute to gold  
The metal of mere bodily appeal,  
Availing them to that more ardent lust  
Which burns an incandescence clean and whole,  
Sustained by that most pure of fuels, trust;  
Two beings merged into one flame, one soul.  
So come, partake of this bright love that lights our life;  
Illuminate the world with us as man and wife.

II. Longer Poems, poem #8: *Epithalamium*—continued

## V

Our story tells how lovers can be friends  
First—how a man and woman can so love  
Each other for their person as transcends  
Romantic appetites in bed—enough  
To choose to wait until their lives allow,  
To wait until they get to know their hearts  
Before abandoning their worlds to plow  
Right in and learn their other body parts.  
Observe how half a decade's wait as friends for life  
Matured profoundly into love of man and wife.

## VI

Yes, recognize this light in which we bathe  
Here, high upon our pinnacle of bliss,  
And testify to those below (whose faith  
In love has waned) the power in a kiss.  
It is a force of lightning strength, we know  
Who've felt it break to shards the gray routine  
Of our unsavored days and make them glow  
Like stars illumining worlds unforeseen.  
O tell them come and leave behind that part of life  
Which does not know this kiss we live as man and wife.

II. Longer Poems, poem #8: *Epithalamium*—continued

## VII

It is this very kiss you've come here now  
To witness, this event momentous of  
That reverent concord honored in our vow,  
Which consecrates the greatest life force, love.  
For in this union of our lips we taste  
Creation's spark, the passion of the stars,  
Connecting us to all in which is traced  
The endless possibilities now ours.  
Yes, save this kiss within your hearts; it is our life.  
We bid you nurture it; embrace us, man and wife.

## VIII

This blessed kiss is but the corner stone  
Of a cathedral we aspire to raise,  
A monument to that devotion shown  
Each other through support, respect, and praise.  
We'll work upon our temple every day,  
Yes, make each word and action but a force  
For love, for affirmation. And we pray  
This love infect the world at its source.  
O pray our work inspire others seeking life  
To find it here where love transforms us, man and wife.

II. Longer Poems, poem #8: *Epithalamium*—continued

## IX

This synagogue, this mosque, this holy church  
Of every faith we build each moment of  
Our marriage, shall preserve our constant search  
For peace—first in ourselves and then through love  
For others—touching, moving fellow men.  
For there's no limit to the love the heart  
Can hold; the more we give the more again  
We find instinct in us to re-impart.  
I invite you all to rapture, yes, to life  
Ecstatically embraced, as live this man and wife.

## X

And I invite the world at large, all living  
Things beneath the stars—the fish and birds  
And beasts throughout the waters, skies, and echoing  
Trees—to witness here these joy-warmed words  
And the exalted temple they'd describe,  
Where's kept the relics of discovered bliss  
In everything we do, each dignified  
By its essential pleasure—by its kiss.  
And let each kiss be like a prayer for deeper life.  
We pray now, woman and her husband, man and wife.

II. Longer Poems, poem #8: *Epithalamium*—continued

## XI

And with our lips sealed thus, another quest  
So dear to us is consummated now:  
The search for parents for our children; yes,  
A mother for a son who can endow  
Him with a family life he's yearned to know;  
A father for a daughter not too old  
For yet another...or a brother...O  
Together we'll create contentment's fold!  
So come and bless this new-born family, this new life  
Engendering two children via man and wife.

## XII

Now let us all perform the muse's work—  
Inspire one another to create  
Our world anew—to dance in light where lurked  
That darkness cast by all that we negate.  
Come, let's partake of this fine food with verve;  
Exalt in love and nothing will we miss.  
Let's eat, drink, dance, sing—live right at the nerve.  
Above all, let us worship with each kiss.  
We press our lips together here in search of life  
Itself—the infinite in us as man and wife.



## II. Longer Poems, poem #9

*My Muse is Out of Control*

## 1

In olden days I felt the urge  
To reinvent the world in words —  
To sing it unconfused  
By all the ponderousness of prose.  
Fine work, though anybody knows:  
FOR *THIS* I'D NEED A MUSE.

## 2

The same requirement held true,  
I'd heard, for those who yearned to do  
The like in paint or stone,  
Or rearrange the world in sound;  
They too would need to sit around  
And wait for help, and moan.

## 3

They'd groan and grovel, call and plead  
For inspiration to proceed  
With this, their discipline.  
And yet this goddess they'd invoke  
To help them sing what can't be spoke  
*Herself* could not begin

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued

## 4

Till summoned — no, she seemed inept  
To stir a foot or line except  
When asked (and *that* in rhyme!),  
As if this poet so unversed  
Would have to go create *her* first —  
And this just *boggles* Time.

## 5

A paradigm, perhaps, of that  
Same paradox which God begat  
When making ALL from none —  
The former state being home to not  
Just the created (future) lot  
But to the latter one

## 6

As well, requiring Him (or Her  
Or They or It) prepared to spur  
A universe to be —  
To do it *prior* to that point  
At which the two states become joint,  
Lest *He* be thought unfree.

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued

## 7

But anyway, my muse. I'd choose  
To *do* this thing, and would enthuse  
About it good and hard,  
Preparing to go off and change  
The world in well-wrought verse — arrange  
Some words till they had jarred.

## 8

And nothing came. No world, no word,  
No voice from high above was heard  
To break the chilling void.  
I'd wait and wait till it grew late,  
And then I would procrastinate  
A while, still unemployed.

## 9

And this was how it was each time  
I'd feel the need to shape some rhyme:  
I'D WAIT UPON MY MUSE.  
I'd sit, stand up, lie down, then sit  
Again, drink tea and read a bit...  
Then gaze upon my shoes.

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued

## 10

Had she but whispered to me *one*  
Encouragement, I would have come  
Right then and there to write —  
To fashion out of language news  
Of other worlds the mind imbues  
To those whom sounds delight.

## 11

And by “encouragement” I mean  
Some little vision I might glean  
For my own revelation;  
A bit of prophesy in which  
To dream realities so rich  
They seem their own creation.

## 12

Get me started’s all I ask —  
Something worthy to the task  
Is all I’d need for now.  
The rest I’ll do myself, of course;  
I’ll take your slightest word as source  
And make you very proud.

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control*—continued

## 13

And like a priest in ancient days  
Who'd stand on wait in patient praise  
Before the oracle,  
I'd sit before my notebook, crazed  
To hear the word through which to gaze  
On the adorable—

## 14

To look in awe upon the world  
Made manifest through vowels curled  
Upon the tongue's delight.  
And then it happened...more or less:  
A woman's clear firm voice addressed  
Me, saying only: WRITE!

## 15

Yes, "write!" One syllable was all.  
Not "write about the rise and fall  
Of Rome," say, nor e'en "write  
In duple meter, rhymed like so..."  
As one might keep a bard in tow  
Till launched. But no, just "WRITE!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued

## 16

Was this the word for which I'd waited  
Every day until I hated  
Life lived in the arts —  
Until I'd wished I'd held a job  
Like normal folks who didn't sob  
To find "arts" rhymes with "farts"?

## 17

No, surely this was not HER voice  
But just the wind or other noise  
Mistook to be my muse's.  
Perhaps it was some mindless bird  
At roost outside, which knows no word  
Yet squawks such as confuses

## 18

Human neighbors with its cries  
And tortures (every time it sighs)  
Good poets with false hopes!  
Or else, perhaps, it's just the sound  
Which disappointment makes going round  
When poets wake as dopes!

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued**19**

No matter. There were two paths now  
Before me: one to be endowed  
With faith in what one's heard;  
The other to sit back and smirk  
That this sound meant *no need to work*,  
As this was JUST SOME BIRD.

**20**

Posterity records for us  
The end result of all this fuss  
With birds: NO POEM WRIT.  
And so, it seemed this latter road,  
Inviting as it was (bestowed  
So short and smooth)...*wasn't it*.

**21**

The only way to get poems made  
Was WRITE THEM, after all, not slake  
Creation with negation.  
So I rose up and took the bait,  
Assured **this muse's call could wait**,  
And...FOUND MY INSPIRATION.

II. Longer Poems, poem #9: *My Muse is Out of Control* — continued**22**

I worked all day. I worked all night.  
I did nothing *but* to write,  
And what I got was GOOD:  
Just words upon a blank of space  
Which nothing, *nothing* could efface,  
As now I'd understood.

**23**

This thing I'd made was nothing short  
Of something new — of great import  
Because it hadn't been.  
Yet now, quite flushed with what I'd earn  
Did I find cause for *real* concern:  
I COULD NOT REIN HER IN!

**24**

That's right; I wrote and wrote and wrote,  
And when I tried to stop, I note,  
It felt I'd lost my soul.  
For, though she'd given me the word  
Which brought *me* discipline, I now averred  
**MY MUSE WAS OUT OF CONTROL!**



## II. Longer Poems, poem #10

*The Man Who Followed His Dreams*

1

We all have been there: woken from that state  
Of cobbled cabbages and mimicked kings  
Where we'd played deaf-mute witness to the weight  
Emotion wields toward yoking disparate things:

2

Where someone whom we recognize to be  
A total stranger, though our current spouse,  
*As well as someone else's*, serves us tea  
Amidst the kitchen of our parents' house,

3

Which slowly steams past crowds upon the dock  
Who wave goodbye to us in tears that rain  
Quite lightly here...*inside*...to strains of Bach  
Heard faintly from a window down the lane....

4

Now, most of us, when faced with nonsense weird  
As this, might reach reflexively to clutch  
At some stray wisp before it's disappeared  
Against the light of reason's noxious touch.

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams*—continued

5

Yes, we might try and hold such fragile creatures  
Of the night's illogic in the glare  
Of aminergic daylight, where their features  
Yield to expectation's caustic wear

6

And wither on the cholinergic vine  
The very moment we attempt to fix  
Them in our preconception, like some *wine-*  
*From-plain-old-water* wedding-party tricks.

7

But this same most of us will rarely stay  
To watch the one made out of loaves and fish.  
We'll pack our metaphoric bags, quick pay  
Our bill, and leave before another wish

8

Is granted by our most accomplished host.  
For, though persuaded that these mysteries  
We'd witnessed in our brains were merely ghosts  
Created by real neuro-chemistries

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

9

At work within the crucibles of our  
Own skulls, we're satisfied with this mere fact  
And not the *wonder* that this most bizarre  
Performance should convey in the abstract.

10

No, *we're* content to launch another day  
In chasing dreams of fame, success, and sex  
And leave behind *this* magic to decay  
Upon some synapse where it intersects

11

With our *preferred* reality...of fame,  
Success, and still more sex. Indeed, the most  
Of us will gladly forfeit this great claim  
To creativity that so engrossed

12

Us only moments back, when in that phase  
Our dorsolateral prefrontal cortex  
Snoozed offline in cholinergic haze  
Before it woke in serotonin's vortex.

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

13

Yes, in place of our proclivity  
For what *we* take as “real,” which, in itself,  
Is just another narrative we see  
In this “remembered present” we’ll soon shelve,

14

The long-awaited hero of our story,  
Rather, chose each morning to *embrace*  
This chaos that is sleep’s great bid for glory:  
Yes, collect transcriptions he would trace

15

Of *his* REM sleep deliria within  
The quick-proliferating volumes of  
His *own* dream journal — such that would but win  
Him fame among his colleagues far above

16

That won by even his great “Engine Man.”  
For, in *these* bravely illustrated tomes  
We find what Freud would have his censor ban  
From *anyone’s* discovery: those gnomes

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

17

Of super-egotistical libido  
Run amok amid repressed desires,  
Dressed in nothing but a fucking Speedo™  
And igniting sublimated fires.

18

No, these were *anything* but what you'd use  
To teach your average five-year-old to read.  
You'd thumb through one of *these* when full of booze  
And hot to follow where your id might lead....

19

But, we digress. The point here that is key  
Is really that the hero of our tale  
Would take the time to gather the debris  
From these bold escapades and with it trail

20

The bigger quarry: that of what our dreams  
Are made and how. For, our professor knew  
From all those sleepless nights he'd spent, it seems,  
Just watching other people sleep, how true

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

## 21

To chemistry our conscious states remain,  
Despite those noble traits we like to think  
*Intrinsic* to our self. Yes, we're insane  
Whenever our good brain succumbs to drink

## 22

Too much of this or that in concert with  
The other and unmediated by  
Hormonal intervention...till pure myth  
Looks like rock-solid truth, *for which we'd die*

## 23

*If necessary*, all despite the fact  
We wouldn't have behaved thus had our brain  
Been spared that chemic cocktail it *must* act  
On as a link within causation's chain.

## 24

And he knew too that this insanity  
Is ours each night, regardless of how well  
We dodge it when our daytime referee  
Is back online and judging how to tell.

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

25

In other words, he gleaned that we're all sane  
And nuts by turn upon a smoothly curved  
Continuum of timing in our brain...  
From which, it seems, a few of us have swerved.

26

By this I mean, of course, those few of us  
Who *live* our dreams while wide awake by day,  
Like schizophrenics or great artists — thus  
Indulging in what work our sleep's made play —

27

Or even those whose sleep debt had accrued  
Such that they would hallucinate their way  
Throughout their soup-like waking hours, stewed  
Enough to meet a friend now long decayed

28

And unavailable to be one's guest.  
Or then the rest of us whose brains we'd fried  
With custom chemicals we would *ingest*  
Instead of just *secrete*, when so supplied.

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

29

Yes, *all* these lunatics our hero knew  
To be but *dreamers* of some different kind,  
Whose dreams were quite predictably the view  
Form *their* specific state of altered mind.

30

And he'd go write great tomes upon this point  
In hopes of disabusing folks of those  
Unhelpful notions psych pros would anoint  
Their students with till nicely predisposed

31

Concerning madness as some sordid thing  
Those lesser minds than ours must bear the weight  
Of on the back of what poor choices bring  
To those behaviors we incriminate.

32

No, *he* would lecture far and wide how each  
And every one of us not only can  
But *does* become pure BATSHIT too and breach  
Those boundaries the DSM began.



II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

33

And he'd make ample illustrative use  
Of these same journals of his dreams he'd kept  
For decades now, and with them would seduce  
His followers to *easily* accept

34

The blatant fact of *his* insanity  
Each night while fast asleep — though some proposed  
While fast *awake* as well, as *that's* when he  
Obsessed on having all these dreams exposed.

35

Why yes, where you or I might follow our  
Own dreams by chasing after some ideal  
(No matter how impractically bizarre)  
We long had set before our steering wheel,

36

Our further-driven hero went beyond  
All this and waited, pen and pad at hand  
Beside his bed, for *his*. This corresponds,  
Some say, to dreaming on demand.

II. Longer Poems, poem #10: *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* — continued

37

Yes, this great appetite for his own dreams  
He'd cultivated while transcription whiz  
By writing these great books that brought vast teams  
Of researchers from their own dreams to his.

38

For, where these steady experts had pursued  
Their daydreams of great contributions to  
The science of the mind, he'd have them chew  
On his instead. *And here they formed a queue.*

39

And now we come to that cadential place  
Where anyone who'd managed not to fall  
Asleep might still expect to have embraced  
Some takeaway, or moral, after all.

40

And so, goddamn it, here it is: A dream  
Is any narrative we weave — awake,  
Asleep, or in between — that helps us seem  
To navigate our world. And he who'd make  
Us think his dreams *our own* enough to deem  
Worth following DESERVES OUR GREAT ESTEEM.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #11

*The Bougainvilleas of Sonora*

## I

Forget the rose, my love; for all its use  
As symbol of romance, it can't seduce  
From us that breathless shudder of deep thrill  
The lusty bougainvillea can instill  
Upon first sight – much like that sudden bliss  
Enveloping our union in a kiss.  
Why yes, despite those qualities that long  
Have won the rose first place in song  
And image as the emblem of all love –  
That blossom representing, far above  
All others, amorous intrigue – this might  
Be less the depth of sensual delight  
It draws than its antiquity among  
Those cultures in which songs like this are sung.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## II

For, this was all before that crucial year  
Of seventeen and sixty-eight when, near  
The town of Rio de Janeiro in  
Brazil, one Jeanne Baret, who'd later win  
Renown as but the first of her fair sex  
To circumnavigate the globe (and vex  
Male natives on the way), had here discovered  
In a jungle what might help her lover's  
Venous ulcer: that which kept him back  
On board, unable to collect and track  
Rare specimens along that two-year trip  
Of Louis A. de Bougainville's two ships.  
This Jeanne had found some bright red bracts, it's said,  
She thought might soothe her botanist in bed.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## III

And these same quasi leaves, quite paper-thin,  
Surrounding three small flowers just within,  
Would prove to be none other than what gave  
Acclaim to Bougainville beyond the grave —  
*Way* more than as first Frenchman round the world —  
A plant with petal-looking bracts unfurled  
In glorious profusion, like a spray  
Of adoration in fierce disarray.  
And though our botanist's bad leg grew worse,  
Despite his lover's jungle trek as nurse,  
This *otherwise*-medicinal vine shrub  
Would spread around the earth's warm tropic hub  
To ornament the terraces of kings  
On down to lowly walls to which it clings.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## IV

Which brings us back from my digression to  
That point itself our poem should pursue:  
The fact that even here, where we escape  
The brutal northern gloom and cold to traipse  
Along the tranquil sun-drenched beaches of  
Sonora's desert coast; where we make love  
In the abandon of all worldly cares,  
Like hedonists let loose as millionaires  
To frolic on our luck; yes, even here,  
Where we pursue our creature pleasures, clear  
Of clouds and chill, to soar on what unrolls  
Into our sparkling Now, like breeze-borne gulls,  
We sometimes turn a corner by some dune  
And stop within a heartbeat of a swoon.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## V

For, what we find before us, like some great  
Volcano spewing forth its red-hot fate,  
Is that forgotten bougainvillea, back  
Beside some crumbling remnant of a shack,  
Extravagantly blushing brilliant hues  
Where few but its own pollinators cruise.  
Yes here, where roving dogs might come and comb  
A curb for some old long-discarded bone,  
We turn and find a fabulous display  
Of color blazoned bright against the gray,  
Like an epiphany revealed to some  
Unready prophet suddenly struck dumb.  
And just like this, the two of us stop dead  
Amidst our tracks, forgetting what we'd said

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## VI

Just then, and clasp our hands when both our hearts  
Squeeze bursts of sudden-risen blood that smarts  
Like pricking needles at our scalps and ears  
And stimulates our widened eyes with tears,  
Which seem to well up blindly from some thrill  
Our forebears must have felt when they'd fulfilled  
Some basic craving or escaped sure death.  
But though the world in which we catch *our* breath  
We taste within a privileged paradise  
Of wine-sipped sunsets without sacrifice,  
The *feeling* we experience remains  
As vivid as the ones rewarding brains  
Of old that searched more fundamental needs  
(Which leaves us riding joys of bygone deeds).



II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## VII

All *this* amid some bare, dilapidated street  
Ignored by all the affluent elite,  
Who typically will allocate great sums  
In chasing titillation that becomes  
No more exhilarating in its rush  
Than this most natural reflexive gush.  
Indeed, our species' whole economy,  
From hunter-gatherers to you and me,  
With *all* our smart technologies, appear  
To anthropologists as engineered  
Around our brain's most basic appetite  
For that rewarding feeling we excite  
Engaged with anything that helped confer  
Survival, *gene-wise*, of an ancestor.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## VIII

And this, of course, included not just things  
From which to jump and run, but those that bring  
Us *closer* too, inviting us from out  
The shadow of instinctive fear and doubt  
To chance *connection* with some entity  
Conferring pleasure on the conferee.  
So, just as your own beauty strikes that chord  
In my most primal feeling of reward,  
Inviting me to seek within your being  
Everything that now seems *worth* most seeing,  
When the bougainvillea fills my view  
I feel my lust for life itself renew  
With value that transcends the merest fact  
Of my existence (which soon grows abstract).

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## IX

Now, let's return to our forgotten street,  
Well off the grid of luxury, and greet  
Our lonely bougainvillea one more time.  
Yes, let's just stand before this most sublime  
Embodiment of vegetative life  
And contemplate, without dissection knife  
And microscope, the dazzling splendor of  
Its quiet revelation far above  
That unforgiving world through which it blooms,  
Full nourished by what little it consumes.  
Is there in all our floriography  
A plant more emblematic of that tree  
Of life through which connection springs from one  
Vast beauty we can bask in like the sun?

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

x

And which among those memorable traits  
Of this great tree-like vine-cum-shrub elates  
Its viewer with the most immediacy?  
Quite likely, it would be ABUNDANCE — key  
To that subliminal aesthetic of  
Survival, procreation and, yes, love.  
Indeed, abundance, unlike sparseness, calls  
Like some enticing siren's song to all  
Of life within earth's harsh economy  
(Where nothing ever really eats for free).  
And so, it shouldn't be surprising that  
Some symbol of it will, straight off the bat,  
Elicit strong emotional response  
In us down where our instincts are ensconced —

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## XI

*Beneath*, that is, mere tweaks to what we've learned.  
And now, if we step back from where we turned  
To find this brilliant vision in our sight  
(In this anatomy of appetite  
Our poem has become in its pursuit),  
We'll see more clearly how this most astute  
Progenitor of ours endeavors to  
Sustain its future. In the end, it's through  
Such lavish attributes that join to bait  
Whatever life might come help pollinate  
It, broadcasting its essence against death.  
Perhaps it's *this* that makes us lose our breath:  
This bold expense of resource spent to lure  
Attention to it, so it may endure.

II. Longer Poems, poem #11: *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* —continued

## XII

And here we come full circle to the thrust  
Of this, *our* expedition, which is just  
That how we've come to share each other's joy  
Is ever rooted in that force employed  
By all the rest of evolution's fruit —  
ATTRACTION: that which drives our keen pursuit  
Of intimate connection with some sure  
Safe otherness in which to feel secure.  
And like the bounty of this greater wealth  
Than can be found within the bounds of self,  
Our bougainvillea brings to mind this bliss  
I rediscover in our every kiss.  
So, let us keep this gorgeous bloom, above  
All else, the potent symbol of our love.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #12

*The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*

1

We all have heard it told before  
How so-and-so did such-  
And-such so over-wondrously  
We dare not try so much  
As reimagine it ourselves  
*Without* hyperbole's bold touch.

2

*This* isn't *anything* like that.  
No, this, *our* tale, is so  
Unvarnished-true that your real job  
Will rather be to go  
And *try* to burnish it a bit  
And make it really glow.

3

For, what I would relate to you  
Today has come to me  
From so reliable a source  
It's lacking that esprit  
That marks those taller ones preferred  
By *tall*-tale devotees.

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 4

Our story tells of Dorothy,  
Who's here with us today  
*Way* longer than the most of us,  
Which is, no less, to say  
The reason we are here at all,  
Rejoicing in this costly way.

## 5

Yes, Dorothy, the mother of  
My love, and who now seems  
My *own* mom too, has come to live,  
Through *her* own mother's genes  
And pluck, and just a pinch of luck  
Perhaps, *way* past our dreams.

## 6

For it was N I N E T Y years ago  
She had appeared on earth—  
Specifically, Payette, ID—  
Between her sister's birth  
And that of future brother George,  
Long famous for his mirth.



II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

7

But soon came those impoverished days  
We've read about that paid  
The bills for all that partying  
Those roaring twenties laid  
Between the teens and forties (when  
More war brought fiscal aid).

8

And jobs were scarce enough to send  
Her dad for his career  
To Portland, while *they* stayed back home  
Until her junior year.  
And not till *then* did Dorothy  
Quite learn to persevere.

9

For, Portland was so big a place  
That newcomers would find  
That they were outside, looking in,  
And Dorothy resigned  
Herself from this point on to be  
Of the *inclusive* kind.

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 10

Yes, it was here, where she had felt  
Invisible at first,  
That she'd determined not to make  
Another feel the worse.  
So, she then vowed to fight against  
Elitism's proud curse.

## 11

But this defining moment in  
Her life would lead her to  
Admit into her circle *not*  
Just those to whom were due  
Their chance to get to know her more,  
But *him* as well whose view

## 12

She'd brightened, working at her books.  
Of course, I speak of Jim  
Who, while at Oliver had seen  
Her, yes, had watched her swim  
Across his notice in the job  
Pool past his cup's full brim.

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 13

He asked soon if she'd marry him,  
Which took her breath away,  
Perhaps in pity of his lacking  
Gallantries, let's say,  
But anyways, she found herself  
*Including* Jim this day...

## 14

*Way* past the mode she had those others  
Who came rapping on  
Her chamber door. Now, she had been  
To business school and drawn  
Up books and budgets logically,  
But MARRIAGE hadn't dawned

## 15

On her priorities till now.  
And though she'd learned to keep  
A balanced book and view of things,  
She quickly grasped how steep  
A slope it was from there to where  
Jim's fears would pool so deep.

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 16

For, he was raised upon the plains,  
Dressed mainly in rebuff,  
And hadn't ever really come  
To trust there'd be enough,  
And brought this fear to Dorothy,  
Who learned to call his bluff

## 17

By *showing* him how bad things were.  
She babysat, as planned,  
For cash, while raising her four kids  
With but the other hand.  
All this she did without complaint  
Of Jim, you understand.

## 18

They'd moved by now from Portland to  
Spokane, where they would buy  
A duplex with a garden plot  
In which to grow, knee-high,  
Great things to eat. And she would cook  
And sew and lead well-nigh

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 19

A regiment of girl scouts too  
While helping out the poor  
Through church and singing in its choir.  
All this had great allure  
To someone who'd decided that  
*Inclusiveness* would cure

## 20

The aches and pains society  
Was suffering so much.  
And she would keep the books at church  
And plan bazaars and such  
While storing what to give the poor  
Come Christmas. Thus, she'd touch

## 21

The world around her with her love  
Of helping those in need.  
And later on, her own four kids,  
Whom she would always feed  
And clothe with an accountant's eye  
For value, would concede

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

22

That this inclusiveness of hers  
Was really for the best,  
Despite the sacrifices made  
By those at home for guests  
Or homeless folks or others whom  
Her ethics soon impressed.

23

But I digress. Meanwhile, Jim  
Woke up one day without  
His job at forty-two, and she  
Went straight to work about  
Some doctors' books she'd kept while Jim  
She'd sent to school to scout

24

Out that degree with which to teach  
For better pay. And then  
At Walters Paints she worked to save  
Up how to go and send  
Them both to timeshare in Kauai.  
(*Inclusiveness* again!)

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

25

Yes, this was just the start of great  
Adventures with their friends,  
With whom they'd go and stay sometimes  
Together at earth's ends...  
Though Jim would all this while fret  
About each dime she'd spend.

26

But not to fear, for Dorothy  
Knew how to make each dime  
Ring on into the afternoon,  
Where she could make it chime  
The dinner bell as well, and showed  
Jim money was but time

27

Well spent. And though he never did  
Give up tight scrutiny  
Of bills received, he *would* give up  
That notion of his key  
Position in the budgeting,  
*Sometimes*, and let her be...

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

28

Except when he again forgot  
How she had handled things  
So sagely. This extended to  
Those trips that Christmas brings  
To those *inclusive* of their spouse's  
Kin as were they kings

29

And queens and not just folks of *his*.  
For, they would visit *both*  
Sides of the family every year —  
Yes, pack the car, in troth,  
With kids and gifts and cookies she  
Would bake without an oath

30

And point the car toward Portland each  
December. Keep in mind,  
Meanwhile, that our Dorothy  
Was never one to find  
Things unimprovable, and she  
Had come to have consigned



II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

## 31

To them, *inclusively*, a cabin  
On a lake their friends,  
The Koentopps, had a house upon  
And where they'd visit then.  
Yes, business school had also shown  
Her how to follow trends.

## 32

For, now they could invite the whole  
Damned bunch to come and stay  
As guests of *theirs* and make this party  
Last beyond a day  
Or two. And though Jim *was* aghast  
At having more to pay

## 33

In order to procure this place  
On Twin, he gradually  
Forgot and would commend his own  
Good sense to have agreed  
On buying it back then (though *then*  
He'd thought it some damned spree).

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

34

But back to our good heroine.  
The thing we need remind  
Ourselves about our story here  
Is less how we've defined  
Its truth in terms of strict detail  
Than how truths are assigned.

35

For, not a word I've lent to you  
Today can *really* give  
The verity of how things went,  
As they are *words*, which live  
In *sentences* and not events  
To capture in life's sieve.

36

But Dorothy herself can tell  
You everything I've passed  
Along to you, *and more*, all shaped  
By *her* perspective's cast.  
And saying "more," I *mean* it too;  
FOR, HER RECALL IS VAST,

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

37

As everyone who's here knows true.  
Yes, she can well recite  
Her life — and yours as well; *watch out!* —  
In details to ignite  
Imagination's pyrotechnics,  
Morning into night.

38

In fact, the more I've come to know  
Her, the more reticent  
I am to ask about the past.  
For, there were times she went  
So far in answering, I had  
To ask her what *I* meant

39

By bringing up the blasted point.  
So yes, for every small  
Memento I've conveyed to you  
There is an utter WALL  
That could be built from bricks pressed out  
Of details *she* recalls!

II. Longer Poems, poem #12: *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*—continued

40

Now, let us raise our glass and toast  
Our heroine for more  
Of life she can regale us with  
Some day. And let's explore  
*Inclusively* all this she's lived  
So vividly before.  
Good health to Dorothy, who is  
The one we most adore!

## II. Longer Poems, poem #13

*The Parliament of Foul Ideas*

Or

*Our Inalienable Right to Ignorance*

1

*T*hat life is short to live while long to learn  
Is why, still green for one soon gray, I've come  
To search more books for truths I can discern  
Of how our world *really* works – to plumb  
Convincing *evidence* in place of numb  
*Conventions* that seduce us with their ease  
While but extorting from our fears their fees.

2

No, not such books conventional to folk  
Who, rather than live *now*, would hold their breath  
On palliatives of myth with which to choke  
The irksome knowledge of their certain death  
And cower in the safety of inept  
Ideas of but *surviving* that same flesh  
In which thought's just a process of live mesh,

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 3

But rather those inviting us to view  
Through lenses undistorted by the tint  
Of nervous hope this world that *is* and, through  
Our deep engagement with it, leave our *print*  
Upon its fabric, not some ghostly lint;  
Yes, books meant not to lull our wits to sleep  
But wake them into life's vast wealth to reap.

## 4

Yet, *all* books should be read at reason's edge —  
Yes, even those reporting neutral fact —  
Lest we confuse *pro tem* belief with pledge  
Of FAITH (belief *despite* contrary fact)  
And offer up our brain to be hijacked  
By some authority unproven who  
Exacts our blind allegiance upon cue.

## 5

For, while belief in its most basic mode —  
*Pro tempore*, that is *before* we've wrought  
It firmly into FAITH — is *gene-bestowed*  
And necessary to our simplest thought:  
It saves us all that time it takes, from naught,  
To prove the truth of *every* step we'd need  
Towards where the subject thought might  
*then* proceed.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas*—continued

## 6

True FAITH is, on the contrary, that deal  
We cut in trusting with our eyes tight closed  
The verity of that which is *revealed*  
*To us as true* the while our reason dozed,  
Most typically because we're predisposed  
To find it so through fellowship in some  
Conspiracy pretending it's not dumb.

## 7

And so, I've long maintained that *any* book  
Can be misread *or* held in valid doubt  
And that what really counts is how we *look*  
In it ourselves to learn what it's about,  
*Not* how it's looked upon by the devout,  
Who deem a text as worthy for *their* eyes  
When judged as such by those they're *told* are wise.

## 8

Like when some minister of FAITH to whom  
They trust their moral guidance (just because  
He claims imaginary friends) presumes  
To solve life's toughest questions through odd laws  
He's read in ancient books of tired saws,  
Though *these* were writ by others who knew *naught*  
Of why things happened as they did and thought,

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 9

Conversely, that the superstitious lore  
Bequeathed to *them* sufficiently explained  
Injustices they saw arise before  
*Their* ignorance of things, and so, ordained  
Themselves as masters of but long-maintained  
*Wrong answers*. Thus, from out old fields come *new*-  
Grown crops of foul ideas to hold true.

## 10

Now, I'd of late been reading deeply in  
The science of such things as love and sex  
And how such appetites, long seen as sin  
By hungry disapproving types perplexed  
By their own urges as they crane their necks  
To pry, are easier explained by how  
Our brains evolved than what our gods allow.

## 11

For, what our gods allow is also seen  
More clearly by a peek inside our brain,  
Whose architecture, drafted by our genes  
In concert with the world that's its terrain,  
Will favor features helping to sustain  
These genes and, hence, will best predict the sort  
Of things these gods we dream will like or thwart.



II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 12

For instance, charitable acts toward those  
Whom we enslave — or grovel to when *they're*  
Perceived to wield the upper hand — or shows  
Of grand respect for rites that seemed to bear  
Us fruit when practiced last — like prostrate prayer —  
Yes, all such stratagems that served us well  
Before we learned to rule by threats of Hell.

## 13

The physiology of sleep and dreams  
Is yet another subject of the books  
I read that proves how often that which *seems*  
The reason something happens overlooks  
The way things *really* work, while tenured crooks  
Indulge their readers' longings to come read  
In dreams dark myths supporting their own creed,

## 14

And all in lieu of real-life facts that tell  
Of why a working brain does this or that  
Toward its efficient functioning. To sell  
Such truths to readers of romance proves flat-  
Out profitless, while myths make prophets fat.  
Hence, knowing how a dream is made reveals  
Far more than dream interpreters' ideals.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 15

For, those who would *interpret* dreams design  
Posh metaphors to show the dream to “mean”  
Some *other thing* than how it’s made — some sign  
That shrouds our guilty thoughts of some obscene  
Old wish that might disturb our own serene  
Time out quite lost in Morpheus’s arms,  
Hence swapping facts of nerves for myths of charms.

## 16

Yes, all this goes to demonstrate my view  
That books are better savored for their art  
Of bringing thoughts and feelings into true  
Engagement with our life than as some smart  
Prescription for its proper living. Start  
With any book at hand and you will feel  
Beliefs compete for sway at selfhood’s wheel.

## 17

And just to prove that I mean *any* book,  
I chose from off a shelf the one called “good”  
By those who don’t read books, and as I shook  
Its dust and cobwebs off as best I could  
I planned to find in it such stuff that would  
Provide me that respite for tired nerves  
That prunes the clutter of my day’s reserves.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 18

I speak of SLEEP, of course: that splendid state  
Of drugged oblivion insuring fresh  
Connections in the circuits we create  
All day and night within our neural flesh  
Which, wearied by redundancies of mesh  
Accrued by forming synapses at work,  
Consolidates its pathways through this murk.

## 19

Yes, I am one who venerates the nap:  
That seeming flick of switch rebooting brains  
Grown heavy with their endless work to map  
Their world by fooling them to feel the gains  
That normally a good night's sleep attains.  
And here I'd found that sedative to best  
Help lure my tired brain to be its guest.

## 20

For, I have found no better way to reach  
That sacred place of senselessness than through  
The blur of print upon a page whose speech  
Seduced my tired brain to bid adieu  
To my identity and but construe  
Myself as one with whom I've just now read  
(As if I woke in someone else's head).

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 21

Now, I had opened up this book of books  
Quite randomly to one specific place  
(Among the countless of such puzzling looks)  
Its editors had managed to debase  
Of meaning relevant to that strange “grace”  
In which their god had sacrificed his son  
For crimes that *everybody else* had done.

## 22

I mean that pointless place some nodding scribe  
Had made when he had Jesus, “by the *grace*  
Of God,” taste death for all the human tribe  
Instead of what had been in that word’s space  
“*Apart from God*” in early texts — a case  
In proof that even scripture lacking sense  
Will summon devotees to its defense.

## 23

Yes, in this letter to the Hebrews, Paul,  
We read (as published now), proposed this sense  
Of “grace” in which his Christ’s betrayal, fall,  
And rise again to fame and recompense  
May be interpreted as evidence  
Supreme of God’s unfathomable *love*  
For all — though just some mistranslation of

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 24

The Greek that really meant “*apart from Him.*”  
And thus, another strict tradition, born  
Beneath a scribe’s bleared eyes, took on a grim  
New life its own, protected by the scorn  
Of those authorities to whom are sworn  
The followers of *any* cult who fear  
To question what would make *a child* sneer.

## 25

So anyway, as I then sat the while  
With book wide open on my lap, I felt  
My critical facility and guile  
Dissolve from where that sense of me had dwelt  
Into the nonsense of what here was spelt  
And came to recognize the view from where  
I now peered out, suspended in the air.

## 26

I felt the long-familiar presence of  
Someone I knew — though not, somehow, by face  
Or voice, it seemed — who spoke to me of *love*  
That had made necessary this embrace  
He’d made of my demise which, by the *grace*...  
Of odd illogic made a kind of sense  
Now as to why this scene felt *so* intense.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

27

For, yes, intense *anxiety* prevailed  
As my most salient feeling now: a weird  
Concern that this on which I'd been impaled  
Of late would be, perversely, soon *reversed*  
As but a symbol of that "grace" that steered  
Me here to stand for all that's "moral," "good,"  
And "loving," though, in fact, *misunderstood*.

28

For, what in any *healthy* mind could stand  
For "love" that is so hateful as this hell  
To which each must submit at His command  
For disobeying some pernicious spell?  
How *can* that word denoting how hearts swell  
In one another's happiness be one  
That *also* means the punishment of fun?

29

Can words be so capricious of their freight  
As makes them suited to conveyance of  
Whichever cargo we desire? "*Hate*"  
Could then be used *precisely* to mean love!  
Why speak *at all* if truths don't count *above*  
Conventions of odd sounds we make with tongues,  
Teeth, lips and noses, diaphragms and lungs?

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

30

But I digress, of course. Such reasoned thought  
Was *far* removed from where I'd slipped through time  
And space into that world my text had wrought —  
*Especially in strictly metered rhyme!*  
Yes, this concern that some collective crime  
Of all mankind could truly be redeemed  
By *my* appearance here, as it now seemed,

31

Was not quite *thought* but rather just the *feel*  
Of something *truly dumb* stuck in my craw:  
That sense one has that something *can't* be real  
Despite the oaths of those who claim they saw  
It, heard of it, or read it in some law;  
That feeling in our gut before we veer  
Instinctively from something smelling queer.

32

Yet, often we remember queer events  
From out our nighttime dreams that didn't seem  
In conflict with our life experience  
While watching them arise. For, every dream  
Is but *experienced* as well and deemed,  
Therefore, believable until we've mapped  
Them with our *waking* sense of what seems apt,

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 33

Which was *asleep*, of course, the while these stray  
Odd remnants of old memories, unloosed  
By waves of deep unease, were then arrayed  
Into a narrative of sorts reduced  
Of sense by night-shift faculties unused  
To editing such stuff amid the dark.  
In light of *all of this* I've just remarked,

## 34

We should allow that what we each believe  
At any given time has less to do  
With what is "true" than how we best achieve  
Those feelings of reward we all pursue  
Toward validation ever craved anew.  
In other words, whenever reason dims  
Around us — night *or* day — amid our whims,

## 35

*We are insane*, regardless of the depth  
Of dignities we rally round our cause  
To buy it some respect. The stunning breadth  
Of tolerance for half-baked thought our laws  
Protect does not indemnify the flaws  
Of logic, nay of *common sense* no less,  
Revealed in our esteemed religious texts.



II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

36

For these, when read point-blank — I mean without  
The aid of such indoctrination stirred  
Into young pliant minds till cleansed of doubt —  
Betray the hands that forged them as "God's word"  
(In hopes of dignifying the absurd).  
Said simply, sacred texts are those we've *learned*  
*To read that way for fear of being spurned.*

37

I dare you find a page of *any* text  
That can't be read as REVELATION! Why,  
*A shopping list* can serve the man perplexed  
By death with needed proof his soul won't die  
When he does, *read with ample* FAITH! We buy  
What's written down much sooner than what's spoke  
Because of all the cryptic sense evoked

38

By something *seen* — more tangible than heard.  
While words evaporate the moment said,  
Those writ remain till our attention's blurred  
Envisioning the stuff *left out* instead.  
This bent for gleaning *in between* what's read  
Gives clues as to how human brains evolved  
To fill the gaps they find toward problems solved.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

39

And hence, the written word, though really just  
Some scratches symbolizing sounds we coin  
Toward useful trade in one another's trust,  
Becomes for us much more — the very groin  
In which things witnessed and inferred are joined  
From out their commerce, hence our special sense  
We get of something left in *evidence*.

40

Yes, evidence of truth in that weird hunch  
Predicting something near us we don't see.  
For, those who *lacked* this sense became the lunch  
Of stealthy predators, a guarantee  
Of less successful genes and our best key  
To how we've come to read the way things look —  
First on a forest floor, then in a book.

41

Yes, just as when we might unearth some bones  
And weapons while we're digging in the dirt  
And quick envision violent struggle, groans,  
And silenced life that long since lay inert,  
These sundry marks found on our page alert  
Us to a presence of the past: a clear-  
Cut proof that someone else had toiled here.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 42

And just because another came and left  
This record of endeavor for us, we  
Who find it tend to read in it a depth  
Of consequence beyond what it should be,  
As if mere *transcripts* of events we see  
Were, *ipso facto*, truer — yes, more *real* —  
Than those *experiences* they might reveal.

## 43

But then in light of this we must concede  
That what is found in sacred books becomes,  
*Epecially for those who do not read,*  
A proof of authenticity that numbs  
One's reason past its inquiry and dumbs  
Down standards of credulity enough  
To but embrace the most *amazing* stuff

## 44

That superstition can serve up: such lore  
That folk will swallow whole (to circumvent  
Its chewing into bits they might abhor)  
Without suspecting that they'd underwent  
Indoctrination to be made content  
With foolishness in place of what is real —  
**THAT THEY WILL DIE** — hence, *dodge the need to feel*.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

## 45

Yes, lore that's conjured out of their own fear  
Of not surviving death and used to lure  
Them with absurdities they yearn to hear  
In guarantee of their extinction's cure,  
Which only comes, of course, to hearts deemed "pure"  
(I.e., full gullible). Thus, sacred books  
Provide the fisherman of souls fine hooks.

## 46

Now, it's well reasoned we should wield the *right*  
To entertain whatever muddled thought  
Has worked its way into our appetite  
And trust uncritically what all we're taught  
In books by those who'd been there first and brought  
Back news — for instance that the dead will rise  
And live without their brains up in the skies.

## 47

But then it's only fair that those who yield  
To us this right to our delusions should  
*Themselves* be free to harbor, unconcealed,  
Their qualms about our having understood  
This world of ours sufficiently as would  
But recommend us to their confidence  
Concerning facts we *all* agree make sense,

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

48

Like gravity and other staple laws  
Of physics or biology we bank  
On with the trust of our own lives *because*  
They are unyielding — this despite our frank  
Indifference to them when we stoop to thank  
Some "outside" force for (somehow) *intervening*  
In this *same* steadfast mesh of laws — demeaning

49

To our species when you think of it.  
For, these same folks who dare to board a plane  
*Because* they trust that physics' laws permit  
No breeches *whatsoever* in this chain  
Of happenings that keeps their flight sustained  
Still hold (once safely landed) that their God  
Can reach right through this weave to wield his rod,

50

Adjusting outcomes here and there at will  
Without (somehow) disrupting all the rest  
On which the whole depends. Now, such a skill  
Would need ignore, of course, that very test  
To which we put all truths we would invest  
In otherwise where our survival's sought.  
I mean, of course, *consistency of thought* —

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

51

Yes, that innate aesthetic sense employed  
Toward weighing choices in our path we can't  
Yet know the scope of, though we most avoid  
It when it's inconvenient and thus grant  
Its use but when we wish, as to supplant  
Real wisdom with expedience's hopes,  
Like swapping treatises with horoscopes.

52

And this *precisely* mirrors what our laws  
Effectively promote: obliged respect  
For *bad* ideas alongside good because  
They're all the work of circuits that connect  
In human brains — as if we should select  
A ball to eat when hungry for a fruit  
*Since both are round*, a fact beyond dispute.

53

By *bad* ideas, therefore, I mean not just  
Those inconvenient to our aim but, more  
To point, those *unsupported by our trust*  
*In how the world works* — yes, setting store  
In sheer absurdities that any boor  
Can see who's not *obliged* to call them true  
By some tradition sheathed in its taboo

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

54

Against its well-deserving ill respect;  
Absurdities repeated by one's peers  
Enough to *gain remembrance*, hence collect  
The cozy feel Convention commandeers  
From sense till they're perceived as souvenirs  
Of comfy habit, though mere anodyne  
To reason's wounds to make them *feel* benign.

55

Again, we *should* be free to be such dopes  
If so inclined, but that we'd honor, prize,  
And *privilege* such inanity — where popes  
Are kowtowed to as alpha males all-wise  
Though masters of mere fairy tales and lies —  
Reveals a most perverse esteem for those  
*Least* representative of how man rose

56

To dominate the life forms on this earth.  
Our scientists, who've studied long to learn  
Why things but happen as they do, are worth  
In popular regard a *fraction* earned  
By church authorities, who've but discerned  
*Their* answers to these same hard questions through  
What things were known when *wheelbarrows* were new!

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

57

That's right, back when technology emerged,  
At last, to lug some rock upon a wheel —  
Millennia before glass lenses urged  
Us to investigate those worlds revealed  
*Beneath* the surface of what seemed — we kneeled  
In base subservience before our own  
Best image of authority we'd know

58

And bade these parent figures in the sky  
Come lavish on our most unworthy skill  
Advantages allowing us to buy  
In subjugation those less worthy still  
And asked too why our begging came to nil  
So much despite our offerings bestowed  
On them in fearful supplication owed.

59

It was back then, when we knew *nothing* of  
What made things work, that these good texts were writ,  
Revealing how we crave parental love  
And validation. Now, although worth *shit*  
In terms of showing us the way things fit  
To build the here and now, these texts became  
Of help in teaching us to locate blame.



II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

60

For, easier than understanding *why*  
A crop had failed or slave had died while strong  
Was finding *culprits* we could punish, buy,  
Or influence till there might come along  
An outcome we preferred. Thus, right and wrong  
Behaviors learned upon our parents' knees  
Would later help us know what would not please

61

Our parent-*gods* as well, explaining just  
Enough to satisfy the clueless why  
Bad things befall good folks: erotic lust,  
For one, which disrespects the gods on high.  
Now, this confusion of a parent's wry  
Disapprobation and the reason things  
Are *as they are* is what religion brings

62

To our attempt to better understand  
Our world. Where science questions each thing taught,  
*Regardless* of authority's command,  
Religious doctrine yearns to ban each thought  
Refusing to salute the rule it ought.  
And hence, the sacred text's assured appeal  
Lies in the ease with which its truths *seem* real.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

63

Yes, more alluring even than the fact  
Of verity is that sweet rush we feel  
When dopamine rewards us for the act  
Of *recognizing* it — as if the meal  
Were less sustaining than that sense revealed  
By appetite new-satisfied. It's *this*  
We chase: less truth than *certainty's* cheap bliss.

64

But once again I see how much I've strayed  
From where my dream was taking me — way back  
When I'd first sunk into that text displayed  
Across my lap and found myself but smack  
Between a pair of thieves, where I'd been tacked  
Aloft to save the world from sin and bring  
Redemption to mankind, or some such thing.

65

Like any dream I've ever had, this one  
I'd lived within my nap seemed just as real  
As being *here* amid this line begun  
Above with "as," and I recall the feel  
Of hoping that this *ludicrous* ordeal  
Through which I'd been thus sacrificed for crimes  
Not mine might promise me some better times

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

66

Ahead, once all were said and done. And yet  
I also felt the while that strange old sense  
We get when assets won against our debt  
Accrued in winning them *don't* match expense  
And we're worse off the more we're recompensed.  
For, here I was, the hero of a cult  
That saw my death as something to *exult*

67

In — no, not *mourn* my loss but *praise* it's worth  
To all who value most what's out beyond  
The scantest proof of it known here on earth —  
As if these devotees of mine who'd donned  
The sordid relics of my broken bond  
With some despotic parent of the skies  
Came not to grieve but *savor* my demise,

68

Yes, see it, *somehow*, as the very source  
Of *their* anticipated life-to-come:  
That perfect, endless sentience as some force  
*Ideally* unencumbered by this hum-  
Drum earth-bound stuff we call "mere flesh."  
Now, dumb  
As this might sound to you (I hope), to *me*  
It had the ring of clear *insanity*:

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

69

That superstitious mythic space where each  
Coincidence one meets is read as cause,  
Confusing chance with agency's long reach,  
As if but governed by those very laws  
That merely *recognize* inherent flaws  
In our ability to pattern out  
The whole from those stray parts we find about

70

Us here. Just picture it yourself: a crowd  
Of followers assembles at your feet  
(Among the skulls of those whose disemboweled  
Careers forewarn *unpleasantly*) but greet  
You *not* as one whose life looks incomplete  
Of late, and thus deserving of their aid,  
But one to whom it's prudent to have *prayed*.

71

Yes PRAYED! Not helped, nor even understood,  
But *preyed upon* as bait toward bigger catch,  
As if some Ur-progenitor they would  
Conceive to dignify the way they'd hatched  
Were further dreamt to eat His young, who snatched  
Some misfit from the brood to offer Him  
Whose jealous vengeance threatened life and limb.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

72

Now, puerile claptrap such as this but proves  
To *live* more stupid even than it sounds,  
Which says *a lot*, of course. For, it behooves  
Me to point out right here the different grounds  
On which a pain described and *felt* impounds  
One's sense of being. Where you would need *pretend*  
You're me, I *feel* this pain you'd apprehend.

73

Yet wait!, I hear you now protest. This dream  
Of yours had never *really* "happened" though,  
Not as a *physical event* (redeemed  
In time and space). It's but *imagined* so,  
An *immaterial* reflection thrown  
Of jumbled *misconceptions* of the real —  
Hence, *not* a "thing," as such, you *really* "feel."

74

To you I'd answer thus: Well then, just go  
And find a brain that isn't altered — yes,  
And let me highlight *physically* — by so  
Much as a thought! Just follow the success  
Of all those nerve connections coalesced  
The while you think and watch them rearrange  
Brain tissue till it's *palpably* been changed!

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

75

Yes, thought is but a *physical* event,  
A happening, *quite tangible*, convened  
In circuitry that's formed of nerve cells sent  
In search of correlation found between  
Hard facts about the world out there we glean  
And that predictive model we maintain  
Toward mapping out survival's best terrain.

76

This *process* of a working brain, called "mind,"  
Is, in relation to the object, "brain,"  
What incandescent light is to that kind  
Of wire filament that will retain  
Sufficient heat. And so, we must abstain  
From thinking mind a substance *separate* from  
A brain when it is rather just the sum

77

Of all its working attributes in play  
That cannot be reduced to those same states  
On which the whole was built without decay  
Into incongruously disparate traits.  
In other words, this mind each brain creates  
Is its *emergent property*, with thought  
Being one late layer of this system wrought.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

78

And yet, these mappings of our world our brains  
Evolved to weave in such increased detail  
Are spun from little more than what our pains  
And thrills are: an electro-chemic veil  
Of stimulus response, now on a scale  
So vast we cannot grasp it till it's seen  
*Divinely*: as some ghost in our machine.

79

These ghosts are byproducts of our far past,  
When folk who had perversely feared some dead  
Thing as still animate had thus amassed,  
Ironically, survival rates ahead  
Of those less superstitious types who'd fed  
With fearlessness their predators in place  
Of progeny. Hence, spirits were embraced

80

As not just plausible but *requisite*  
Components of our cognitive design,  
Permitting us to utilize, a bit  
Less dangerously than otherwise, that line  
Of hazarding an option as defined  
Less by real evidence than by some hunch  
Made clear through fear we're someone else's lunch.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

81

Now, all of this — regardless whether sense-  
Perceived, recalled, imagined, or sleep-dreamed —  
Is done with ions in synaptic clefts  
Toward that remembered present of what seems.  
For, as our poet long ago had deemed:  
The dreamed and the perceived, seen close enough,  
Reveal that they're both made of that same stuff!

82

Yes, "stuff" none other than that language writ  
In atoms charged unequal to their nerve  
Cell walls, conducted as potential, bit  
By bit (as on or off), from ports that serve  
To bind with other neurons and preserve  
A circuitry semantically complex  
From out the varied options it connects.

83

Yet, this same stuff communicating sense  
Through flesh by means of that electric meld  
Of chemically-inspired membrane — hence,  
Dependent on those very laws beheld  
By science to discern how it is spelled —  
Is trusted by most folk to but *survive*  
The body's habitat in which it thrived!



II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

84

In other words, they hold in FAITH this stuff  
That is the product of a process of  
Biology and physics close enough  
To be predicted *can still rise above*  
The death of cells in which such things as love  
And satisfaction were achieved, despite  
The fact these cells are dead and won't excite!

85

How does this mechanism of a brain  
That forms this circuitry in which to hold  
Those special attributes we still explain  
To be intrinsic to this thing called "soul,"  
Like wit or verve or knowing how to bowl,  
Remain *intact*, alive to its last shred,  
Once those same cells that nourished them are dead?

86

Let's take for argument your Uncle Dick,  
Who was, while still among the living, quite  
Recalcitrant — a textbook model of a prick —  
Though it turned out, *to everyone's delight*,  
His brain scan showed a tumor that grew right  
Where his compassion should have been enclosed  
In just those circuits now long decomposed.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

87

When your dear aunt had buried him (in feigned  
Remorse, perhaps, for her most "grievous" loss),  
Your family had but sat around and strained  
At justifying why he hit the sauce  
And, then, his wife. For, now he came across  
As someone *not* responsible for those  
Behaviors we once thought he really *chose*.

88

Now, most believe this poor prick's soul enjoyed  
His way to heaven as a packet of  
"Pure energy, which cannot be destroyed,"  
They'd hold. It *can* be, though, *transformed*, above  
His corpse, *as heat that rises up* past love  
And hate to dissipate into the air —  
That place they'd have him float in, full aware

89

Of *everything* on earth he didn't know  
Alive. And this same personality,  
Remembered differently by friend and foe,  
Still seemed, despite the immortality  
He scored beyond his brain's finality,  
*Distinctively his own*...though no one knew  
Quite whether this would be the one that drew

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

90

Upon his brain *just prior* to this growth  
That interfered with how he'd seemed till then,  
Or, rather, *after* it replaced with oaths  
That kinder Dick the pastor spoke of when  
The eulogy was read aloud, amen.  
And so we see that Dick's immortal soul  
Depended *vastly* on which brain he stole.

91

But you who've dared so far to follow me  
Upon the tightrope of each line stretched taut  
In careful feet above the sharp debris  
Of misinterpretation really ought  
To know the actual feel of being caught  
*Enjambed between* these very lines with which  
We draw our sense of self so true to pitch.

92

For, this is but a *literary* work —  
A *poem*, not some tract, the meaning of  
Which one might find but buried in the murk  
Of rhetoric instead of how some dove  
Or plover sounds to ears tuned high above  
Those earth-bound mutterings of prose, which deals  
At best in facts and not in how stuff *feels*.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

93

Our model for this parody in verse  
Has as its central scene — that is, *within*  
The "frame" our narrator had us immersed  
In touching how he fell asleep chagrined  
By Love and how She *still* eluded him —  
A lovely fuss about how all earth's birds  
Had met to try out some seductive words

94

With which to find their mates, and then, once they  
Had failed at that, to but appeal to Love  
*Herself* upon this obscure martyr's day —  
The one we celebrate love on *above*  
Those better candidates we've long heard of —  
And then agreed to settle it *next year*  
On this same day, hence ending in good cheer.

95

These lines, composed by that most subtle ear  
In English (*if* you call what Chaucer spake  
That self-same language we speak now) endear  
Us to the value of those dreams we wake  
From into those we live in and partake  
Of with great certainty that we can know  
The difference, *which is difficult to show*.

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

96

For, this most vivid dream of mine I'd sung  
About above while dangling from my cross  
Was made *identically* to those I've clung  
To in the daylight of my life and glossed,  
Therefore, as quite veridical. The cost  
Of each is but experienced the same  
Regardless of which term I use to frame

97

It in a rhyme. We live within a vast  
Continuum of consciousness we call  
"Real life" or "made-up shit" or else what's classed  
"Insanity" according to the fall  
Of consequence around us. That is all.  
In short, our wakeful conscious life is but  
Some narrative we weave of what means what

98

To our survival of such varied sorts,  
Including, *when not literal*, that kind  
Of *social* circumstance that best supports  
A comfortable living unconfined.  
And so, regardless of how it is enshrined  
In our vocabulary, *we must dream*  
*To live*, lest we forget how life *might* seem

II. Longer Poems, poem #13: *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* — continued

99

In certain situations posing threat  
To the assured survival of our genes.  
So, when I dreamt my sacrificial debt  
Was paid by gruesome and inhuman means,  
My brain was but preparing for such scenes  
I might endure when this you've just now read  
Is judged to be *quite worthy of the dead* —

100

Yes, by religious critics who would call  
Aloud for my good name's dismemberment  
To punish me for how I'd so appalled  
Their God with blasphemies that give consent  
To seeing FAITH as *so much time misspent*.  
And thus, these books I'd read became in me  
The very stuff of which my dreams might be.

## II. Longer Poems, poem #14

*Chasing George*

An Epic Poem in Search of Selfhood in Twenty-Four Books

[Note: See pp. 466-71, below, for exegesis, poetis personae, dedication, etc.]

**I**

## Book the First

**I.1**

**I** met a dealer in an antique store  
Who told me of a thing so precious rare  
He wouldn't think to let it out the door  
Till came that "special someone..." (breathing air!).  
Oh, not just anyone would understand,  
He said, my wallet bloody near his hand.

**I.2**

I caught my breath and followed him in back  
While noticing the archway sign, which read:  
*NO ENTRY / THINGS NOT PRICED YET / WET SHELLAC!*  
And felt my blood run cold in sudden dread,  
Recalling that I'd only stopped to ask  
Directions to the library, alas.

**I.3**

For, I'd been long pursuing dragon lore  
With which to glean whereof man's hatred comes  
Toward this composite of the dinosaur —  
This incarnation of the fears he plumbs —  
And now was tracking down an early source  
Of myth for some old zealot and his horse.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.4

Yet suddenly I found myself astray,  
Being blindly led toward God knew what ahead  
Through dim-lit corridors of scuffed parquet  
Stacked high with things abandoned by the dead.  
And then we promptly stopped. My guide turned round  
And grasped my elbow, pointing toward the ground,

## I.5

Where we descended then a staircase, deep  
Into the very bowels of the place.  
And there I saw what would disturb my sleep  
For years and lend new meaning to my chase.  
(For, surely *this* was what was known as FATE:  
That thing for which one *cannot* show up late.)

## I.6

So startling was the spectacle before  
Me now, I couldn't close my eyes to blink,  
Nor grasp what my new guide meant by some door  
That was removed to bring it in (I think).  
For, here I faced a pair of yawning jaws  
That advertised huge teeth as sharp as claws



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.7

Around a snake of tongue that slyly beckoned:  
*Come and let's together taste your death!*  
Yet worse by far was what I now had reckoned  
Springing from its chest with my next breath:  
It was its *life*, escaping down to feed  
A crimson pool below the heinous deed.

## I.8

For, it was by the prodding of a spear  
He'd bled — one thrust there by a shiny knight  
Whose rearing steed aped well his smiley jeer,  
Both proud to show a maiden such a sight.  
It was intense, though *still* since ages past,  
Long bound by leaden bands in colored glass.

## I.9

As if awakened from a dream, I stirred  
At that moist palm I felt upon my arm  
And recognized the voice I seemed to've heard  
As murmur all that while, and with alarm  
I turned to look the dealer in the eye  
And asked his chin, "how much?" and heard him sigh.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.10

“What *will* you take?” I counter-offered fast.  
“This dragon in your window has no price?”  
But in his grin I saw the die was cast.  
Indeed, I knew *some* number *would* suffice.  
He counted what I’d proffered and demurred,  
Though his consent was easily inferred.

## I.11

I took a breath, then grabbed my wallet back  
And reveled in my triumph for a while.  
For, I had bought my dragon from this quack  
Who played my Virgil, and it made me smile  
To think what luck it is to lose your way  
Sometimes and find your dream in your delay.

## I.12

Two men appeared who helped me out the door  
With it and to my home for installation.  
Once we freed it from its box though, more  
Could not be heard than silent perturbation:  
Though the glass remained in perfect shape,  
It now appeared...*the dragon had escaped!*

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued***I.13**

Please note that not a shard of glass was missing;  
Rather, just the subject matter changed.  
Where *he* had been were now two lovers kissing  
And the woman's clothes quite disarranged:  
Her girdle, which should prove the dragon's lead,  
Was now slung round the neck of that white steed

**I.14**

Whose well-pleased grin was suddenly replaced  
By eyes the size of tennis balls and jaw  
Hung low at this performance most unchaste.  
The place appeared in dire need of law:  
The maiden on her back, no lamb in sight,  
And armor everywhere *but* on the knight!

**I.15**

Such is our world without a dragon near:  
The mice at home right when the cat is not.  
That now was hardly time to stall was clear;  
I had this beast's coordinates to plot.  
For, surely would wherever else he went  
Be turned a place of strictest regiment.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.16

I tipped the men and sent them on their way  
And chewed on what to do about this beast  
That had absconded with itself. I'd pay  
A visit first, I thought, to him who'd fleeced  
Me for it. After all, *he'd* found him last.  
Yet now his shop was gone. I was aghast.

## I.17

This seemed quite like that wedge's slightest edge  
On which philosophers are wont to ponder.  
Not a thing I saw could I allege  
To recognize now here where I would wander.  
Just medieval things, like castles, moats  
And battlements and obsolescent boats.

## I.18

Ah, this was just the knavery of booze  
At play upon my brain! O yes, of course.  
Such would explain that haughty, truant muse  
Whose name I called *and called* till I was hoarse.  
(Perhaps she'd heard my every invocation  
But could glean no hint of my location.)

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.19

Yet no, that *couldn't* be. I hadn't touched  
The stuff since last my wife left home for good.  
And drugs I *never* took — not “drugs” as such.  
Nor seemed this like some dream in which I stood.  
“Reality” this seemed to be indeed —  
That place our brains evolved to try and read.

## I.20

Yes, after all, how much more “real” a world  
Was that in which I'd stumbled on this glass  
In which I saw my destiny unfurled  
By merest chance — where likely I'd have passed  
Some other day — in which a buck or two  
From lunch skipped bought me freedom within view?

## I.21

For, free was I at last from this dull quest  
That no one even pressed me undertake:  
A lifetime spent pursuing things professed  
Instead of things *themselves* of which is spake.  
Oh yes, henceforth I would *real* knowledge seek  
And find my beast without the use of Greek

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the First — *continued*

## I.22

Or Latin, or those other tongues long dead  
In which I used to search for living truths.  
“Just what,” I asked myself with pride new fed,  
“Can Jacobus, that king of half-hatched sleuths,  
Tell *me* about a dragon he’d not seen  
Except in books by others no less green?”

## I.23

“Why, less than this!” I answered, fingers thus,  
My vigor whetted by this fiery mission  
Stoked by spirits to rare heights of fuss.  
“To no convention, concept, or tradition  
Shall I bow...except to Him!,” I said  
About my author, who could write me *dead*.

## I.24

“But first, *before* I go,” I said to Him,  
“I must see evidence of You who send  
Me. Yes, I’m not the type to follow whim  
And just *presume* your word I must attend.”  
And on this brazen challenge did I wait...  
And wait...till it was very, *very* late.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second

## II

## Book the Second

## II.1

I woke in pandemonium, quite lost  
Aswim confusion's thickest stew and dazed  
By each ingredient. Things seemed but tossed  
About through space in reckless whimsy crazed  
By blurry want and purged of what they'd mean.  
It looked no less than *Chaos on caffeine*.

## II.2

But gradually, commotion's motions slowed,  
And as my vision held these things in place,  
Significance came bit by bit bestowed  
On them again. I now recalled apace  
My challenge put to him the night before.  
Or was it long ago? I wasn't sure!

## II.3

And up I sat in panic at this thought  
To survey well the unfamiliar room  
Around me hung with spears and girdles wrought  
Upon a tapestry on which there loomed  
As well a...*dragon*...and a gorgeous maid  
Shown kneeling by a knight to whom she prayed....

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.4

Oh yes, I thought; this is indeed the place –  
*Wherever it is* – and in a loud crash  
Jumped down from off a table laid in taste  
With food and drink and everything I'd mashed  
While sleeping there the night, however long.  
(Remembrance weakens when the drink is strong.)

## II.5

"Yes, *this* must be his sign!" I cried in faith  
That I had seen just one, though there grew two  
Before me now...until one proved some wraith  
Quick vanishing like vapor from my view  
Along with all those other specters seen...  
And that damned ringing in my ears so keen.

## II.6

"O thank you, David," did I shout out loud.  
For, this was but His name who had me writ  
With body, soul, and wit so well endowed.  
"Yes, thank you for but finding me so fit  
To undertake this task. I'll never touch  
Another drop. I swear to it *this much!*"



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.7

I showed him, *thus*, and waited for a sign...  
Till I recalled that I'd been waiting still,  
And dropped my arms to grab a hold the wine  
For one good *l-o-n-g*, though *retroactive*, swill.  
(One doesn't just embark upon some quest  
Without first saying bye to all the rest.)

## II.8

And now was I as ready as could be  
To go and find that dragon that escaped  
And learn from him the truths you'll never see  
On tapestries or glass, *however* shaped.  
(How fine it was to be alive and well  
Within an epic not concerned with Hell!)

## II.9

And in this spirit nothing could impede,  
I readied me before the looking glass...  
Till dawned on me I did now antecede  
Their evolution out of polished brass  
Or what damned else this thing before me was,  
As now I saw in it bare more than fuzz.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second — *continued***II.10**

I righted my attire best I could  
From memory, forgetting I'd not worn  
Such things as these before, and so just stood  
There quite perplexed to find me so adorned  
As heroes are in times like these — I mean  
Whenever one's own author sets the scene.

**II.11**

But having tied my sollerets and trudged  
My way to that great door through which I'd go,  
I spied upon a table what I'd judged  
To be a book in vellum, opened so,  
And to my horror found on close inspection  
Text so written as to beg reflection

**II.12**

On but any meaning whatsoever,  
Save, perhaps, a sense of perseverance —  
Like that which might have suffered the endeavor  
To compose such tidy incoherence.  
This seemed indeed to be that sort of tongue  
One finds, no wonder, written more than sung.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.13

But I digress. What all this *really* meant  
Was plain as dirt to see. As if my course  
Seemed not already strewn with mean intent,  
I'd now need play charades to find a horse.  
I cried to him above who had me picked,  
"O Borodin, you really are *so* strict!"

## II.14

"No knowledge in the world is worth all *this*,"  
I cried. "With no more effort you might wake  
Me where my understanding's not amiss.  
But seems you'd rather play me till I break.  
If this were but the only path to truth  
I'd sooner slog through knee-deep mud...forsooth!"

## II.15

These bold words clashed in echo round my head,  
My beaver being down, and in my haste  
To raise it felt my gauntlet now embed  
Within my visor, darkening what I faced.  
God! I was thirsty now, believe you me,  
And would've drunk...were but my beaver free!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.16

When, finally, I got myself redeemed  
And moving toward the door again, my eye  
Caught hold a glint of gold so bright it seemed  
To lure me in, much like a flame might buy  
A moth. And in a flash did I succumb  
To inspiration found between my thumb

## II.17

And index finger there, where gleamed a pendant  
Painted with the features of a lass  
So ravishing, of beauty so resplendent,  
I couldn't catch my breath. It seemed I'd passed  
Beyond the corporal world of lungs and heart  
Into that weightless one of lust and art,

## II.18

Where none exists but for intensest yearning;  
Where, in a sudden sputter of hot joy  
One tastes a state in which man's highest learning  
Seems but dull, like heavy sauce to cloy  
The palate whereon we perceive this "soul"  
We think we have, and thus received quite whole

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.19

A truth, enlarged from out this flask I took,  
That promised life's great secret in entire:  
*Our world is but a page in that great book*  
*That tells of propagational desire.*  
I judged this wisdom neither good nor ill  
But let it seep into my blood and thrill

## II.20

Me down into the marrow of my bones  
(Where I had known it ever). And in treason  
Quick, insurgent mobs with sticks and stones  
Were felt to scale the ramparts of my reason  
Till, with this, her likeness in my dire hand,  
My heart fed hot, much like a firebrand.

## II.21

It fed quite hard upon those lips, ripe, red,  
Pursed full in wanton sensuality;  
Those eyes, bright blue, in which I'd lost my head  
To bumbling sentiment's mentality  
About the "love" I gleaned within her breast –  
That firm round bosom driving my unrest –

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Second – *continued*

## II.22

And, ah, that neck, that chin, those soft, soft cheeks  
On which there blushed the very lust of life  
Itself (as some spring flower sweetly seeks  
Its pollen to be published full and rife,  
Come forth who may to do it). And that hair!  
Oh, what in this wide world could *compare*

## II.23

With the allurement of those flaxen locks?  
Why, *none*, dear God! Nor *any* of her charms!  
Yes, I will answer any door where knocks  
A plot in which she ends up in my arms,  
Full pressed with kisses on those shapely lips,  
My longing cooled against those swelling hips!

## II.24

But whoa! Where was I prior to this kiss?  
What mission brought me *armored* to this place?  
No, not for *love* would I be dressed like this  
But rather for some battle in love's chase!  
Yet, it took HER to make me resolute,  
And so, I clipped her locket to my suit.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third

### III

Book the Third

#### III.1

*T*hus, armed with this resolve (*and* suit) of steel  
I ventured forth, my love upon my sleeve,  
To face what hand my author might next deal  
Me, be it some mere kick upon the greave.  
For now, this princess had me so engrossed  
I'd stop for *nothing*...save, perhaps, a toast.

#### III.2 3

Ah, life's aburst with beauty and good cheer  
When you just jump in it with both your feet,  
Not worrying about what mess you'll...meet—  
But hey, my quatrain's all "enveloped" here!—  
Not worrying about...what might have been,  
Nor topics moot, like "virtue," "vice," or "sin."

#### III.3 4

No, life is something to be *used*, not hoarded  
Like some mattress stuffed for some great day.  
For, *that* day might not come until you're boarded  
For eternity, as they would say,  
And this, your cash-packed bed, left far behind  
For some indifferent spendthrift there to find!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued*

## III.4 5

Oh, what a waste. It even makes me sick  
To think on it. Now, had you rather spent  
Your tender with some lover full of kick,  
At least you might have gone without lament.  
Or at the least, lamenting through that smile  
Stoked by vibrant memories the while.

## III.5 6

Well, anyway, I threw the door ajar  
And from this threshold leaped to greet the day  
— This day that promised miracles so far —  
And thrilled these feet upon this good earth's clay  
Would soon stand firm, prepared to go and tread  
Wherever He should choose to have me led.

## III.6 7

I felt them hit, and yes it did feel good...  
*Except* that they kept going, sinking down.  
Down, d-o-w-n they sank till finally I stood  
Kneepiece-deep in that oozy, sluggish brown  
I knew instinctively for mud — that sludge  
Through which I'd sworn I'd *never*...trudge.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued*

## III.7 8

To hell with You and all these stupid rhymes!"  
I said, incensed, for anyone who'd hear.  
"I'm sick of choosing just that word that *chimes*  
Concordant though in *meaning* something queer!  
For, *slog* was what I swore I'd do, not 'trudge.'  
I'll play this game no more. Just wait and judge!

## III.8 9

"And that goes too for all this stupid meter;  
I am finished counting on my fingers  
Just to say did this and that the neater  
Than I might have with a word that lingers  
But a syllable too long. From here  
On in I'll damned well say things as I like  
without regard for how words strike...the ear...  
*damn it!"*

## III.9 11

But after venting that (and much, *much* more),  
My ire stoked yet hotter with each word,  
I hankered soon for nothing short of war,  
Declaring, "I'll not stand for this absurd  
Complicity! No, not the slightest part  
I'll play toward this mere nonsense you call 'ART'!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued*III.~~10~~ 12

“Why, I’ll just sit this out and watch your tale  
Collapse beneath an unsupported plot.  
Without your handsome hero to prevail  
Against Fate’s finest hand, *all’s* ill-begot.  
So, I’ll just suck up what to slake a thirst  
And wait to see just who will holler first.”

III.~~11~~ 17

And by the time I made it to the top,  
I felt myself near death from heat and thirst,  
As if the very sun that baked this slop  
Enough to walk on well-nigh cooked *me* first.  
Try climbing up a hill some sultry day  
Attired IN AN OVEN all the way!

III.~~12~~ 18

And yet, did I complain? No! Life is good!  
For, if not here, where *would* I really be  
But jobless, yearning to be understood  
Beside some verb or other! Is *that* free?  
Besides, the only thing ‘twixt me and doom  
Seemed now whatever wet I might consume.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued*III.~~13~~ 19

And what I spied from out my sweat-blurred eyes  
Was that same stuff I had so thickly craved.  
Yes, *water*—cold, wet water. Ah, gold buys  
No thing so valuable as what might save  
A body from his thirst! The mightiest king's  
A slave to what your poorest peasant flings

III.~~14~~ 20

Into a trough for beasts to guzzle up.  
It's only common till you want it most.  
A starving man sent suddenly to sup  
Could not have hastened toward his steaming roast  
With fiercer focus. Woe to him who stepped  
Between my self and that toward which I'd leapt!

III.~~15~~ 21

And blinded by my wettest joy (and sweat),  
I tripped off the bank and sank like a stone  
Straight to the bottom of the stuff I'd yet  
To taste. And not till then could I have known  
Real irony to be so sprightly quick  
Upon its toes and deft with every lick.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued***III.16 22**

And as I sank, I thought in quite a flash  
How my whole life seemed mirrored here in this—  
How I'd not tried a thing but with such rash  
Resolve that sent me down to the abyss  
Of all success, where aspiration's lure  
Is pawned for dull complacency's full store.

**III.17 23**

Yet, luck would have it not so deep as seemed  
It plunging in. For, once back on my feet  
I heard my helmet drain, and found what streamed  
Down me quite good. (Ah, thirst is no aesthete!)  
And then I stooped to drink of what I could  
All 'round me—meaning this in which I stood.

**III.18 24**

And once I'd filled myself to bursting sweat  
And flung my helmet off to greet the air  
That thrilled with chill my face and neck all wet,  
I froze in awe of what I saw from there.  
Before me now lay shimmering in the sun  
A world so splendid it looked new begun.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third—*continued*III.~~19~~ 25

Bright mounds and pools of colors yet unmixed  
Gleamed richly from this painter's palette, vast  
As earth itself. And all around it, fixed  
In azure endlessness, a sky was cast  
So vividly, I smarted in despair,  
Much as *all* beauty leaves its wound to bear.

III.~~20~~ 26

I swooned, quite powerless before all this—  
Dame nature's naked splendor—and felt good.  
She urged partaking, lured me come and kiss  
Her petal-lips and wallow in her wood  
To thrill in her luxuriant, fruited space  
And sleep amid her secret-shadowed place.

III.~~21~~ 27

This seemed the virgin landscape I had seen  
In paintings old and thought untrue, ideal,  
Some trick of brush and pigment, just too clean  
To show the rude, chance work of nature, *real*,  
Where things get broken, die, or go to waste,  
While life, unmoved, continues in its haste.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Third — *continued*

III.~~22~~ 28

I knew now only lust had kept me blind  
To this great splendor here through which I'd trudged —  
A lust for *life* so keen I could not find  
The sense in any part that might be judged  
Extraneous to its keeping. But once tamed,  
This thirst revealed what kept my heart inflamed.

III.~~23~~ 29

Enthralled by this primeval paradise —  
Resplendent teeming lushness, raw and pure —  
I pondered all that I would sacrifice  
In yielding to it, giving up my lure  
Toward dragon, truth and justice...*and the girl*....  
And then deep down I felt a thing unfurl,

III.~~24~~ 30

Like appetite or drive, renewed desire,  
And then found myself revived, full-grown,  
And bounding over barricades of fire  
With me upon its back toward fates unknown.  
For where in intellect is found the force  
To stave deep lust from off its innate course?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth

#### IV

Book the Fourth

##### IV.1

**B**ut first things first. Ambitions of the “soul”  
Are sought distractedly when put before  
The body’s own. One must discard it whole,  
This prudish epic etiquette of yore,  
Wherein since ancient days no hero’s done  
What any *real* man would not dream to shun.

##### IV.2

Though follow we our hero’s every stride  
Toward triumph ‘gainst his inauspicious odds  
And watch him kill and pillage, lie and hide,  
Misuse the women and displease the gods,  
Yet *never* do we spy him go attend  
HIS BLADDER’S CALL, for fear *this* may offend!

##### IV.3

Yes, such is the hypocrisy bequeathed us  
By the lofty laurel-headed set—  
Those bards who never fart— who, being wreathed thus,  
Deem it meet that art steer clear its debt  
To life, nor mirror it too closely seen,  
*Lest kidneys be as nobly sung as spleen.*

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.4

But *I'll* be no one's minion of tradition;  
*I'd* not have it seeping out my ears.  
This urgent stream that flows from my volition  
Serves to liberate me from my peers.  
So, look who will, and gather 'round to pray,  
WHILE I PISS THIS INHERITANCE AWAY!

## IV.5

And oh, how fine it felt, like God on high,  
To scatter one's own water to the winds—  
First *man* among immortal heroes, aye,  
The first for whom Propriety rescinds  
Her laws—or leastways turns her head the while,  
Attending indiscretions *far* more vile.

## IV.6

But wait! What was that noise I heard behind me?  
It sounded like some bawdy wench's laugh.  
I turned 'round quick to see and found, purblindly,  
I had company—though dressed but half  
For the occasion. When my settling sight  
Fixed sharp upon that form my heart took flight.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.7

For it was she: she of the bosom round  
And ripe, red lips and flaxen hair so soft,  
Whose hips I'd held while dreaming would confound  
My thoughts of more essential things quite oft—  
Like why in bloody hell I'd loitered here—  
The one for whom I'd toiled in this gear,

## IV.8

And broiled, and renounced all earthly pleasure  
Not directly touching mission's end...  
Which *lately* had but lost a goodly measure  
Of its old allure. Oh, *oh*, could poet send  
Protagonist incentive more than this?,  
I thought, my mind's eye focused on a kiss

## IV.9

Upon those lusty lips that seemed as if  
They'd never close from 'round that lusty laugh,  
So keenly was she peering at my stiff  
Repose. (Yes, armor keeps you like a staff.)  
Indeed, the thing that held her so amused  
I hardly could have gleaned from that effused

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.10

In this new burst of cachinnation fits.  
For those rare syllables I could construe  
Gave me to wonder if she'd heaved her wits  
Out with what shook her dignity askew.  
They sounded unlike any tongue I'd known...  
Except, perhaps, the French in which I'd moan

## IV.11

When all I'd stub my toe or bang my head  
Way back in my indecorous salad days—  
The ones, *good God*, I hadn't even led  
Yet for some half millennium, anyways!  
But anyway, to keep an epic short,  
I did that which I'd sworn to not resort:

## IV.12

Yes, interrupt a woman—not for love  
Nor money but right now for sheer impatience  
Did I breach this rule so high above  
All others I had learned. And in that cadence  
I found customary of the time,  
I knelt upon one knee and spoke in rhyme,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.13

Inquiring in my gallant, courtly tone  
What was her name, pray tell, lest I defame  
So high a chasteness with one of my own  
Selection. Nothing butters up a dame  
Like manners, I now thought, not ill-impressed  
With my urbanity, though still undressed

## IV.14

Waist down, as then I realized when I saw  
Whereon it was her gaze had built its nest.  
No, *not* my shield. There ought to be some law  
Against the ribald pranks one finds expressed  
In verse toward innocent, hard-working folk  
Like me by poetaster bastards, broke

## IV.15

For want of wit. Such dastards should be made  
To live the life they write so as to teach  
Them how to pick their rhymes in better faith  
And fit. But, gentleman I am, I reached  
My ungloved hand toward her that she might trust  
My pure intentions, purged of all the lust

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.16

That surged unchecked throughout my corporeal being.  
When she put her hand in mine and smiled,  
All wet with mirth, I felt my caution fleeing—  
If there was some left—and I grew wild  
With goad to prick and tear my reason loose  
From off its watch at passion's trembling sluice

## IV.17

And drew this hand, so delicate and smooth,  
Down to my lips and kissed it softly, dreaming  
It to be her body such to soothe  
The hard-pent pressure of desire steaming  
Up my suit. She then addressed me, smiling  
In a manner sexy and beguiling,

## IV.18

Though I grasped of it no goddamned word.  
Nor mattered this a whit. For, this was love,  
That flawless exegete of all things purred  
In ears since Venus mounted high above.  
She ran the fingers of her other hand  
Amid my hair and uttered something grand

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.19

To hear, which seemed to mean, *how do you do?*  
(But didn't, as I'd later understand).  
Emboldened by her voice, so near a coo,  
I then inquired how her castle's manned,  
Or some such thing, to which she laughed anew  
And pulled me up from off my knee to view

## IV.20

Those gorgeous big blue eyes of hers and feel  
Her breath upon my cheek and glean what stirred  
Within that bosom, pity to conceal.  
I stood erect before her, undeterred  
But for the tingling numbness in my leg  
And spots a-spurting 'gainst my vision vague.

## IV.21

And yet again she tried, to my delight,  
Seductively that greeting used before,  
Though now intoned a wee bit less polite—  
As if this tryst of ours might prove a chore.  
She dropped my hand and caught ahold that favor  
I had brought along for private savor.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourth—*continued*

## IV.22

Oh, I thought, so *that's* what had her worked  
To such a sweat!, and watched her as she started  
New her old inscrutable quiz, then smirked,  
My eyes lost in her bust where it had parted  
And but struggling out from dark desire  
At the bit about her ROYAL sire

## IV.23

Mad to find now missing this small thing—  
This charm I borrowed but to fuel my thrill—  
For, though *portraying* her, it was THE KING,  
*HER FATHER*, who had paid the limner's bill.  
"The King?" I gasped, my vision quite returned  
From out that valley all too quick sojourned.

## IV.24

It now looked plain as deer within a field:  
The girl's as well *connected* as she's built!  
And though by now my mission was concealed,  
I'd find what all to do, right to the hilt!  
But lest my motives anyone mistake,  
I stayed to play the *scholar*, not the rake.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth

V

Book the Fifth

V.1

**A**h, never did the flesh bring man more pleasure  
Than was felt by me up on that hill,  
Where daunting walls adorned in sovereign treasure  
Glimmered in the hearth's excited thrill.  
I delved in deep and greedily partook  
That corporal sustenance so long forsook.

V.2

We had lamb. So succulent and tender  
Was this luscious meat, I couldn't eat  
It fast enough, nor heed the regal splendor  
All around us where we sat, nor greet  
The royal gaze I felt upon me set  
As if on something odd found in one's net.

V.3

Existed none that wasn't on my plate.  
Outside the noble compass of that rim  
Fussed sound and light, scant meaning to relate  
To senses fixed concertedly within,  
Fixed fast upon the luscious taste of life  
Itself — past merest happiness or strife

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.4

And all such routine things that only veil  
That most ambrosial savor of mere being —  
The subtle tang of some minute detail  
On which the whole depends, like light for seeing.  
I knew it now for what it was, this taste:  
Less food than that great hunger it replaced.

## V.5

And having ducked starvation's slow blunt scythe  
Once more, assuaging deep this oldest lust,  
I raised my eyes from off these bones, full blithe  
As one who'd lost it all but found a crust,  
And let them drift and wander round this hall,  
This vast and dark enclosure, thick with pall.

## V.6

In aimless search of boundary did they fly,  
Where mighty curving ribs soared overhead  
To bear aloft a vault so spacious high  
It seemed the very firmament instead,  
As if in place of heaven's fearful void  
Here man presumed to have his own employed.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.7

Then, falling from that dizzy height, they lit  
Below upon a weighty corbel stone  
On which those arching ribs were made to sit  
Supported. And from out that block was shown,  
Where once had been a surface smooth of sense,  
Now gouged to life a beast of such intense

## V.8

Expression as to seem the very germ  
Of all unrest, corruption's seed set deep  
Within delight, hell-bent to disaffirm.  
Forever wakened from its stony sleep,  
It raged against the light in wrath all-seeing,  
Riled at the fact of its own being.

## V.9

So fierce a visage did this creature bear,  
Coaxed violently by steel of sculptor's chisel,  
I felt afraid to meet its eyes, the glare  
Of which was so intense it seemed to sizzle.  
Yet I looked, compelled by that weird thought  
That I had seen somewhere a likeness caught

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.10

Within some *human* face I'd known one time.  
It haunted me, this recognition dim  
Of having met amid rare distant clime  
Some personage of normal mortal limb  
Who nonetheless resembled in his smile  
Some aspect of this mien I found so vile.

## V.11

And so, quite heedless of the voices round  
Me clamoring for my gaze, I stared intent  
Upon these lineaments that would so hound  
Me, rooting memory's folds for merest scent  
Of recognition. Yet to no avail,  
For all that came to mind were things for sale:

## V.12

Yes, fragile, costly things... "so precious rare..."  
I wouldn't think to let them... "think to let..."  
Ah hah! That's *it*! Down in that *dealer's* lair  
Is where I had such fiendish eyes last met!  
It was *his* face I saw on that tableau:  
The antique dealer, ARCHIBALD IMAGO!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.13

Or so the name was writ on that receipt  
He gave me for my dragon—*now long gone!*  
Oh, what a crafty master of deceit  
To feign such polished unconcern whereon  
He knew I'd bite like fish on freshest bait!  
Why, that Arch-merchant must have lain in wait

## V.14

Until I lost my way and stumbled in  
Upon his web, long spun for none but me!  
How else explain his helpers who, like kin  
Of mine, knew just which one my house would be?  
Yes, *they* led *me*! He pressed me call him "Lark"  
For short, as "Arch" he found "too harsh, too dark."

## V.15

Or else perhaps too bloody close to home!  
For, arch he was indeed of something short  
Of goodness. Had I left my wits to roam  
The streets while in his shop, that he could thwart  
So well my knowing him? And what dark art  
Obscured my note he'd even dressed the part?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.16

He stood there dressed in black from head to toe,  
His wizened face reclaimed by hoary beard  
That must have taken centuries to grow.  
And on his finger gleamed a ring more weird  
Than anything I'd seen in all the worst  
Shop windows. Surely was its maker cursed

## V.17

With a specially heightened lack of taste,  
Or at the least an unenlightened patron.  
For, what it showed was like a snake enlaced  
Amid a knot of endless complication,  
Courting still the most disdainful gaze  
To linger there awhile in its dispraise

## V.18

And miss the even stranger stuff about  
Him: that old tome he carried at his side  
Through which he'd pore each time you'd come to doubt  
Him on some provenance he would provide.  
Did mortal ever live in all the ages  
Wise to what was writ upon *those* pages?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.19

Why, had he worn a pointy hat with WIZARD  
Writ on it, it couldn't have been more plain:  
A tongue *that* smooth could have only slithered  
From a mouth the Arch-tempter had ordained.  
Yet, miss I surely did these telltale signs  
Until I woke well snared within his lines.

## V.20

If wake I did at all! For strange to say,  
I can't recall a time things *weren't* weird!  
Hard pressed am I of late to tell the day  
From night, so have their properties careered  
Together in my mind—the thing concrete  
Commuting fluently with its conceit.

## V.21

Might *all* of this have been in fact a dream—  
Some chemic conjuration of my brain  
In which the alchemist who now so seemed  
My mentor was but *me*, and this domain  
Of his in which I wander none but *mine*—  
None but that popped realm above my spine?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifth—*continued*

## V.22

For *there* is where it's said a world's transformed  
Within the merest liquid drop—up there  
Within that crucible where's nightly warmed  
Concoctions of anxiety and care  
In random recipes of unrestraint,  
Investing meanings bold in matters faint.

## V.23

Indeed, I sense I've led another life  
Than this somewhere, sometime—a job, perhaps,  
A home, with children, pets, friends, bills—a wife—  
Yet all by now long faded into lapse.  
If so, it's nothing to regain it all  
But open wide my eyes to watch this fall

## V.24

To faint remembrance. Yes, to merely die  
From here right back into that other dream—  
The great corporeal one wherein we buy  
Our food for this one—and emerge full free  
And unconstrained by this Arch-author churl:  
That dealer and his lizard...and...*the girl*...?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth

## VI

Book the Sixth

### VI.1

No, no, don't go! Hold tight! Let not a ray  
Of light peep in to burn away this veil  
On which I have her fixed, just poised to say  
She needs me. For, once gone I can't entail  
Myself to this same kingdom once again,  
Despite how I might *recompose* it then.

### VI.2

Oh no, let go and drift right back instead  
While time exists to save this world of hers.  
Out, sun! Go rouse some lovers in their bed  
And make them sweat from what their love incurs,  
But *I* will not to your rude stare succumb.  
*My* flesh must once again grow heavy, dumb,

### VI.3

And senseless of the everything without  
Until its text reads only of within,  
Rewoven in a pattern of devout  
Veridicality, like touch on skin.  
Oh, to dissolve and seep back into night,  
Dispersed across that sky beyond all light,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.4

Where SELF is then re-membered all anew  
Within a moment vast as countless miles.  
Yes, I feel it now — I'm coming through.  
I feel me drifting past those quiet isles  
Lining Lethe's moonlit banks, on course  
For that dark cave that holds our very source:

## VI.5

That leaden den where Sleep holds languid court,  
Whose ineffectual ministers of state  
Would nod to his dull-muttered mandates 'thwart  
All cares of consequence on which they wait.  
Did gentler despot ever reign than Sleep,  
Whose subject never lived that dodged *his* keep?

## VI.6

How soothing feels my Lethe's current, soft-  
Drawing me onward toward the little death  
I've lived in her before so oft, so oft;  
How rich it is to ride her lusty breadth  
In impotence — to savor the elation  
Over selfhood's sweet obliteration!



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.7

Yes, yes, to *rid* me of identity —  
To gallop tilting toward that very hole  
Through which one's lost in the immensity  
Mere being seems, without a part for "soul."  
That's what it is, this fragrance I now breathe:  
The evocation of the life I *leave*!

## VI.8

But what rare, splendid country's this around  
Me here I see as if with fingertips,  
Or lips, as lovers do — yes, more profoundly  
Than with eyes — like passing round her hips,  
I feel to her horizon and beyond,  
Where she, this earth, curves gently 'round, all donned

## VI.9

In silken verdure bound by shimmering seas,  
Effulgent under white-hot shafts of sun  
Where part the billowed mounds of drifting breeze-  
Born clouds. Yes, yes, the earth and I are one!  
From here at Lethe's vast terrestrial shore  
Can I at once the whole of her explore:

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.10

Like when I crush a grape between my teeth  
And find perspective plays no part in sense:  
What's gleaned of it above or underneath  
Is all together apprehended hence,  
As if the world then is tasted whole  
With nothing left but *feelings* to extol!

## VI.11

But what are these alluring forms I pass  
Now, shrouded thick in shade? I seem to know  
Them deeply but for this miasmic mass  
Between, through which bare more than shadows show,  
Though some illumined well enough to trace  
Vague hints of something intimate — a face

## VI.12

Or place or something else in which one seems  
To see one's "self" within the den of Sleep.  
That's it; I'm here! These are the husks of dreams  
He's said to leave abandoned 'round his keep.  
From each he'd drawn that seed of logic, strange,  
In which a sleeper reads new worlds arranged.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.13

And yes, I recognize them all, somehow;  
In each I see someone or thing I'd known  
Before by name, as if but sound endowed  
Them then with old identities full-blown,  
All lost again and then discovered new,  
Like truths awaiting *propositions* true.

## VI.14

And hence the boundless richness here: a guise  
Of language and sensation that's but used  
*Predictively*, reducing our surprise;  
Where prior probabilities perused  
Can then be tested, recombined for free,  
And minimized of inefficiency.

## VI.15

Of course, I didn't *think* all this, per se.  
I merely felt its truth grow glowing keen  
Upon my being—as one *knows* by way  
Of taste some spice unknown by name to glean.  
No, not in signs of speech arranged to *mirror*  
The experience, but in that clearer

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth — *continued*

## VI.16

Ken one *feels* the world in from here,  
In which you see that words so often *muddle*  
The reality they would cohere.  
They simply dress it up for that unsubtle  
Eye unused to seeing plain and shop  
It forth transformed: mere costume on a prop

## VI.17

Of truth. For words sustain their very own  
Reality, distinct from what they'd "mean,"  
In that the thing that's spoke cannot be known  
*Except* in shapes mentality's machined.  
Then what plain use are words describing things  
When only of themselves they ever sing,

## VI.18

When really of their own event they tell,  
The very properties of their performance:  
Breadth, weight, hue and tone of each — their spell  
As *things* before use as coordinates  
With worldly things, mere points positioned  
On that daily map we call cognition?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.19

What can they really tell us of that land  
*Itself* they chart, not of the lines and planes  
By which its sheer duration may be spanned  
For postulation's sake, but what remains  
Beyond mimetics of a thought's expression  
Or the datum and its mere reflection?

## VI.20

What can words tell us of that conscious space  
Achieved across linked synapses, like storms  
Of process, urging replication's race?  
What values can be found in symbolized forms  
*Suggesting* things themselves? To know what's "real"  
Just shut your mouth, put down your pen, and *feel*!

## VI.21

But as I said, I hadn't *thought* all this  
As such. Indeed, it all seemed now but altered  
To its merest *telling*—gone amiss  
Somehow, as if these words, once apt, soon faltered  
From their path proscribed by act of plot  
And wandered out to where the facts were not,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixth—*continued*

## VI.22

But out where they themselves might meet and mingle,  
Rubbed contextually against each other's  
Sense, engendering facts their own no single  
Word could hope to do. Had I my druthers,  
I'd have *stayed* there too, far from all events  
Recountable. It seems this wasn't meant

## VI.23

To be though—seems the very words that made  
Me were reforming towards some different text  
In which I saw night's bright enchantments fade  
To sudden strangeness. As the shore collects  
The disenfranchised from the sea, the edge  
Of this, my sentience, now showed remnants dredged

## VI.24

From darkening depths of sleep: odd shards of things  
Once valuable—chance rubble of my past—  
A woman's voice that calls or cries or sings....  
No, laughs. And rising up from out the vast  
Expanse re-gathering to become me  
Again, my manhood struggles to be free....

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh

## VII

Book the Seventh

### VII.1

“O God!” I now ejaculated loud  
With opened eyes to see my dream-come-true —  
The one in which that heiress well-endowed  
With attributes so feminine subdues  
Me in my bed and traps me in her arms,  
An avid inmate of her ample charms,

### VII.2

And there detains me from those puerile chores  
Conventional to every romance hero:  
Like chasing every horror on a horse  
And righting wrongs until the score is zero.  
Yes, life *is* good!” I yelled in sheer delight,  
Faith firmly resurrected by this sight.

### VII.3

For here she was, not merely in my dreams  
But in my *bed*! Well, *someone’s* bed at least;  
The room looked unfamiliar. Those best schemes  
Hot Venus ever tried on maid or priest  
Seemed downright soporific next to this.  
My eyes, it seemed, were trapped in the abyss

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.4

Of bliss corralled within her plunging gown.  
And when I pulled them out and up to meet  
Her own — that blue in which I thought I'd drown —  
I felt those full ripe lips of hers entreat  
Me toward adventures never dreamt till now.  
She hovered over me, as might a plow

## VII.5

That would be lowered down to work the earth,  
And, quick, I strained to pull my eyelids closed  
And play this game for *all* that it was worth.  
I feigned to be still *sleeping*, indisposed  
To any but the most invasive measures  
One employs at such a point. Pleasures

## VII.6

This enticing are too rarely found  
To *not* take hold of, damn it, when one can!  
The world's strongest glue would not have bound  
My eyelids shut for long, as she began  
With unforeseen abandon such a laugh  
Would make you think she'd cracked and broke in half.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.7

Ah! *This* then was that sound I'd heard far off  
From in the dim-lit bubble of deep sleep—  
That very same I'd thought some deadly cough  
When first I heard it—back when she caught peep  
Of me so ill prepared beside the stream!  
This laugh was *anything* but what you'd deem

## VII.8

Quite proper for a damsel of *her* birth.  
It sounded closer to a hog in pain!  
Still, one could sense this had less death than mirth  
About it—maybe even ascertain  
In it *endearing* qualities of sorts,  
Like tears of helplessness amid the snorts.

## VII.9

But still, I opened up my eyes to hear  
Between deep breaths and sighs a word or two  
I understood, I think—something quite near  
*O would I save her from some bugaboo*  
*Or such that ate some creep the townsfolk had...*  
No, *sheep* it was it ate that made them sad....

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.10

Well, *whatever* it was that pricked her zeal,  
I now discerned it wasn't really me  
But rather some large horror whose next meal  
Comprised — *and this by her own king's decree!* —  
Primarily *herself*. "His *what?*" I cried  
In jealous rage. For, should I just abide

## VII.11

Some rival come and steal from me my lunch!  
Just how can I convey to you in rhyme  
The impact of these words? No cogent punch  
In one's own gut some unsuspected time  
Comes close. For here I lay within the lap  
Of rapture, like a suckling at the pap,

## VII.12

Near drunk on beauty, swimming in those eyes,  
Those cheeks...*those thighs!*...till suddenly I'm doused  
In cold, wet realization that her cries  
Are due some brute whom I would need to joust —  
And *win against*, of course — to stand a chance  
Of seeing her again (beyond some trance).

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.13

Oh, I was kindled now, I grant you, hot  
As any well-stoked hearth in June! What more  
Could you expect a man to hear and not  
Erupt in green-eyed malcontent? "I'll gore  
Whatever bloody bastard comes between  
Us two!" I warned *whomever*, sight unseen.

## VII.14

Of course, just *who* whomever might have been  
I'd no idea — nor could care a stroke.  
These flames I felt now raging deep within  
On envy's moist green shoots had spewed such smoke  
I couldn't see a thing, or so to speak.  
For, I knew just what havoc I would wreak.

## VII.15

And it would be the error of the dearth  
Of wits about me now that drove me thus —  
The sort of thing one winces on in mirth  
And pain next morning that was none but fuss  
The night before. And startled by this thought,  
I realized that my tongue was dry and taut,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.16

As if some *other* appetite of mine —  
I had, it seems, too many for good health —  
Had wakened now beyond its quiet time  
To stretch, yawn, lick its chops and hunt in stealth  
My SELF — if that's what's called this great confusion  
Closely following Free Will's delusion —

## VII.17

Watching what I next will do to find  
Some meaning in it all. I felt my hand  
Reach out, directed by that thirst purblind,  
To grope for that one thing I'd understand —  
The thing I'd always reached for with such pluck  
And found, alas, when *truly* down on luck —

## VII.18

That flask that never left my side, *except*  
*In use*, was now quite nowhere to be felt.  
I asked my hovering muse, that quite inept  
But gorgeous genius of my fate who knelt  
Now with her knees pinned 'round my chest, just where  
In bloody hell this thing had gone. Her hair,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.19

Just by the way, was nothing less seductive  
Than the rest of her, by God!, a shower  
Of gold silk suffused with the destructive  
Lure found in some soft meat-eating flower.  
Now it was embosomed round my head,  
A spider's catch within her new-spun bed.

## VII.20

For she had closed in quick on my distraction  
Now and rummaged with a sprightly hand  
Beneath the sheet, no doubt toward satisfaction  
Of my search for flask, till it hit land  
Abruptly where the *cuisse* and *tuille* would meet  
Had I been dressed for it — she's *not* discreet,

## VII.21

My muse, whatever else she is — and laughed  
Like hell the moment that her hand had found  
That thing she sought. And though it were the shaft  
Of my own lance, I grabbed firm hold around  
The bedpost at my head and shouted out  
An oath to shock the young or the devout.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventh—*continued*

## VII.22

You see, there'd been a misinterpretation  
Here, somewhere, for *I'd* thought this guffaw  
Of hers had meant, with optimist's elation,  
That she'd found my flask — though I now saw  
It really meant that she herself was sure  
She *hadn't*. Yet *this* was one I could endure,

## VII.23

This tussle in our mother tongues, this clash  
Of cultured folk in bed whilst raged outside  
The mayhem of the middle ages. Gnash  
Your teeth the while; what cannot be denied  
Is this: 'twixt her scant this and my scant that  
We understood quite *nothing* of this chat

## VII.24

Beyond *essential* things. And *there*, we're taught,  
We lovers leave philosophers behind.  
While those poor tinkers merely ponder thought,  
*We're* left the *business end* of life to mind!  
Inspired so, I felt my will engorge...  
Till hearing her now purr these words: "O GEORGE!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth

## VIII

Book the Eighth

### VIII.1

“*O* *who?*” I snarled, flushed a vivid green,  
And turned to catch this poacher face to face,  
Though dawned on me this rival addressee  
Was likely but the *landlord* of this place,  
*My host*, whose bed it was I’d poked about  
The morning with my muse — *who too*, no doubt,

### VIII.2

Would be but *his*, along with any booze  
I found round here. Such stuff is what we romance  
Heroes must endure. Our wins we lose  
Until, once more, we ply our ready lance  
In faith to win it back right at the end.  
Christ! Those you cannot trust you shouldn’t *send!*

### VIII.3

I mean, just vet them better to begin  
And then you’re done with all these irksome tests  
Of worthiness along the way. If sin  
Can beat out virtue in your man, this rests  
On *you* whose agency brought forth this book.  
I could go on but won’t. My sudden look

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.4

Around the room found neither hide nor hair  
Of anyone or thing you'd call a foe  
And fight. So back I turned to ask my fair  
One who in Hell she had addressed with "O,"  
And I then saw her eyes wax quickly wide,  
Like one aroused so much as to confide

## VIII.5

To you the passion burning up her breast...  
But rather burst out loud in yet another  
Of those heinous laughs to scare the blessed  
Right out of heaven. Pondering what Mother  
Would have thought, *nay done*, had I brought *her*  
Back home to tea had helped me disinter

## VIII.6

My past a bit until her next sedation,  
When she mustered up the strength to answer  
Me about just who in God's creation  
"George" was. In that special tone that cancer  
Brings to conversation, she spoke with true  
Conviction and surprise the one word... "YOU."



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.7

That's right, yes, "you": spelled M, E, *you*. Of course  
I called her on her error unrestrained,  
As *I* was *not* that cad-upon-high-horse,  
That militant and patronizing saint  
Of this same name! In fact, it was none less  
Than *him* I'd come to stop, I then confessed.

## VIII.8

You see, *he* was the *very* one tradition  
Soon would send to slay with flinty smile  
That dragon in my glass—an exhibition  
So barbaric, rude, uncouth, and vile  
As would quite make the worst invading horde  
Seem but as healing as a trip to Lourdes.

## VIII.9

And girl or not, I hadn't come this far  
In search of what had happened just to stand  
Aside right now and leave things as they are—  
Or *were*, I mean, as these were things long planned  
As past events (which is absurd, of course,  
If entropy and time exert their force).

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.10

“This dragon’s mine,” I said. I could then feel  
These very words reform me towards my mission  
With priorities again congealed  
Around those muscles tensed for more sedition.  
But the princess was no longer sitting  
On me anymore but rather hitting

## VIII.11

Me with fists, with shoes, and then my sword,  
And I was, *finally*, well out of bed,  
Defending me against someone who, Lord  
Knows, *really* wanted me as good as dead.  
But soon I had disarmed her, and we fell  
Into the bed again. I caught her swell

## VIII.12

Within my arms once more and held her hard  
Through spasmed thrusts and sobs till safely moored  
Against my chest. She slept. I felt my guard  
Drop now for good when she let go my sword,  
Which I could hear now hit the floor with tired  
Clang that feebly echoed some, then died.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.13

It was, it seems, far less the firm, hard hold  
Than those soft words I'd whispered in her ear  
That had assuaged her so. I'd mumbled bold  
Assurances, which, neither true *nor* clear,  
Were meaningful enough in their mere sound  
To adequately calm us *both* back down.

## VIII.14

Just what it was of this she'd understood  
Had likely mattered less than did the meaning  
Of my effort to explain it. Good  
Or bad, the same held true for me. Seeming  
To believe the nonsense I had spoken,  
*I* seemed soothed by what had been *betokened*

## VIII.15

Rather than just meant. Ironical though,  
Things *were* but looking up now. After all,  
I had in bed the girl of my worst foe,  
Whose imminent betrothal I'd forestall  
By stealing her myself, and too, that beast  
He'd come to save her from — *all this at least*

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.16

*In published versions.* Actually, it's known  
The *real* enticement toward his crass display  
Was but the love of someone of his own  
*More manly* shape. Alas, yes, he was "gay,"  
I said — moved less by shapely leg of maid  
Than soldiery from out his jock brigade

## VIII.17

Of near-hysteric zealots, who pursued  
On horse just anyone or thing to kill  
For but the glory of their misconstrued  
Dear Lord, whose Will they'd heard with *subtlest* skill.  
Now, this is common with your hard believers —  
They tend to be your overachievers.

## VIII.18

And this was quite especially so with George,  
Who'd find his inspiration in a turd  
And mount his horse to gallop off to forge  
High war at times when even God demurred.  
Back to my text: Our plaintive princess knew  
Of George just what she'd gleaned that day he slew

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.19

Some stump his Lord disliked while in a field  
In which she'd picked some flowers. Yes, she saw  
At once that *this* brave knight was one who'd yield  
To nothing. Surely *he'd* be him she'd call  
In time of trouble. And, alas, *that* time  
Was now, it seemed, for she'd be scant but chyme

## VIII.20

Next morning, she now feared, were that mad mob  
To get their way and force the king to keep  
His word — that one in which he'd pledged to lob  
*Her too* to that starved dragon. For, quite deep  
Inside this beast's intestines now had wasted  
All the sheep *plus* anyone who tasted

## VIII.21

Sheep-like in the minds of these poor folk.  
So please forgive her this sad mental state  
In which some ass like George, who still provokes  
But jokes around these parts, could look so great  
To her right now — her indispensable  
Hope, though just some incomprehensible

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighth—*continued*

## VIII.22

Dope. But when she'd opened up her eyes  
I put across to her what you've just heard  
Related here and found myself surprised  
To see this grand charade of hand and word  
I'd tried had worked. She seemed now to accept  
It all – until, that is, a smirk had crept

## VIII.23

Across her lips just then when I'd addressed  
That bit about her savior's sexual preference.  
And *there* she stopped me in my tracks, possessed,  
It seemed, of sudden, wicked irreverence,  
And vented laughter loud enough to clear  
The room (if had been others that were here).

## VIII.24

She looked incredulous. And I was losing  
Humor. "I know a bit about this stuff,  
My dear," I said with confidence (confusing  
Future, past, and now). "I've taught enough  
About it, after all," I then disgorged.  
"My name's Professor Plowman...*Pierce*, not '**George**.'"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth

## IX

Book the Ninth

### IX.1

**I**t's said earth offers man no torment worse  
Than the ferocious sea. This isn't true.  
The shipwrecked sailor who observed this first  
Might well have learned much on the briny blue,  
But having been removed from homelife news,  
He's weathered neither lover, spouse, or muse.

### IX.2

And *there's* where your good rudder will get stuck  
Beneath what's otherwise fine buoyancy.  
Poseidon by himself would have no luck  
Subduing all the chaos stirred up, free  
Of charge, disputing Amphritrite's will.  
It is a challenge for the greatest skill,

### IX.3

Requiring such care with every word  
That it's still safer toiling in the sea  
Than betting on surviving the absurd  
Endeavor of attempting to agree,  
*Or not*, with one's own muse. To even try  
Invites a torment harsher than to die

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.4

Beneath the salty depths of Neptune's clasp.  
I'd rather have the worst that *he* might choose,  
With his wet wrath aimed hard at my last gasp,  
Than dare dispute the wisdom of my muse  
(From whom my inspiration seems derived).  
Yes, give me your most frenzied wave that strives

## IX.5

In frothy lust to lash up at the moon,  
And I will ride it long and hard with all  
The appetite I've ever brought to boon  
*Or* doom; yes, all the relish, thirst, and raw,  
Intoxicated rapture of the "mad"  
(Who see in their brain's mischief countless sad,

## IX.6

Ecstatic thrills the "sane" will never know).  
And with my head pumped full of fiery thrill,  
I will abandon everything and throw  
My wits aside with all my strength and skill  
To sail the surge of your most awful might  
Right up into the dizzying weightless heights



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.7

And down again with slow, momentous force  
To dive and crash right back in furious spray  
Amid the shattered wreckage in your course.  
Yes, *thus* I'd sooner die than waste away.  
For, even you, dear god, have not the power  
To thus grind us *h o u r* upon *h o u r*

## IX.8

As SHE can when you get her going. In you  
A man knows where he's at with ship gone down.  
In *your* arms he will die but once, it's true.  
But plunge him into *hers* and he'll just drown  
*Relentlessly*, distracted by his joy  
While held within her whims like some old toy.

## IX.9

**"O boy, is he a bigot!,"** you declare,  
My gentle listeners. How strange that *I*,  
Of all great heroes *the* most debonair—  
Extremely liberal—should stoop to ply  
Enlightened ears with such rude boorish views!  
But understand, dear hearers: to confuse

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.10

The speaker with the speech in such a case  
Is every bit as dim of *you*, I might  
Observe. Truth is, I don't at all embrace  
Such crude misogynistic rant. Indict  
Not the *actor* for bad lines he's given;  
It's but the *playwright* should be shriven.

## IX.11

For rest assured, *I'm* not prejudiced...**BUT**  
All I know is that a man's identity  
Is sacred, yes, and that no matter what  
You say, it feels quite near obscenity  
When challenged — be it by a woman, man,  
Unknown, or muse — regarding **WHOM I AM**.

## IX.12

And when my own damned muse gets me confused  
With someone else — especially some rogue  
Who's my own enemy — I feel abused,  
I'll deign confess, and likely will invoke  
A mood where unbecoming thoughts become  
More prevalent than fine ones that they numb.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.13

“God, this is dumb! What *is* this all about?”  
I thought. And like one who is sudden woken  
From a night’s concocted truths, no doubt  
To find things worse than his bad dreams betokened  
(*And* not as familiar), I just laughed  
At this, my realization of how daft

## IX.14

I’d been till now, and how I’d missed the clue  
That her being here was anything but chance  
And not the rare coincidence of two  
Inhabitants of one same space and stance  
(Which ours quite nearly was). It had appeared  
Though now quite clear she’d been but planted here

## IX.15

Smack in my path—I would have had to climb  
Right over her, lest we collide—by *HIM*:  
By that inscrutable shaman of time,  
Space, and decorative ambiance, that grim  
Though coyly smiling dealer of antiques  
Whose shop spells doom to anyone who seeks

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.16

To bargain for odd remnants of his past.  
For, wasn't he that same arch-magus-fiend  
Who lured me from my author's path to cast  
Me cold into a world just machined  
Toward *his* dark ends? Why, yes; then what of *her*?  
Was *she* but conjured up by *him* to blur

## IX.17

My view of any predetermined goal,  
A sure distraction from my author's own  
More dignified designs? In this, her role  
As "muse," she'd help him keep me as his drone  
To work toward what nefarious endeavor  
His own heart desired — most to sever

## IX.18

My own author's hold on me. Of course!  
Imago could have been one time himself  
A hero who, like me, had won through force  
Of faith and brawn our poet's fame and wealth.  
Perhaps, grown discontent beneath the yoke  
Of reckoned stress and syllable, he woke

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.19

From out his fettered deference to the ear  
To turn against the very one who gave  
Him name and limb (and glorious lack of fear),  
And then, like Lucifer, but fell, a slave  
To his gigantic pride, and then conspired  
But to kill his god and set on fire

## IX.20

Any relics found from out that rhyme-  
And-meter world that tethered him so fast.  
For, then he could begin again and climb  
Above all best intentions, unsurpassed  
In rank debasement of his perfect diction  
And the savor of his own affliction

## IX.21

As a self-made exile from truth.  
And there he'd sit amid his ghastly lair,  
Where books and papers strewn about, uncouth  
In clutter, told of moral disrepair  
At work behind his brazen new campaign  
To thwart and undermine his author's reign

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Ninth—*continued*

## IX.22

Above the world made manifest in verse—  
The poet's order of mere words that made  
Him who he was and free enough to curse  
His thralldom. Yes, he'd taint its life, invade  
Its pulse with jumbled numbers of his own  
Contrivance till it lumbered, overthrown

## IX.23

Of all good measure, into cheapest noise.  
Oh, I can see the scoundrel now, Saint Chief-  
Thief-Poetaster-Potentate, who cloys  
The ear with gaudy bits of peeling leaf,  
Recycling every trite, prosaic phrase,  
Each crass confection full of purple praise

## IX.24

He could appropriate from all the worst  
(Sincerest) verse, all re-gilt fortunate  
As souvenirs. And serving him his thirst  
For the obscene, this most importunate  
Of charms, this specter of pure sex appeal  
He's cast at me, as if some fish its meal.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth

## X

## Book the Tenth

## X.1

Would such a fisherman need *so* much bait,  
Though? Couldn't one who'd come to cast a lure  
Like *this* be good enough at reeled-in fate  
To get it without aid of tricks? What poor  
Fool with the art to fashion one like *her*  
Would not just save some steps and but confer

## X.2

Upon a hero of his own creation  
The intrinsic will, attention span,  
And drive *precluding* his own mediation?  
He is either deft beyond his plan  
Or else too slow to pose much threat to that  
Great scheme *my* author's made! Had *I* begat

## X.3

A creature as he had as beautiful  
From out the ivory of my own desire,  
I think I would have found it suitable  
Enough to stop right there and quick retire  
To the country with my work instead.  
(The world can run itself, now back to bed!)

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.4

Unless, that is, but no...it couldn't be...  
That she is *his*, MY MAKER'S, doing—meant  
Not to distract but to *engage* me, *free*  
Of any sly diversions such as sent  
Me by that most unscrupulous mean peddler,  
That insidious middleman and meddler

## X.5

In Borodin's designs. Oh, *that* might work  
As well! As if He's cast her but to guide  
Me *past* those sirens waving like berserk  
From off Imago's pleasure boat—yes, tied  
Me, deaf, blind, invulnerable, to the mast  
Of my own greed for *her*! (I am aghast

## X.6

To ponder all the ways one can arrive  
At the very same dilemma!) Makes sense  
When you think it through: He who could contrive  
Within his painted world quite so immense  
A realism as this—yes, one *complete*  
*With its own corruption*—could keep his feet



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.7

Quite out of its conceived wet corner too,  
If needed. After all, could some mere merchant  
Really rival one to whom is due  
His own supply's demand? Could the serpent  
Then predict the savor of that fruit  
Before *he'd* eat its flesh and waxed astute?

## X.8

Of course not! That Imago stands no chance  
Of out-maneuvering *him*. Seems safe to say,  
*Her* presence here must be but to advance  
Our poem's work, not thwart or disobey  
Its laws — sustain the *apple*, not the worm,  
It might be said — yes, help me reaffirm

## X.9

The virtues of this work of his, despite  
The inroads made in it so far by snake-  
In-the-grass salesmen like him. I'll requite  
With *her* help his every treachery: each fake  
Apostrophe, mixed metaphor, wrenched stress,  
And ineffective syllabic excess

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.10

Left festering here by this first fallen son,  
This impresario of God-awful  
Verse, and root out each egregious pun.  
Inspired by *her*, I'll but reclaim His lawful  
Charge of my own script, purloined by *his*...  
Shit! *There's* another: if Imago *is*

## X.11

My author! What if Borodin himself  
Is but *his* ruse — the supreme red herring —  
Just some strong-smelling god redrawn in stealth  
Across my path each time my own unerring  
Nose gets wind of George? Perhaps when *her*  
Scent, lovely as it's frail, cannot deter

## X.12

My lead, then he can come and throw me off  
With but a pinch of God! No, down, weird reason,  
Down! If really I had thought such moth-  
Eaten logic likely, I'd do treason  
To us both: I'd cram an anapest  
Right down my trochee and make manifest

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.13

Such degradation in the prosody  
And substance of this poem as deters  
Through its worst profligate verbosity  
Even that most steadfast saboteur,  
The most determined worm – and truly *then*  
Wreak havoc in Pandemonium, amen!

## X.14

Yet, every certainty brings on its heels  
The mandatory sticky gum of doubt,  
And I can't help but ponder that those wheels  
Propelling fate-wards with such keen, devout,  
Inexorable force, might prove to be  
Compelled by neither him *nor* Him, but ME.

## X.15

Now *that* would be the worst, the hottest hell;  
To *have* no devil, dire God, *whatever* –  
Yes, to lack beyond one's lonely self  
Some cause in which each newly lost endeavor  
May be justified; in short, being FREE,  
Yes, *awfully* free, remote, a refugee

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.16

Among a nation made of one, where wars  
Erupt *among mere disparate states of mind*;  
Where, safe from the oppression it abhors,  
The spirit's caged by one to which it's blind:  
The despot of *responsibility*—  
Dark privilege of unchecked facility

## X.17

To choose and live within each horrid choice;  
Yes, dwell *beyond* Beelzebub's best reach  
And therefore safe from any dangerous voice  
Except the very one we can't beseech  
Or shun, the one soft-whispered in our ear  
*Interior* to what our organs hear;

## X.18

The voice that sounds the outcome of these strange  
Admixtures, chemic cocktails we achieve  
From out the complex seethings of our brains,  
Wherein disordered blendings can conceive  
Within one skull a nation's greatest pride  
Or darkest nightmare it can't hope to hide.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.19

And furthermore, if such were so, then she'd  
Be mine all right, but *literally*; no, *not*  
The woman of my dreams I'd soon succeed  
In winning from her father with a swat  
Or two of my own sword but, as she seems  
At times, well, *just* the woman of my dreams,

## X.20

As if some emblem of my appetite,  
A life-size allegory of that urge  
That drives a man to rouse himself and fight  
The wrong, the right—whatever's deemed his scourge—  
And conquer something he can call his own;  
The proverb's carrot, though in flesh and bone

## X.21

Perceived and dangled out before my aim  
By me alone—without the intervention  
Of some lascivious goddess whom to blame  
Each time my goal's surpassed by my intention,  
As when I get indeed the thing I want  
And find it less fulfilling than the hunt.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Tenth—*continued*

## X.22

Enough now! Stop! Desist! Is there no end  
In sight of numbered truths recruitable  
Supporting any given thought? Defend  
Against it all we might, most suitable  
Of truths are always those that can transmute  
Themselves from qualified to absolute

## X.23

In that intensest heat of moment's need  
That stokes this hellish crucible, our skull.  
Yet, if we merely pay indifferent heed  
As to which exegesis might best lull  
Us into action (the desired sort),  
Let's choose our favored truth and *then* support

## X.24

It with what necessary proof we would.  
For *that* is mustered well in retrospect,  
Once gains and losses all are understood  
In concrete moral terms. So just select  
The one to keep her — and all else call sham —  
MY CONSCIENCE IS APPEASED, THEREFORE I AM!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh

## XI

Book the Eleventh

### XI.1

**M**y pupil, anyway, who all this while  
Had waited on me to reveal the myths  
Of George, was dreaming of some sunny isle  
On which she'd bask beneath his steamy kiss —  
That George who'd pluck her from the jaws of Death  
To serve and worship till his dying breath.

### XI.2

So, after suffering me to muse alone  
Upon the infinite enclosed within  
The solipsist's best nutshell (cranial bone),  
Her winsome smile quick wilted to a grin  
The moment I crashed in upon that kiss  
With still more text on what there was amiss

### XI.3

With George. O there were such things even *I*  
Had not yet known until I'd try exhort  
Her on them. *Impotence*, is one. Deny  
Them I could not. "I'm but a pale reporter  
Of what's in my author's head," I said.  
"I simply cannot wait till he is dead!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.4

I added, God knows why, except I meant  
It, I suppose. “For then we’d both be free,  
Abandoning ourselves to the event  
Of us alone,” I ventured, hot to see  
Just where in hell this went. “Yes, just the two  
Of us then there’d be — along with certain few

## XI.5

“Accoutrements we’d need — but unconstrained  
At any rate by this most tortured plot  
He’s lured us through. And why? For nothing gained  
But lunges at his favorite hate, that snot-  
Nosed prig with little hands and spotless cuffs  
Who cheer-led those God-Queen-and-Country buffs

## XI.6

“To Highest Righteousness. This was *his* sad  
Excuse for storyline, contrived for quaint-  
Of-hearts in rhyme to glorify some cad  
Who’d somehow come to stand as patron saint  
Of this whole bloody land, DESPITE THE FACT  
HE’D NEVER BLOODY BEEN THERE! That he lacked



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.7

“The merest documentable event  
To show he’d ever even lived at all  
Proved water off the backs of his hell-bent  
Hagiographers. Now *that’s* what we call  
MYTH, my dear,” I triumphed in conclusion—  
Till noticing the cloud of thick confusion

## XI.8

Mucking up the lucid atmosphere  
Of this, our cozy classroom where we lay.  
“But I digress,” confessed I in good cheer  
And less-good faith (as I had not). “I stray  
From questions far more pressing than of why  
We’re here,” I claimed, my focus on her thigh,

## XI.9

Which shone like ivory in this raking light,  
So sensuously soft and warm as myth  
Had never been—at least not since the night  
Fair Paphos was conceived from out the pith  
Of ART—that desperate act of making real  
The beauty trapped inside one’s head. Such zeal

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.10

As had this lonely sculptor for his work,  
As turned raw Want, curved hard so like a tooth,  
Into that buxom flesh of Have, a quirk  
Of realization that became his truth;  
Such fierce devotion to one's dream as *his*  
Did suddenly seem mine as well. For this

## XI.11

Warm life I felt here cupped within my hand  
Was surely but the ultimate projection  
Of my lust shaped as to understand,  
An urge now given tangible expression  
Just as Love bestowed upon that king  
Whose sorry prayers are now the stuff I sing.

## XI.12

Yet this, *my* moment of ecstatic joy,  
Fell short our Cyprian's delirium.  
Might "I" then be some Roman poet's toy:  
An exile from some Imperium,  
Carved from bold ambitions He forsook  
But for some vividness in words, some book?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.13

Might “I” as well be precious less than life  
Vicarious — one played out in the cell  
Of one unquiet mind, replacing strife  
He’d rendered, Midas-like, from all that fell  
Within his ken, his surrogate for SELF,  
Re-edited for life upon some shelf?

## XI.14

Or worse, now that I think of it: might *she*?  
Might the protagonist intended here  
Be but *the girl*, on whose plate he’d serve me  
As *garnish*, not the meal, and my career  
Mere *incident* to someone else’s story,  
Shadow of our *heroine’s* great glory?

## XI.15

Oh, don’t go there again; that road’s too rough!  
No, *I’m* the only hero of this tale.  
*Repeat: I’m good enough, I’m good enough!*  
It’s just that every time I should, I fail  
To act toward any one decisive end —  
As if I fear I’ll miss, just ‘round the bend

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.16

Of some new path forsaken, sudden view  
Of promised land I've come in search of, word  
By word the time; that realm of which so few  
Have gained beyond a glimpse, though all have heard —  
The celestial city of "truth," spread out  
Before me whole, mirage within a drought,

## XI.17

Resplendent 'gainst the most ephemeral blue  
Of now, its shimmering towers rising high  
Above the haze of proofs that we construe  
Around our freedoms like a maze. Yes, try  
And try, I cannot contemplate a choice  
Without unearthing in its crux a voice

## XI.18

Dissenting its most basic proposition —  
Such that in each question couched I hear  
Its tenet stated as but the sedition  
Of some bigger premise. And it's this fear  
Of what I want and this ambivalence  
Toward my success she sees as impotence.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.19

It's tough instilling zeal within a truly  
Open mind — one such as to respect  
The tail-end side of anything you'd duly  
Show it. You'd fare better to collect  
Your wine in nets or alms from off a prelate  
Than to stir a liberal into zealot.

## XI.20

For instance, if I really *were* her George,  
As *she* would have me here upon this page,  
I wouldn't need to think. Yes, I'd engorge  
My manly pride upon some holy rage  
I'd find to sate my glories on...*for God*.  
But, as I'm me, I'm skeptical. I plod.

## XI.21

So, this is it, then — *this*, my just reward  
For that most sane, judicious disposition  
Shown: my inability to ford  
The merest puddle without indecision?  
Is this thing called "intellectual"  
Some nicer name for *ineffectual*?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eleventh—*continued*

## XI.22

Now *that* perhaps goes just a bit too far.  
For, after all, I *have* effected much  
Towards my own denouement of his bizarre  
But hale retelling of a tale. For, such  
Are my distinctive strengths that they resist  
Convention's means of measurement. No list

## XI.23

Of vanquished brutes or beauties could be drawn  
Up reckoning wherein *my* assets lie;  
No gore-scored fields will ever shock the dawn  
Where *I* had waged the day before. No, *I*  
Am one who's role's to learn *and teach* the mythic,  
Not *become* it—as the *Neolithic*

## XI.24

Mind is suited best for that, immune  
From accidental use beyond the task  
Assigned it—that sure kind that will presume  
“This task is God's, and God is good,” not ask  
“*Should this be done at all?* IT'S JUST SOME TEST!”  
Oh, save us from your pious! Give us rest!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth

## XII

Book the Twelfth

### XII.1

*T*here's no such thing as *dragons*, why of course,  
I said to calm my sacrificial sheep.  
Of all the myths we use to reinforce  
The *Good v. Evil* bit we yearn to keep  
Between our teeth, it's this one dies the hardest —  
Maybe since its telling lures the artist

### XII.2

Out beyond the primly bordered gardens  
Of our self-esteem to go explore  
The wilderness of want and fear that hardens  
Us to hate. With every dragon gored  
We lose a bit of innocence and bleed  
A bit of reason — yes, as if to feed

### XII.3

Upon the ready flesh of our inherent  
Insecurity. We strive to prove  
We're not the beasts we are — I mean the current  
Creatures of our genes whose lineage moved  
On fins then scaly stumps to claw their way  
Towards the society we have today,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.4

But rather the *creators* of our fate,  
Descended not from accident of sex  
Within the cooling sea but rather straight  
From off the Tree of Knowledge where, perplexed  
By Him, our brand-new parents followed suit  
And bit from that indigestible fruit

## XII.5

That swelled our *every* belly full of “sin,”  
As it is writ. But even those of us  
Who’d grant our species ancestry akin  
With monsters of the deep make little fuss  
Over the likelihood we’d now *remember*  
Them as well, over the chance some ember

## XII.6

Of experience—some singe of fear  
Across a nerve—could burn its potent shape  
Upon the cell walls of a race and rear  
Its ghost throughout our growth from newt to ape  
Till now, when *still* we find its scowl impressed  
Beneath life’s surface, like a palimpsest.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.7

And yet it's true: our dragon's nothing more  
(Nor less) than the artistic incarnation  
Of our worst, most ancient, dread — the core  
Of our collective psyche — sublimation  
Of the motley horrors our survival's  
Captured of its predators and rivals

## XII.8

Deep in cells no conscious thoughts illumine.  
Hence, I guess, our curious attraction  
To this heinous creature of the human  
Heart; we breed it with the satisfaction  
Savored but in witnessing, "God willing,"  
This, its re-enacted ritual killing.

## XII.9

For that indeed would seem its *raison d'être*:  
This, our need to read within our own  
Worst doings — lies and cruelties, *et cetera* —  
The imprint of some source outside us shown  
To be the *actual* force behind them all;  
Some infamous proponent of our fall

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.10

From high among our moral gardening chores;  
A scapegoat we can curse to purge us clean  
Of taint — from all our sanctimonious wars  
Especially — and then to take this fiend  
So dressed and lead it, fattened, to the altar  
Of its timely sacrificial slaughter,

## XII.11

Where we safely watch our sins disposed  
Of with the ceremony they deserve;  
With that great pomp and spectacle enclosed  
Round our transgressions till they're well transferred  
To something truly worthy of our hate:  
Some stark, cold threat whose ornate death could sate

## XII.12

Our tooth for justice once again and send  
Us back to our delusion full of cause  
And bursting with convictions to defend.  
But should we wake again, this trial of jaws  
And claws, this nightmare of obscenity,  
Would prove itself man's best amenity

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.13

Of any — even our most loyal —  
Beast of burden. After all, which horse  
Or dog has ever guerdoned us its toil  
With the enthusiasm, fire, and force  
Proposed by this most diligent of hired  
Hell-hounds every time its job's required —

## XII.14

Every time it's conjured, hot, in a bit  
Of paint or rhyme? What brazen bull has yet  
To entertain for us a death so rich  
In red necessity, in conquered threat,  
As does this most assiduous animus,  
Most mastered menace, and most fabulous

## XII.15

Of malefactors of our own creation  
When it's shaped or named straight into being  
In a window or an incantation?  
None! No beast that's ever sent us fleeing  
Our affairs to stoop amid the safe  
Dark legends of a cave *comes near* to chafe

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.16

At reason as does this most pestilent  
Of pets still does, with its most awful voice  
And gruesome breath and its most excellent  
Irreverence for the laws folks hold by choice  
To be the most conclusive evidence  
Of a supreme designer's prevalence.

## XII.17

It's just as if the worst of all the features  
Of the worst of creatures — those we find  
Least use for — had been chosen with a preacher's  
Eye for evil, mercilessly combined  
And made the consummate grotesque: *ideal*  
*Negation*; yes, the *other* side of Real,

## XII.18

Were it to have but two — the value  $x$   
Might represent when elsewhere all is  $y$   
And all we can describe is nonetheless  
Irrelevant because it can't apply  
To any proposition we might frame  
With logic fundamental to the brain;

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.19

As if some cosmic synthesis were here  
Achieved from out the myriad expressions  
Of *corruption* fused through life's career —  
The sum of ugly being its perfection —  
Leaving us to gaze on mystery  
Invisible to science, history,

## XII.20

Or any other lens of ours save ART —  
Since that, at least, we look through without need  
Of facts to measure out its truths or chart  
Its use — a mystery without a creed  
To read it as, explaining it away  
In black and white where truths are shades of gray.

## XII.21

But since this brute's recurrent reign of terror  
Is but bound by bone between our ears,  
Wherein it's free to prey upon the errors  
Faith preserves for us of primal fears,  
It's prudent that we view the dragon's hold  
On us no different than the common cold.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

## XII.22

Were we to merely let it run its course —  
Regard it as some germ the mind is prone  
To when it's weak — we'd steal from it the force  
We now waste warring with its teeth we've sown.  
For war affirms the nonsense of repentance;  
Each win pronounces Death's most polished sentence.

## XII.23

And so, I told her, summing up what point  
I felt I'd soon be getting at, this dread  
She'd had of being eaten like some joint  
Of meat was misconceived. Why yes, instead  
Would she be better off her mind directed  
Toward what fate she'd find in her elected

## XII.24

*Savior*. (I.e., BE SURE THAT YOUR AFFLICTION'S  
WORTH THE COST TO REMEDY!) For here,  
Dead center in our poem's metered diction  
Should her hero's icon now appear.  
Meet George, that glittering idiot she'd wed —  
Chased silver with a window for a head.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twelfth—*continued*

### XIII

Book the Thirteenth

#### XIII.1

**N**ow *George*, we know, derives from Greek for “earth”  
As well as “work” and hence means one who plows  
The ground, who farms the land for all he’s worth;  
In other words, a *peasant*—yes, a cow’s  
Top dog, with sweaty brow quite low and tanned—  
A *boor*, that is, or *lout*, who understands

#### XIII.2

Not one thing that Boethius has to say  
Distinguishing a substance from its cause,  
But mainly how to husband sheep and pray  
God doesn’t see him violate His laws.  
It also might mean *filth*, since some assert  
That “earth” is but a nicer name for *dirt*,

#### XIII.3

Which farmers spend their largest clump of time  
In—but, of course, for *dung*, without which no  
Aspiring *bumpkin* could survive. So, grime,  
Sweat, shit, and ignorance, it seems, bestow  
Real etymological validity  
On our distrust of his divinity.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

XIII.4

And yet, although we see a name can tell  
Us much about a man — his moral bent,  
His aptitudes, appearance, even smell —  
It cannot tell it all: can't represent  
That darker, harder region of the heart  
Where *humans* live — where contradictions part —

XIII.5

That pinprick spot an ocean wide where hot  
And cold yield nothing up toward temperate blend;  
Where you and I desire, *and do not*,  
The other's troubled joys with equal strength;  
That lush gray country of ambivalence  
For which words offer scant equivalence.

XIII.6

To gain admittance *there*, where's found the stuff  
Of any *thorough* portrait of a man —  
One drawn from *life* and not just smoothed enough  
To soothe the lazy eye — you'd better plan  
To trade your dictionary in for word  
Of mouth and trust the ear for truths unheard



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

## XIII.7

By our inspired etymologists.  
But never mind, for none of this applies  
To George, whose most devout apologists  
Themselves have shown that anyone who tries  
To peek beneath *his* smile finds just the sorts  
Of things you would expect, like war and sports

## XIII.8

Resembling war and death-defying deeds  
Of reckless heroism thrust on poor  
Defenseless maidens of fine shape and breed,  
Each kneeling in her peril to implore  
Him come and save her from Death's claws — although  
We're told she *really* prays for him to GO!,

## XIII.9

Not come, lest *he* be eaten too: "Behold,  
Good sir, those horrid jaws now yawning wide  
Behind you that will chew us *both*, O bold  
Young fool, if you don't run away and hide  
Right now and let me face my most acute  
Yet necessary Fate, O GO! SHOO! SCOOT!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

## XIII.10

Were her precise instructions, as we read  
In Jacobus. But I digress again.  
My point is just that George, whose driving creed  
Is ACTION in a world where *thought* would lend  
A spark of welcome light, whose only goal  
In life's to wander round and stick that pole

## XIII.11

Of his into but anything that moves  
Within the pale of God's disapprobation —  
Though where *he* got such expertise behooves  
Our closer scrutiny — whose condemnation,  
Sight unseen, of all the gods but *his*  
Struck prudent Roman minds as an *abysmal*

## XIII.12

Indiscretion, worthy of the best  
That the old classic martyrdom techniques  
Provide — yes, just that George, that do-good pest  
And patronizing “saint,” with pearl for teeth  
And brawn for brain, is — I cannot hide  
It any longer — LACKING AN INSIDE!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

## XIII.13

That's right, all surface, empty, fully void  
Of anything beneath his polished pose  
You'd call a SELF (that sense of will employed  
Before we know it). Yes, God only knows  
What all you'd find down there amid the straw  
And sawdust holding him together, taut

## XIII.14

And upright in the saddle, like a pigeon  
Perch of spattered bronze; but what you *won't*  
Glean there's the slightest flaw of indecision  
Or uncertainty, the most remote  
Regret, fear, doubt, or other *mortal* trait  
That thwarts a chap's endorsement as a saint.

## XIII.15

Just like that bite of conscience *we're* most prone  
To when we've done what's right...that really *wasn't*  
Though for any party but our own;  
That sting felt deeper than the lash, first cousin  
To the mother of all musts — compassion —  
That high sentience for some *other's* fashion

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

## XIII.16

Of suffering life. But this, our highest ken,  
Through which our species dreams its dignity  
Amid the squalid politics of fen  
Or town or church, seems sheer malignity  
To one who's out to get real business done,  
Our traveling man for Christ being such a one.

## XIII.17

So driven is this knight to hawk his wares —  
Those justifications for the battle cry  
That are the relics of God's own affairs  
Disputing with the Darkness eye for eye —  
He has no time to learn their lasting worth:  
This blindness fast inheriting the earth;

## XIII.18

This inability to recognize  
The *kinship* shared by sheep and goats *beneath*  
What features might be used to judge them prized  
Or cursed; this taste for punishment bequeathed  
To us from out the heat of that first vengeance  
That was God's, when He but gave the engines

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued***XIII.19**

Of His hell its first inhabitant:  
That bold, proud angel banished far from love  
Where he could found a rebel cabinet  
To plot against the paradise above  
And taint its prospect with unsightly things.  
For, *these* are the rewards that violence brings —

**XIII.20**

Especially the wisdom it confers  
On all who would partake of it — that lesson  
Chroniclers keep telling us deters  
The bully from indulging his aggression  
Once we've taught it to him with a kick.  
He learns, *GO GET THYSELF A BIGGER STICK!*

**XIII.21**

Yet look how George still tries to lure 'em in  
With threatened tongues of everlasting fire  
To lick the buttocks of poor souls who've sinned  
When he might capture the entire choir  
To which to preach by using tastier bait,  
Like joy *RIGHT HERE ON EARTH, without* the wait;

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Thirteenth — *continued*

## XIII.22

Without the need of promissory notes  
Deferring compensation for our toils  
Till come some day when all ungodly goats  
Shall roast and goodly sheep enjoy the spoils,  
But more importantly when just reward  
For all this sweat would likely be ignored

## XIII.23

By the recipient as quite beside  
The point, considering the date. For what  
Good use are mansions to the bona fide  
Above who'd have no longer things to shut  
Indoors nor elements from which to hide?  
Why keep their treasure from them till they've died?

## XIII.24

And *this* is but the so-called mind you choose  
To trust your flesh to, I observed. If I  
Were you I'd pick the dragon, yes, confuse  
Your fervent fiancé, whose thrusting cry,  
*For Christ!* is, by and by, the truth, alas;  
He loves his lord more than he does *your* ass.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth

## XIV

### Book the Fourteenth

#### XIV.1

*I*d lost my audience by now. My muse  
Was sleeping soundly at my side, quite plainly  
Uninspired by the truths that booze  
Reveals to man. And on her lips, so faintly  
Pursed as if to weep at visions braved  
Beneath her trembling lids, I saw engraved

#### XIV.2

The cares of all the ages — so not just  
An offering with which a king might buy  
Another day of desperate people's trust  
But one that's given *always* and *can't* die  
To then forget, as we can do, and know  
The taste of that same fruit that ends our woe;

#### XIV.3

That fruit that hangs ripe at the end of time,  
When each our lease on flesh and bone is up,  
To nourish all in nothingness, sublime  
*Beyond* what passion overflows of cup,  
*Beyond* what freedom seems to things constrained,  
Since things most "seem" so far as they're contained.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued***XIV.4**

Indeed, she seemed as pitiful and sad  
As angels might, were angels real — as if  
New-born without the bodies they had had  
A moment prior when they turned so stiff  
Against the finite privilege of constraint  
That had so richly busied them till late.

**XIV.5**

Yes, these, the very lips on which I'd sucked  
Ecstatic secrets of eternity,  
Like nectar from the pulp of time, now looked  
So fearful pale, as if modernity  
Were meant to read in them old truths revealed  
About its fate, which long ago was sealed.

**XIV.6**

As if the outcome of our every rub  
With possibility, each sundry chafe  
Against the harness of potential (dubbed  
“Volition” by philosophers with faith  
That they are free), were all past tense to her,  
All known events positioned to occur,



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.7

Like those recorded on the poet's page  
That happen, nonetheless, each time we come  
To them; as if the knowledge of a mage  
Or sibyl were awarded her in sum  
By her Titanic mother, Memory  
(Who lends brief immortality to *every*

## XIV.8

Known existence spent upon this earth),  
And all but toward the task of helping man  
To glorify his past—to make it *worth*  
Remembering—to nudge the poet's hand  
Enough to smudge the *value* of men's deeds;  
To sing them into tune as use decrees.

## XIV.9

So might some hero, come to save his world  
From consequences of a faithless age,  
Be found propelled upon his path unfurled  
*Not* by some teacher, priest, or wizened sage,  
But by this granddaughter of Earth and Sky  
Whose job's instructing poets how to lie.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.10

Or if not *lie*, at least to make things clear  
That aren't—voice a doing such a way  
It rings like finished marble on the ear  
Despite it's being one we might inveigh  
Against revealed to us in tradesman's prose—  
In short, to show our heroes how to pose.

## XIV.11

And as I lay there, head on fist, stretched out  
Before my fate in bold, unfettered laze—  
Like one might spot some god reclining, stout,  
Beside his bowl of grapes in better days—  
I found myself positioned to indulge  
In contemplation where a nipple bulged

## XIV.12

Profoundly in my view. It pushed erect  
Up through the soft encumbrance of her smock  
Stretched taut around two hills that would project  
And ebb with every breath. I gazed, ad hoc,  
Upon this symbol of our earth's largess,  
My head quite clear but for erectile flesh.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.13

It would have been a sin to wake her now!  
A world of obligation waited there  
Behind those quivering lids that would endow  
Me with the need to move, to do, to bear  
A weapon and accomplish something “great”  
While all I wanted was to meditate.

## XIV.14

For here upon the teat of inspiration  
I had found my place within this tale.  
*The only thing that matters is elation*  
I’ve heard said by those who’ve chased their grail;  
The rest is merely rhymed and reasoned swill,  
The stuff with which your time on earth is filled

## XIV.15

And then forgotten. But to dwell in state  
Of full dilation, living at the nerve,  
Alive to every taste upon your plate  
And every whim within your cup-rim’s curve —  
Now *that’s* worth *twenty* lifetimes of success  
Stepped out in all we think we can possess!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.16

Like tracts of land and everything we find  
Thereon or in conveyed to us by deed —  
That instrument which Death proves just some signed  
And witnessed scheme two *borrowers* agreed  
To call real title, as it's *earth*, no less  
Which holds superior claim to that, I'd guess.

## XIV.17

Oh yes, I'd give my horse to stay right here,  
I thought, divorced from consequence and free  
To marry *every* moment, cheap or dear;  
Immune from Reason and its central creed  
Requiring an antecedent for each thing —  
Yes, live beyond this very song I sing!

## XIV.18

If only we could witness every second  
Of our life this way — appreciate  
Each gorgeous inch of the familiar, reckoned  
Novel with each fresh regard — create  
A relic out of every object seen  
By merely adding *feeling* to routine.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.19

Why wait for men ordained in special clothes  
To tell us which is special, which is not,  
When this authority we grant them flows  
From *us*—from some convention *we* begot  
To cover up their nakedness! Now they  
But sell us back our feelings when they stray!

## XIV.20

Take Princess Cleo here—yes, that's her name,  
My author prompts me. Now, I'm sure there's some  
Who'll see her as a toy for the depraved  
While others—those of learning—will but come  
Employed to read in her the context of  
Her office, long established high above

## XIV.21

By ancient bards. They'll welcome her with arms  
Wide open—not as just some wanton grope  
Who'd come to lead them to temptation's harms,  
But rather as a literary trope,  
A figure of the poet's provocation  
To create, albeit from dictation.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fourteenth—*continued*

## XIV.22

And with my erudition of the epic  
Form from which I boldly spring, I leaned  
A little closer toward her, as a skeptic  
Might his text, to study what now seemed  
The highest use of sex to one who writes  
These allegories of man's appetites:

## XIV.23

*Allure*. In her it was no mere orectic  
Symbol but a *fundamental* image;  
Thus, he could insure my dialectic  
Of existence wouldn't end in scrimmage  
With a saint to save some foul-mouthed beast.  
Unless...this was my cue to stay and feast....

## XIV.24

I'd thought myself in circles here. My blood  
Now coursed as fiercely in the current wake  
Of dreamed *inaction*, with its sudden thud  
Of private thrill, than might it have for sake  
Of something really *done*. It seemed, by God,  
No difference if I roused her now or not!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth

## XV

Book the Fifteenth

### XV.1

**A**nd so indeed, I chose the path of ACTION —  
Oftentimes the easiest road we take,  
As *its* results are rarely those abstractions  
Pondered on our pillow wide awake,  
But things concrete which any fool can see  
Without reliance on philosophy.

### XV.2

Yes, despite the rightly touted merits  
Of IDEAS, which can serve the sound  
Foundation of a doing, he inherits  
Most from life who *does*, we're told, whose crowned  
Ambitions sit in judgment of our prudence  
Like Experience does her slowest students.

### XV.3

Well anyway, lost to the world in urge,  
I pressed my lips to hers without restraint  
And felt the warmth of destiny submerge  
Me in a bliss beyond your average saint.  
And with this long, firm, wet and ample kiss  
I'd caused a whole new genre to exist:

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.4

The *Muse-Awakened Pastoral-Erotic*,  
So it might be termed; a way of life  
For us inspired few which no narcotic  
Can compete with in transcendence — rife,  
With rapt, ecstatic sensuality  
Beyond conventional carnality

## XV.5

(As practiced with real meat) — yes, nothing less  
Than transmutation of that very lust  
That keeps a species from extinction, pressed  
Into that higher metal of august  
Poetic metaphor, the dreamer's gold,  
With which our starkest truths are bought and sold.

## XV.6

And while I chewed upon that juicy mouth,  
Which tasted sweet as Fortune's teat, I saw  
Her opened eyes gleam bright — she looked, no doubt,  
Like one *expecting* her surprise — and all  
I felt, beside her nails dug in my back,  
Was what it's like where magnet poles attract.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.7

As if the grammar of my inmost being —  
First-person pronoun, I, as subject *and*  
All predicates, with every noun agreeing —  
Helped me now to read (and *understand*)  
Creation's great design right at its source:  
The fundamental principle of FORCE.

## XV.8

For, no amount of love or liberal thought  
Nor meditation on the ideal state  
Can hold the planets turning as they ought  
Around their suns in such concordant gait,  
Or keep them from mere riot in the skies,  
Unleashed and reeling towards their own demise.

## XV.9

Sheer force would be sufficient, though. And so  
It seemed now *here* within the tighter orbit  
Of this bed, in which the undertow  
Of instinct pulled me down beneath all morbid  
Thoughts of fate cold reason could coerce  
Toward *Her*: dead center of the universe.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.10

I knew now *She* was why I showed up here,  
Not he, nor He, nor even that damned beast  
I'd followed all this way with shield and spear,  
But *She* had made me who I am, released  
Me from the numbing drudgery of life  
Lived out of habit (*sans* the spice of strife).

## XV.11

For *She* is my Desire — heaven's hell —  
Exquisite irritant of our content,  
Much like a speck of grit within our shell  
That makes us *want*, which prods us reinvent  
Ourselves within the nacre of unrest  
And wake amid the luster of some quest

## XV.12

Where we can properly forsake the whole  
Of what we held inviolate before,  
Need be, and pick, to meet our newest goal,  
New principles in which to put our store —  
In other words, to rouse that same delight  
Which languished while we had no ill to fight.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.13

And what had been our sedimentary bed  
Of torpid satisfaction She has changed  
With this mere grain of lust which chafes like dread  
To life lived most intense, because most strange.  
She cultivates our darkest superstitions  
Into poets' gleaming intuitions.

## XV.14

And suddenly revealed to me I saw  
A truth as radiant as pearl: that book-  
Length torment waiting for her, tooth and claw,  
Was not; it was the lure upon *Her* hook—  
Or rather, as pale Jacobus reports,  
Her *girdle*, yes, that magic leash of sorts

## XV.15

On which George brashly bade her go parade  
His conquest like a lapdog through the town  
To teach these folks whose God should be obeyed  
(For making Satan heel) and whose kicked out—  
Hence proving that there's only one true faith  
While buying converts from the crowd in haste.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.16

This girdle that I speak of, by the way,  
Is nothing new; it's been the talisman  
Of lucky knights since long before the day  
That knighthood first began — embarrassment  
Be told: *all* since the Saracen presumed  
To populate where Christ had been entombed!

## XV.17

It was this same enchanted belt that Venus  
Donned whenever hungry for men's eyes  
And then lent jealous Juno at her keenest,  
Till her god stayed home and stopped his lies,  
And then bribed Paris with, until he chose  
His nation's doom from fruit that Discord throws;

## XV.18

That same which Bertilak's enticing wife  
Had urged on Gawain as a parting gift  
To thwart the ill effect upon his life  
Her husband's ax would have when brought to swift  
Encounter with his neck next day — a token  
Of their love exchanged with vows unbroken,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.19

But also of the loopholes in the moral  
Laws that guide a man to serve his God.  
For Gawain's souvenir of strictly *oral*  
Sex—I mean, of course, that *spoken*, not  
Performed—became his costly badge of shame  
*Because he prized his life above the game,*

## XV.20

Because he failed to manifest this lace  
To *him*, his host, with whom he had agreed  
To swap respective winnings from their chase  
Each day (in field *or* bed). For though indeed  
He'd won *this* prize as nobly as the rest—  
I.e., those treasured kisses he found pressed

## XV.21

On him each morning by the latter's spouse  
Sent in to test his chivalry—he chose  
To hide it where he dressed and *not* announce  
This thing among those kisses paid his host  
For all that gorgeous kill awarded him.  
*And this omission ate at him like sin.*

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Fifteenth—*continued*

## XV.22

For she'd confided how no man who wore  
This band of gilt green silk could suffer death  
From hardest whack of sharpest ax, and swore  
It was their secret to her dying breath.  
And to a man about to go in search  
Of his demise next day, such terms as CHURCH,

## XV.23

LAST RITES, or even PARADISE seem not  
Remotely musical upon the ear  
Like "MAGIC GIRDLE" does. But why allot  
To him "the vice of cowardice?" This fear  
Of dying is our species' second best  
Survival mechanism (after sex).

## XV.24

Were *every* soldier for God's call so brave  
As but to gallop into death as told  
Without a prudent thought on how his grave  
Facilitates his cause, we should behold  
A world no more moral than it's now —  
Just drained the more of men to take this vow.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth

## XVI

Book the Sixteenth

### XVI.1

**N**ow, how this girdle came to be *a garter*  
Too, as found confused in many texts  
Of Christendom, may yet be known. Since martyrs  
For the faith have been obsessed with sex  
No less than you or I, his obligation  
To ignore it leads him to fixation

### XVI.2

On the closest thing to touch a maiden's  
Thigh — this belt-like band of silk that guards  
So close that realm so high, so good, so laden  
With appeal to errant knights and bards  
That it becomes quite in itself imbued  
With this magnetic charge that she exudes.

### XVI.3

And like that lace engirding that fair waist  
Above her hips, this ribbon round her thigh  
May too be loosed and used to fire haste  
In mortal men unmoved by pontiff's cry.  
And so, we shouldn't be surprised to find  
Such different things *all one* to whom they bind.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.4

Like when that most inspiring of our virgins,  
Mary, Queen of Heaven, dropped *Her* girdle  
Down to conquer an apostle's urgent  
Doubt who'd showed up late again; so fertile  
A device of fleshly worlds this seemed,  
It struck good Thomas like a falling beam.

## XVI.5

Or Edward, as the story goes, who plucked  
His partner's garter from the floor and bade  
Those guests who'd snickered at him worst of luck  
While donning it himself. And so the fad  
Began amongst his wisest knights, who forged  
An order dressed like this to honor...*George!*

## XVI.6

That's right, to *George*, poor Cleo's hope, they prayed,  
These couple dozen of the brightest knights  
Poor England had, who rallied round arrayed  
In women's underwear before their fights.  
They looked to *him*, our selfsame cad, to rouse  
Themselves and go and kill whom God allows.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.7

Yes, fresh from France, where they'd but practiced *quid*  
*Pro quo* with distant offspring of the ones  
Who'd conquered *them*, and whom they'd *yet* to rid,  
These pure-bred cavaliers with thirsts like Huns  
For blood would clink their goblets to some saint  
Whose clean white image might just cleanse that taint

## XVI.8

They'd picked up over there. For *there* they'd  
slaughtered  
Nearly all their continental cousins  
In their bid to have them neatly quartered  
On their shields—what heralds call *escutcheons*—  
Yes, and thereby add to their achievements  
All these great estates and rich bereavements

## XVI.9

God saw fit for them to seize, according  
To some adventitious law. Therein  
It's writ—by ancient folk, far off, affording  
Nonetheless a precedent for *him*  
Who would be king—that woman shall inherit  
NOT the kingdom's crown, no, nor confer it

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.10

On a man descending in her line.  
Now *this* was heady stuff to England's legal  
Minds — this law some Franks wrote up the Rhine  
Back when — for with it England would be regal  
Heir to France, whose male line petered out  
Through war, disease, high living, and the gout.

## XVI.11

Yes, back again from France, his mother's land,  
Where he had raped and pillaged what was rightly  
His, the king was quick to understand  
The need to prove his better knights more knightly  
Than they seemed, to train their loyalties  
Upon himself — by way of royalties

## XVI.12

And honors unavailable to most  
Of mortal man. And what symbolic band  
Could better serve to keep these men engrossed —  
To bind their vast ambitions, on command,  
To that of his — than this same woman's garter?  
And who but GEORGE could better guard this larder?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.13

I mean, who'd keep these brigands safe *inside*,  
Where they'd be less the prey to interests other  
Than the king's. For, none from out that pride  
Of patron saints they'd prayed to yet was covered  
Head to foot in quite the righteous armor  
Posed in by this spotless-shiny farmer;

## XVI.14

None they'd groveled to before had quite  
The moral gleam in which so well to see  
Themselves in their most complimentary light  
As George could offer, with his pedigree  
Of persecution serving God's best cause.  
And so it was he'd earned their loud applause

## XVI.15

And accolades, their toasts and oaths before  
Each dinner, joust, or massacre they waged.  
As gentlemen of breeding who deplored  
The thought of unheroic deeds, this rage  
For *God's* agenda — WRONG's defeat by RIGHT —  
Was what made George for them the perfect knight.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.16

He stirred in them a rage for something more  
As well: a rage for *orders*, yes, a need  
To found societies, wherein great store  
In honor could be kept, all measured, deed  
By selfless deed, like money in the bank,  
*Of use in fending off mere file from rank.*

## XVI.17

That is, in keeping all this honor safe  
Unto their own—the gentle-born—clean out  
Of reach of every rascal, knave, and waif  
Who'd like some for himself to flaunt about.  
And how to better guard this trait so cherished?  
Ritualize and codify each flourish!

## XVI.18

Yes, see it all as *ETIQUETTE* is how.  
Just turn each task into a noble act  
Which only those of means could hope to bow  
To in these hungry times (when towns were sacked  
To fund the costs incurred in sacking cities).  
Do it for a woman's love and pity.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.19

That's right, for Christ, but also for that more  
Effective inspiration, less abstractly  
Theological in scope: the lure  
Of love by wellborn woman. More exactly,  
One well married too — whom one can never  
*Really* have, which heightens the endeavor.

## XVI.20

In other words, to hold a social code  
In which one's life is offered to one's God,  
One's king, *and someone else's wife*, each owed  
Allegiance in return for love (that's *not*  
Redeemable), and all maintained in force  
By this new culture centered on one's HORSE.

## XVI.21

For *nothing* came so close to martial hearts  
As did these martial steeds on which they sat  
Caparisoned and ready to depart  
This plague-worn world. The horse's habitat,  
In fact, provided these bold chevaliers  
Their very language, customs, and careers.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Sixteenth—*continued*

## XVI.22

And *chivalrous*, therefore, they carried on  
As all along, and butchered all those foes  
Of God's (and of their own as well), till dawn  
Revealed each day just what such bloodshed sows:  
More bloodshed *and*, more valuably, *much* loot—  
GREAT MOUNDS of items prized by the astute.

## XVI.23

And it was good to see, this ring of men  
Dubbed nobly in the name of George's own;  
It looked like Arthur's court come round again  
In search of platter, cup, or bit of bone.  
And what great monarch *wouldn't* want it thought  
How much like Camelot *his* household fought?

## XVI.24

Yet while these men ride off into the night  
Of Europe's longest God-inspired horror,  
Let us turn again to Cleo—right  
Whereon our Dragon waits upon her garter.  
Here our triptych's middle panel's done  
And we may pause before the last's begun.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth

## XVII

## Book the Seventeenth

## XVII.1

**A**ges passed and nothing changed – at least  
In terms of setting, plot, or central theme.  
Outside my skull the seasons still increased  
And waned in vast indifference to this dream  
We live of finding meaning in it all,  
While here within they spelled *my author's fall*.

## XVII.2

I mean, I'd read these ornaments of earth's  
Recurrent progress in the sun, this language  
Of its instinct 'midst the stars, as first  
And surest proof his hold on me was vanquished,  
Leaving me full free from LITERATURE,  
The art of saying THIS but meaning more.

## XVII.3

For, after all, what use had any bard  
Since man first ached to sing of his condition  
For mere replication of life's art  
Of spinning richness out of repetition?  
Epics don't begin *before* the egg,  
As they'd need trace each sperm that didn't take.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.4

Well, *I* drew comfort from this endless waste  
That formed the world I saw around me here —  
The needless, the redundant, the misplaced —  
For each square inch of it allayed my fear  
Reality and verse might be the same  
(And I then but some pronoun with a name).

## XVII.5

In other words, this law of generation  
Via infinite routine, by which  
Our world evolved from single cells to nations,  
Governed nothing of the poet's pitch  
And proved, thereby, my place among the real,  
That state where appetite defines the meal.

## XVII.6

And now, as if at once, had I perceived  
How truly free of him I'd really been  
Here all along and how being free relieved  
Me of all fears of disappointing him.  
And with this knowledge I began to think...  
Increasingly of *how I'd like a drink*.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.7

Each night my muse would cling to me as though  
It were her last. To calm her I would trace  
Adventures from my life of long ago  
Which, given that they hadn't taken place  
As yet, were unrestrained by any qualms  
Of contradicting Truth, just like the Psalms.

## XVII.8

I let my narrative rove far and wide  
Amidst the fluid ether of events  
Unhappened yet and watched it wade the tide  
Of possibility, through future tense,  
To feed on the minutiae found in man's  
Composite memory. She was entranced.

## XVII.9

I counted up for her tall conquests of  
Injustices, campaigns against the worst  
Of tyrants in the name of God above,  
Bright victories on land and sea dispersed  
Between great bedroom scenes of less restraint,  
All spun with the conviction of a saint.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.10

Yet these benignly dangerous entertainments  
That I used to fill the void of night  
Fell powerless come morning's bright new raiment  
Every day, when she would start up right  
Away on her obsession with that dragon  
And I'd reach in reflex for my flagon.

## XVII.11

Oh, she would pester me, my frightful shrew!  
She'd work on me persistently till I  
Was dressed and out the door each afternoon,  
Not far behind her on our way to find  
That most elusive of the world's threats,  
This monster born of reverence for our dreads.

## XVII.12

And I would watch her saunter on ahead  
Upon her buxom ass as white as snow  
And think of all the other men (NOW DEAD)  
Who'd followed her like this, straight to their woe—  
Like moths into the heat of consummation—  
All to be her knight of liberation.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.13

I, on the other hand, will *never*  
Be combustious matter for her flame —  
Some bright but short-lived flicker of endeavor  
Spent to stoke the glow of poet's fame —  
No, *she* will prove *my* oxygen, each breath  
Inspiring sluggish lungs with tingling depth.

## XVII.14

I'll breathe her in right down into the bottom  
Of my being — limit of my need —  
Until my lust is lit and burning Sodom-  
Hot, intense as *any* zealot's greed.  
And hence will I survive this poem's terror,  
Drawing deep each time confronting Error.

## XVII.15

And I don't mean by "Error" what you'd find  
Incarnate in some cave in Fairy Land  
Awaiting those who've lost their way to grind  
Up for its bread; I mean *not understanding*,  
Yes, presuming that a thing is RIGHT  
Because it's something you (and GOD) quite like.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.16

Of course, to read this word as I've just done  
Is HERESY to most. "One *likes* a thing  
*Because* it's right," I hear you chide, "if one,  
That is, has any MORAL SENSE to sing  
Of." But, I would respond that this sound "sense"  
You lean on has two sides, like *any* fence.

## XVII.17

For, none distinguishes thy neighbor's green  
From one's own enviable lot so well  
As does this barrier of sight-unseen  
Superiority. Yet, how to tell  
Which side of it affords the better view  
Depends on whether one is him or you,

## XVII.18

To tell the truth. But once again you balk.  
"Are there no fundamental laws of GOOD  
And BAD perceptible to ALL who walk  
This earth?" you ask, "some universal SHOULD,  
Beyond the hold of culture?" And to you  
I'd say, "You're growing *tedious*. Go to!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.19

A poem's not the proper place to chew  
The fat with gaunt philosophers. Such cant  
As dialectically befits our feud  
About what meaning life might hide finds scant  
Capacity in which to fuss and spume  
Within our stanza's careful little room.

## XVII.20

What's properly chewed *here* are WORDS — not mere  
Ideas but the incidents of speech  
Itself, through which such thoughts find their career  
From mind to mind, those sounds the poets teach  
Us to be truest subject of their pains,  
Each one a thing of heft they weigh in grains

## XVII.21

Upon a nerve; a thing of color, shape,  
And texture ever changing in the light  
Of those intoned around them as they scrape  
Against each other's sense of their own plight,  
Creating in this flux the subtlest scope  
In which to see *beyond* the quaint old hope

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Seventeenth—*continued*

## XVII.22

Of syllogistic logic – that dim dream  
That finds the world knowable if only  
Propositioned well – to where is gleaned  
The highest realm of humanness: that lonely  
Place beyond mere thought where *feelings* reign,  
Where things cannot be PROVED though *can* be feigned.

## XVII.23

For yes, it's here above the arid box  
We build round us with logic's help from but  
Its basic building blocks of paradox  
That we find palpable the very *what*  
Of life gone undetected there, and yet  
All caught upon the self-same instrument

## XVII.24

Of languaged sounds. But still do you persist  
In sifting poems for your nuggets of  
Philosophy, as if one could enlist  
From art the answers to one's doubts above.  
You might as likely go and catch a fish  
And *teach it lungs* as soon as wait on this.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth

## XVIII

Book the Eighteenth

### XVIII.1

**B**ut back to my digression. I had left  
My inspiration riding on ahead  
Of me upon that snow-white ass of deft  
Symbolic purity (which would instead  
Appear ironical to anyone  
Who knew her like *I* did; *she was no nun*).

### XVIII.2

And while I held her in my manly gaze  
(Wherein her ass was *me* she rode), I thought  
With halting concentration on the days  
Before I'd known her, back when I had taught  
Pale college students how to read a myth —  
Yes, how to see that *ALL THE GODS EXIST*.

### XVIII.3

I'd mentored them to read myth with emotion,  
Like one reads a poem — with the spine —  
Not through the convolutions where that notion  
“Reason” is distilled, like turpentine,  
To thin the rich effects of reddest reverence,  
Bleaching yearning into bland acceptance.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth — *continued*

## XVIII.4

*Belief is everything*, I'd emphasize  
To them. It's crucial to our understanding  
Of our selves and world that we devise  
Some structure to embrace those most demanding  
Blanks in our perception of the whole  
That challenge our delusion of control.

## XVIII.5

Of course, this seemed sheer scandal to those pupils  
Who had trusted me to be their rock  
Of godless skepticism. But my scruples  
Were intact, I reassured my flock.  
For, this "belief" I plead is not the pious  
Stuff of churchly bigotry and bias.

## XVIII.6

It's of a *far* more superficial sort —  
The faith a poet prays for in his hearer —  
As intense as it's duration's short;  
That momentary faith in worlds made nearer  
To one's feelings than one's very own;  
A faith in things well made, of seeds well sown.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.7

It's that same credence we embrace each time  
We're witness to a crucifixion done  
With feeling and ability. The rhyme  
Of brush or gouge alone makes even one  
Most skeptical of Christ's redemption stir.  
It is a faith in things *as if they were*.

## XVIII.8

For who among us really cares two turds  
If good Sir Thopas ever lived for real?  
What matter most are those immortal words  
In which he'd high-tailed back to fetch his steel.  
Yes, when through nature's bric-a-brac he'd fled  
In hot pursuit of whom he'd render dead

## XVIII.9

The moment he got back correctly dressed,  
We pray the giant's good enough to wait  
For him. And were Sir Thopas's great quest  
Through which he pricked in fits and starts towards Fate  
Denounced as worthless doggerel someday,  
We'd still believe it as it's writ, I'd say.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.10

And that is technically because we think  
The fictional event in that same gland  
The “real” one is perceived in, till the stink  
Of one pervades the other’s understanding  
And the gods *unseen* become as real  
To us as those we’re sure to see and feel.

## XVIII.11

And so it is with our Childe Thopas then.  
We know his whitebread face, his rose-red lips  
And seemly nose with saffron hair. So when  
We picture to ourselves these daring trips  
Of his o’er hill and dale might *not* be true,  
We laugh because *we’ve seen them*—surest proof.

## XVIII.12

One might as soon declare his *dream* a fraud—  
That he would wed some Fairy Queen—and yet  
One knows *damned well* it happened, as it gnawed  
At him in just that way which, don’t forget,  
*A thing that never happened couldn’t*. Saying  
Thus, “his dream’s not real” would be but paying

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.13

Little store in things which but occur  
*Behind* the vision of our wakeful eye.  
It would betray an existential blur  
In which, at its extreme, we might deny  
Each beat our heart indulged in while we slept  
And trust just those our witness would accept.

## XVIII.14

Yes, dreams, like *all* good poems, operate  
Like myth upon our mindfulness, as though  
To conjure up *contingent* truths that sate  
Somewhat our hunger for what *can't* be known.  
And thus, I'd taught my scholars how one deems  
The *myth* as dream: as how a *culture* dreams.

## XVIII.15

I'd have them ponder how mankind's abysmal  
History upon this earth—his wars  
Of God's profound intolerance, the dismal  
Fruit of trusting in a MORAL "FORCE"  
That motivates *both* sides with equal zeal  
Until a winner proves *his* cause more real—

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.16

All finds its way into his *dreaming* state  
As well. It's just as if the visions he  
Endures each night or day beneath his pate  
Reveal his *people's* needs implicitly,  
Reflecting those illusions which entail  
The best results, like why the "good" prevail

## XVIII.17

Sometimes. As if each *waking* action—deeds  
Of high renown to some and low regard  
To others, *equal in their fervor*—feeds  
His introspection with a counterpart,  
A shadow of itself to be reviewed  
For truths, like nourishment distilled from food.

## XVIII.18

And like that code inherent in our speech  
From which the privileged glean their underlying  
Message out of denotation's reach,  
The *pattern* of myth's dream is satisfying  
In itself as *narrative*—our brain's  
Technique for making meaning from stray grains.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.19

Yet who, I pondered further as I rode,  
Would counsel *me* now how it's best to read  
A myth in which *I* wake each day? Does code  
Exist with which *my* every thought and deed  
Conceived and executed is surmised  
To stand for something else by other minds?

## XVIII.20

Truth is, I look upon *your* life that way!  
I read you as that faceless entity  
Whose cause is to perceive and contemplate  
My own. Through you is my transcendency  
Complete: from auditory incidents—  
Mere waves of sound—*into significance.*

## XVIII.21

So yes, to me you are that great unknown—  
The ideal ear in which I happen—"God,"  
For those who can't abide a subtle tone  
When speaking things they're sure of...  
*which they're not.*  
Of course, this doesn't mean I worship you;  
Were that the case, how could you tell what's true

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Eighteenth—*continued*

## XVIII.22

From what's mere flattery in anything  
I've sung up to this point? There'd be no way  
To hear my voice and not mistake it's ring  
For that of someone teeing up to pray.  
Each innocent descriptive epithet  
Might smack of servile groveling instead

## XVIII.23

Were I to show my wonder as mere fear.  
And you would be ill served indeed, believing,  
Naturally, the reason I'd revere  
You, organ of my hearing, is deceiving—  
Reverence born of practicality  
In that your hearing *is* reality

## XVIII.24

To me. Not you, *per se*, but your *attention*  
Is the stuff I crave, the air I breathe.  
And so, relax; for, nothing that I've mentioned  
Yet has strayed from truth, you may believe.  
No, not the slightest urge to bow and scrape  
Has motivated this, our poem's shape.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth

## XIX

Book the Nineteenth

### XIX.1

Three quarters through this greatest of all quests  
We make and still no dragon in clear sight!  
It seemed as if my aim had waned — regressed  
In time from finding him *to not* — that's right,  
From *stopping* George, whose job it's always been  
To kill our foe, to *understanding* him.

### XIX.2

That's George I mean...I think. Oh, I don't know!  
For, anymore it seems like all these roles  
Of ours are interchangeable, as though  
The "George" she sees in me achieves his goals  
The moment he becomes the one she wants —  
*Beyond* the man — as it's his *guise* she hunts,

### XIX.3

Not him. Yes, it's the brave heroic pose,  
The ideal stance of HIM who'll up and bring  
Blind muscle to a given task, she goes  
In search of, yes, the dragon-chasing thing.  
That's why each time she looks into my eyes  
She seems to see through *me* to my *disguise*,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.4

As if this record of perceived events  
I call my SELF — this fluid transcript of  
My body's contact with the world I sense,  
Which *seems* to gather somewhere else above  
It all as that estate unique to ME —  
Means little more to her than sophistry;

## XIX.5

As if this who I am obscures the *whom*  
*I'd play*, and hence my image as her man,  
As such obtruding on what folks presume  
To be "life's moral meaning" or "God's plan."  
In other words, as if the actor's *part*  
Meant more than who he was *outside* his art.

## XIX.6

Perhaps, she's right, perverse as such a role  
May sound described to pious ears trained hard  
To hear "God's love of man's immortal soul."  
Perhaps this ghostly spirit they regard  
As captain of that vessel we call "man"  
Is but its ship *log* rather than its plan.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.7

I mean, perhaps this effervescent cloud  
Of personality we yearn to see  
As something neatly separable from out  
Our body's physical machinery  
(And limited from out all life on earth  
To our own species, privilege of good birth);

## XIX.8

Yes, just perhaps this ghostly fizz we pray  
Transcends the gross corruptions of the flesh,  
Where it presided while an émigré,  
And rises into light and love and fresh  
Blue sky — perhaps this same supernal fog  
*Is immaterial as well to "God."*

## XIX.9

That's right; to *Him* or *Her*, *Them*, *We* or *It*  
Men call on, scared, perhaps this substance "I"  
We hold inviolate does not admit  
Distinction from the stuff left when we die,  
That its existence on some higher plane  
*Is dreamed*, the function of a working brain

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.10

Which, when it's stopped, takes with it all it's learned —  
A slate wiped clean at once of every mark  
That life had left upon it — undiscerned  
Forever now the moment it went dark —  
Including that awareness of its own  
Activity, the consciousness it's known.

## XIX.11

No matter, then, this knowledge we'd collected  
All the while — this body unsubstantial,  
Yet apparent, like the thing reflected  
In a glass: conspicuous till cancelled  
In an instant; cut, as with a knife,  
From consequence, by loss of light (or life).

## XIX.12

Oh, what a subtle waste an education  
Is — a lifetime spent acquiring all  
I am as subject of my speculations  
Just to read from life's most cryptic scrawl  
That I had always been this anyway!  
EXISTENCE PRECEDES COMPETENCE, let's say.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.13

Yes, learning seems a kind of obfuscation:  
Covering the intuition's eye  
In hopes of strengthening our cerebration's  
Range in reading *into* what we spy,  
And using towards this end that self-same hand  
That might have found *how touch can understand*.

## XIX.14

For, reaching out into the world to feel  
Its things upon the fingertips conveys  
Enlightenment which no abstract ideal  
Can comprehend within its mental maze;  
A knowledge so immediate and clear,  
We hold it suspect, like a thing too near

## XIX.15

To be worth reaching for, too much revealed  
To want undressing by the intellect;  
As if we'd rather trust that thing concealed  
By some identity we can detect  
For it—that is, by what it seems to *share*  
With other things—than apprehended bare.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.16

While education teaches us to yearn  
For higher things than here and now — to wait  
For the mundane to *die* to best discern  
Its living qualities — the touch can taste  
That essence instantly and understand  
Without translation out of what it can't.

## XIX.17

Why spend such time it takes to synthesize  
From rows of symbols ordered 'cross a page  
Experience on each which, with the eyes,  
Ears, nose, tongue, skin, we can *at once* engage  
Right at the source, voluptuously plucked  
Upon the nerve, where brain meets earthly stuff.

## XIX.18

For where the page records the mere reflection  
Of these properties, as mirrored from  
Our own regard, the spine relates *connection*  
With them straight, where hammer touches drum.  
And yet what better illustration of  
This difference than that shown concerning *love*.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.19

No manual can tell us what the skin  
Can touching that most sacred state of being:  
LOVE. While we can turn the page to Sin  
To learn *precisely* what it feels like seeing  
Cupid shoot another than one's self,  
We cannot find a volume on that shelf

## XIX.20

That ever could relate to us the feel  
Of actually being shot. But to receive  
His dart within the tissue of what's real  
To us—in which our *bodies* must believe—  
Is like the pious apprehending God,  
Like seizing the sublime where charge meets rod

## XIX.21

Upon the human spine, like lightning's surge  
Releasing that accumulated lust  
Of heavenly for earthly stuff, that urge  
To reconcile extremes, fill calm with thrust  
Till hot has cooled to calm again and thirst,  
Long whetted by the dry, is reimbursed.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Nineteenth—*continued*

## XIX.22

To feel love's arrow plunge into the flesh  
Of dull contentment and invite the mind  
To bodily awareness of that zest  
Within is to partake of one's divined  
Participation in the cosmic scheme  
And feel one's place within the living stream.

## XIX.23

It is to crave fulfillment in the OTHER —  
Consummation in one's APPETITE —  
Where want and need seem one DESIRE, mother  
Of all nourishment and its delight.  
It is that very thirst a psyche knows  
For eros, fired in each brain that grows

## XIX.24

In its potential — that same habitat  
Created with the matter scattered fast  
From out the first event, predicting that  
Attraction born from smallest point grown vast.  
And this primordial force we feel above  
All else finds correlate in thought as LOVE.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth

## XX

Book the Twentieth

### XX.1

Yes, LOVE: that most transcendent predilection  
For another, for a being out  
Beyond the closely guarded misconception  
Of completeness we call “self” (where doubt  
Seeps through belief’s shared wall with known events  
Till patched by faith to look like common sense);

### XX.2

That widening out of boundary to bring  
The *other* full within the compass of  
Our care, where we may comprehend them, *thing*  
*Itself*, beyond mere figment forged above  
Our spinal cord in solipsism’s lair  
As souvenir of some ideal we bear;

### XX.3

That aspiration towards affinity  
We feel from out the loneliness of one,  
Inviting us towards that DIVINITY-  
*LIKE* oneness *shared*, where, like that light the sun  
Shines equally on two without decrease  
To each, the whole is equal to the piece;

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth — *continued*

## XX.4

That deepest sensitivity revealed  
To hitherto unconscious lives found swept  
Inside this widened arc, wherein, unpeeled  
From out the toughened rind in which they'd slept  
Immune to life's delicious core delight,  
They wake to find themselves with APPETITE;

## XX.5

That keenest savor of this appetite  
Itself, as if it were the very food  
Sought out to sate its ache, such to rewrite  
A satisfaction's feeling to include  
Its prompting urge, imbuing each sought taste  
With embers of the hunger it erased;

## XX.6

That necessary byproduct of sex  
Left over from the ancient making of  
Eukaryotes, where what attracts, connects,  
And binds two gamete donors long enough  
To mix their genes in fresh new fruit remains,  
Recursively, hard-wired in new brains;



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth — *continued*

## XX.7

That thrill these brains are bathed in now, ignited  
New with that same lust for which they're wired  
By the steady hand of what excited  
Best their predecessors' lust, fresh-fired  
Into circuitry of hit-and-miss  
Inheritance that sparks thrilled flesh to kiss;

## XX.8

All this, and much, *much* more, we mean by "love" —  
This craving for connection that predicts  
(In concert with its food, of course) the stuff  
Of culture everywhere its urge afflicts —  
All this that makes us possible — *precedes*  
The ethics weighing our competing needs.

## XX.9

Yes, this same hunger for attachment's strife-  
Edged bliss predates our "selves" as cells in that  
Great cycle of fulfillment we call "life."  
In *its* vast curving path no habitat  
Of moral law is found outside a brain,  
And hence no shame innate to lust's domain,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth—*continued*

## XX.10

Which operates precisely beyond need  
Of our approval, moved by those same laws  
That saw this very brain evolve to read  
Its own conception as, somehow, its cause,  
Which is absurd, of course, as it's but *flesh*  
*Developed thus* that makes awareness mesh,

## XX.11

Thus proving FLESH the parent of the "mind"  
And therefore true PROGENITOR OF ALL  
Those mores and moralities we find  
Supporting what we want to have and call  
"The good" and hence begetting that high thought  
That sees what *is* as though it were what OUGHT.

## XX.12

This fundamental mechanism of  
Intelligence provides that every action  
Be identified from well above  
Its consequence by virtue of whose faction  
It serves best, like judging "bad" a kiss  
When it's bestowed on him who stole your bliss

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth—*continued*

## XX.13

Or, following this theme, like finding “good”  
Some harsh calamity you would have deemed  
Unfair before yet now have understood  
As apt when visiting said party seen  
To have solicited your bliss’s kiss  
And earned himself — *the fucking bastard!* — this.

## XX.14

And it’s this same proclivity at work  
Within the convoluted human brain  
Enabling its user now to shirk  
What reason might impede those most inane  
Procedures that have *long* outlived their use,  
Like *chasing* food when food is quite profuse,

## XX.15

Or chasing *anything* one doesn’t need  
(Or even *WANT*, for crying out loud!), like balls  
Designed and made precisely to succeed  
In being *all the same*, so that each falls  
And bounces without difference to the rest,  
Thereby *insuring* that no one is best

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth — *continued*

## XX.16

And more desirable to catch and keep,  
Which leaves such costly, grueling competition  
For one in these contests seem *knee-deep*  
In pointlessness, as if this whole ambition  
Toward its final capture were covert  
Symbolic power play through which men flirt,

## XX.17

Display, parade, and jockey for a mate;  
Or chasing *with* these very balls some hole  
To plug or hoop to stuff or glove frustrate  
(While running home) or net to call one's goal —  
In other words: SOME BOUND'RY TO PURSUE  
AT WHICH WE BID OUR RIVALS ALL ADIEU.

## XX.18

And this deep drive seems cousin to the one  
We chase behind of GETTING SOMEWHERE FIRST —  
Not some *specific* place we'd need to run  
(Where, say, some cool clear drink awaits our thirst)  
But merely where our group decides it's best  
To separate one member from the rest

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth — *continued*

## XX.19

For worship as an idol of the race —  
A living symbol of perfection seen  
(Somehow) to be the goal toward which we'd trace  
Our progress out of crude raw life and glean  
Some sort of purpose in it all — despite  
Rich evidence refuting this outright,

## XX.20

Yes, proving rather that this destined end  
Made manifest to us is one installed  
By *us* who'd profit much to apprehend  
"Divine perfectibility," so called —  
Though WE'RE BUT COSTLY VEHICLES OF GENES  
THAT STEER US ANYWHERE THAT PROVES THEIR MEANS.

## XX.21

I mean since we are ALL (yes, every one)  
The lucky heirs of genes that had prevailed  
Amid the competition once begun  
Between a cell and one whose parent failed  
Somehow to replicate *precisely* (well  
Before the later vogue for sex would gel),

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twentieth — *continued*

## XX.22

And since descendants of these first two cells  
Enjoyed their life *because* their parents fought  
(That is, for some advantage that compels  
Success in an economy that's wrought  
By merely being two with different traits),  
They'd come to clothe themselves in those estates

## XX.23

Bequeathing their successors' best success  
Within this early business jungle — on  
And on through ever-added, more complex  
Attire to don, protecting those they'd spawn  
With adaptation skills to match terrains  
Grown harsher yet, *requiring bigger brains*.

## XX.24

And with these most expensive vessels yet  
Developed to insure survival of these genes  
We find ourselves but living in *their* debt,  
The most exorbitant employment schemes  
Of which WE ARE, and yet unconscious of  
THEIR MOST EXALTED MECHANISM: *LOVE*.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First

## XXI

Book the Twenty-First

### XXI.1

**A**nd wham!, like *that* my dragon had appeared! —  
As if the moment I let go my grip  
On his pursuit I lost what interfered  
With recognizing him and could equip  
My vision fresh with focus unobscured  
By expectation's glare, my blindness cured.

### XXI.2

Yes, here he was, point-blank within my gaze:  
That writhing mass of animus and smoke  
Toward which I'd suffered every tortured phrase  
Of twenty goddamned books of verse in hope  
Of slaying him from that medieval mind  
That tortures every scapegoat it can find.

### XXI.3

Did I say "slaying"? *Saving's* what I meant,  
Of course, the proper word I *should* have used  
Were this a text in which a hero's sent  
To do a thing that had not so confused  
His reader and himself alike. Let's try  
Once more from "Yes" and show how authors lie,

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First – *continued*

## XXI.4

How they just write a thing and it is TRUE  
According to convention – this despite  
The inconvenient fact one may construe  
From simple observation, day or night,  
That this thing didn't *really* happen – no,  
Not in the sense that “happen” *should* bestow;

## XXI.5

Not in the only sense it *really* could,  
Wherein the thing that “happened” left its mark  
On PHYSICS, changed somehow the neighborhood  
Of its event, extending out an arc  
Of difference in the world. Now, this same thing  
The *poet* tells us “happened” cannot bring

## XXI.6

The world this kind of change, you see...*e x c e p t*,  
I guess...to the extent that when we think  
A thing we alter what's within that breadth  
Of tissue where a thought-chain finds its link  
And leave it physically revised enough  
To ripple consequence through real-life stuff...



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.7

Until its influence is felt across  
The earth by those who'd read some symbols coined  
From out this change and find *their* brains embossed  
With some mutation of it re-conjoined  
In such a way with *their* own links that *they*  
Promote such change on earth that's found this day....

## XXI.8

Oh, Hell! I see what's going on within  
This text — another not-so-subtle sign  
That I am but some mouthpiece used by Him  
To pour into your ear His great design,  
And that each textual corruption spilled  
From my own lips is something clearly willed

## XXI.9

By Him, ironically, as my mistake,  
Intended to reveal some truth beyond  
My ken that's well within your own, to make  
Me seem more real. Yet, how can one who's conned  
His audience so much as to belie  
Free Will in His protagonist deny

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.10

The likelihood He too is less than free?  
Yes, just as He might hide behind that slip  
Of tongue I'd made some stanzas back when He  
Would have me SLAY, not *save*, what this whole trip  
Was meant to rescue, so might *His* intents  
Depend upon the outcome of events

## XXI.11

Transpiring out beyond *His* conscious reach.  
From out the network of semantic priming  
Radiating from each cell of speech  
Employed in shaping me, His own comes rhyming  
Wide of His intention's sloppy aim  
To lend that "Free Will" feeling to this game

## XXI.12

In which He juggles sundry bits of sound  
That stand for something else of unknown worth  
Until it's shared by some convention 'round  
A dictionary! Thus, I'll trace *my* birth  
Of action to some word that might express  
Beginning, such as where we stopped at "Yes."

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.13

Yes, here he was, point-blank within my...phrase...  
Now...less the object of an appetite  
Incarnate in one's self than one he *slays*...  
Toward huge reward...if only he would fight  
The goddamned beast and take the girl! No, no.  
*This* way my author lies; I'll take it slow

## XXI.14

Around the bend of narrative that winds  
Its serpent way before my trusting...gaze...  
And exercise such firm restraint that binds...  
No, *blinds* me to my author's ways, no...gaze....  
Yes, that's the word, as He would *never* use  
So rich a rhyme, **which means it's one I choose**...

## XXI.15

And this means *he's* now MINE, my fiery pet,  
The bold quintessence of that ancient urge  
To fight or flee before a vital threat,  
Envisioned Byzantine in one vast splurge  
Of gaudy hues the brilliance of bad luck.  
And here, through him, my freedom had been struck:

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.16

I gave him teeth where you'd have fear, and nails  
As long as you can pray, two eyes to see  
You with until you've disappeared, with scales  
Of polished steel reflecting your debris,  
And balls the size of menace so robust  
You could find armies dangling from his lust.

## XXI.17

And he arose, triumphant as black smoke,  
From out the rubble of my bondage where,  
For all the life I'd ever known, I'd spoke  
My author's thoughts, vicarious, in air  
Provided toward that end his book required —  
Only to escape now on new-fired

## XXI.18

Neurons of his own through circuitry  
Quick forged in memory's soft solder, hot-  
Uniting worlds unexplored by me  
As yet (until they'd cooled into *my* plot).  
Yes, quick as lubricated lighting, I  
Who'd labored patiently between each lie

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.19

And sigh he'd have me rhyme together, now  
Was off upon the back of that same beast  
Of his I'd bought from him then lost somehow  
From out the bottom of my glass. Released  
From Borodin's genetic text to travel  
Out along each thread I could unravel

## XXI.20

Down its long-disintegrating weave,  
I crossed each synapse of his certainty  
To find myself an ion well received  
Upon this virgin shore where bird nor bee  
Have yet to propagate. And here I found  
Those words in which MY meanings would be bound.

## XXI.21

And as my dragon mushroomed from that text  
Contrived by my late author to insure  
His plot's success, I saw it as the flexed  
Subversiveness he'd cultivated, pure  
As "NO" in his most valiant hero, ME,  
Whom he succeeded making but *too* free

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-First — *continued*

## XXI.22

For his own good. (Now, just which “his” I meant  
Here I can’t tell, as “good” would seem to bear  
Like relevance to each participant  
Considered.) Yes, arising from his lair  
Of torpid unconcern, where he had lain  
Await in unemployment’s slow domain

## XXI.23

Till called, my fiend had billowed up before  
Me like a Jinn from out a bottle, big  
And brash as a procrastinated chore  
Released on its deferment. In one swig  
Of liquid understanding I perceived  
In him the reason why mankind believed

## XXI.24

In his irrational religion: Fear.  
Not just the comfort in renouncing thought  
In lieu of dogma, which affords one clear  
Opinions on all questions of what ought  
One do in any certain case, but worse:  
That fear of things UNSEEN, man’s greatest curse.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second

## XXII

## Book the Twenty-Second

## XXII.1

**F**or, while it *may* be that the saving grace  
Of our survival was that very art  
We had evolved of filling in each space  
Our misperceptions left, wherein a fart  
Might better seem the sound made by some beast  
Behind us, creeping closer toward its feast,

## XXII.2

And while it's true that he who would pay heed  
To such threats read in harmless sounds through fear  
Did tend to live so long at least to breed,  
Unlike his less imaginative peer,  
Who bravely had ignored the outside chance  
This fart would cost his progeny's advance,

## XXII.3

It's also true that even once we shed  
This need to thus distinguish every fart  
From art in order to survive, instead  
Of using reason to discern which part  
Of what we've sensed was fact and which just *seemed*  
To be, we still *prefer* the stuff we dreamed —

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second — *continued*

## XXII.4

Particularly as imagined things  
Prove so much easier recruited to  
Explain the causes of those happenings  
For which we've otherwise no stinking clue —  
This largely due to their more supple shape  
Than found containing things that you will scrape

## XXII.5

Against in life of the *nonfiction* type  
Right here on earth. This most convenient trait  
Shared by our best delusions makes them ripe  
For any recipe you'd use to sate  
The most religious appetite for TRUTH.  
For, all you need to add is LACK OF PROOF!

## XXII.6

Amen! The pudding that's the end result  
Of faith extorted through obedience  
Is always one cooked up to feed a cult  
*Without the need of real ingredients,*  
As these mundane components tend, when placed  
Together in the pot, to govern *taste*.



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second — *continued*

## XXII.7

And taste is what's most clearly *lacking* from  
Religious faith. I mean AESTHETIC SENSE —  
That faculty of thought wherein all dumb,  
Trite, lame absurdities provoke offence  
To that CONSISTENCY we've learned to scan  
Within the laws of nature *and* of man.

## XXII.8

Why yes, consistency is at the heart  
Of each anatomy we formulate  
Of what we find as beautiful in art,  
Like when the painter strives to make relate  
What's in her background to her figure here  
Up front by toning down what seems too near,

## XXII.9

Or that musician, wit, or poet who  
Would emphasize a phrase in such a way  
Distinguishing its truth from those he drew  
In its anticipation and thus play  
Upon his listener's interest such control  
That measures each proportioned to the whole.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second—*continued*

## XXII.10

So, when a line describing some great curve  
Of thought, or else some bit of paint or clay  
Adjusted so in hue or shape to serve  
This need, reads *inconsistent with the way*  
*Life feels*, we chastise the creator's art  
For lack of truth and treat it like a fart.

## XXII.11

We either ridicule its maker for  
This lack of taste, protesting that it stinks,  
Or just pretend it doesn't and adore  
It insincerely...lest one really thinks  
It wiser to ignore it altogether,  
Circumventing whole this foul endeavor.

## XXII.12

But where, in all the scripture we agree  
To call profound though it is not, is found  
*The slightest trace* of this consistency  
Of thought or moral feeling *art* can sound?  
Were we to judge a piece of holy writ  
With this discernment, we would call it SHIT!

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second—*continued***XXII.13**

For, central to the logic of such texts  
As our religions round the world hold  
But sacred is the rule that what connects  
A statement to its truth is what's controlled  
By high authority, which makes it true  
*Without* a proof, protected by taboo.

**XXII.14**

Why, take the Eucharistic wafer, for  
Example, held aloft by priests across  
The earth since ages past, when Christian lore  
Had turned it to the body of their boss.  
Go tell its baker who supplies your priest  
That they're but made of FLOUR WITHOUT YEAST

**XXII.15**

And he will answer as a businessman  
That you are off by one ingredient:  
ALMIGHTY GOD. Now take one from its can  
Of jeweled gold most inexpedient  
And show him, "JESUS CHRIST, IT'S JUST SOME BREAD  
THAT **HASN'T** RISEN! YOU HAVE BEEN MISLED!"

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second — *continued*

## XXII.16

But though this fellow bought the flour from  
A mill that ground it from some wheat that grew  
In dirt (enriched by poop), he'll swear no crumb  
Of it is but the flesh of *you know whom*.  
And you can reason, "well, just LOOK AT IT!"  
But he'll insist *you're* just mistook by it.

## XXII.17

For, he'll maintain that FAITH is *how* it's true —  
That there is virtue bravely earned in just  
Believing what one's told that one must do,  
That blind obedience to God (and trust  
That he has *seen* it) *always* trumps the hand  
Played by the other guy in His command,

## XXII.18

Yes, even if *he too* has that same ace  
Tucked up his sleeve. For, *his* belief and yours  
Can *never* be the same without the GRACE  
Of God, who put it there. And this insures  
Clear victory to HIM (*your* God, of course),  
Through *your* devoted effort to enforce

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second—*continued***XXII.19**

This great authority conferred on you  
When you had prayed (back when your hand was  
dealt).  
Our baker will divulge now why so few  
Have followed this hard game. For, those who've knelt  
In prayer know how this property will foil  
Even any move dreamt up by Hoyle.

**XXII.20**

I speak of MYSTERY, that great black box  
Of God's authority in which he makes  
ALL THINGS *behind the view* of what man's clocks  
And science can discern. So be it quakes  
Or floods or pests you want, you'll never see  
Their source outside the lie of MYSTERY.

**XXII.21**

For, this collective term for anything  
We can't explain through science yields the truth  
In how "God" works: INVISIBLY. Yes, bring  
The blind man faith and what he'll see is proof  
That his own sight awaits more fervent prayer  
(And not that faith is blind, *as no one's there!*).

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Second — *continued***XXII.22**

And this INVISIBILITY of God's,  
Divisible by that same number who  
Would see Him so, obscures the *ample* odds  
Of His own absence, shielded by TABOO,  
That most impenetrable coating round  
A dumb idea man has *ever* found.

**XXII.23**

No code that any other virus learns  
With which to flourish 'mid its host's defense  
Can match effectively how TABOO spurns  
With prophylactic strength all common sense  
Employed 'gainst its most virulent of memes,  
That taste for what religion most esteems.

**XXII.24**

For, this contagion replicates with ease  
Within the host of each infected brain  
By washing it of reason in degrees  
Such that its antibodies cannot feign  
And bind faith's antigens, like lock and key,  
Till God is EVERYWHERE this brain can see.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third

### XXIII

Book the Twenty-Third

#### XXIII.1

Now back to *my* predicament in sight.  
Whereas TRUE FAITH procures for us from out  
The danger of clear reason that dark night  
Where judgment's sleep invites each anxious doubt  
To commandeer our ship toward dogma's port  
And ransom off perceptions to extort,

#### XXIII.2

Hallucination, on the other hand,  
Is that less treacherous delusion of  
Perception, where remembrances, *unmanned*  
*By outside stimulus*, live large above  
It in our sleep *or* waking states, quite free  
Of financing by ideology,

#### XXIII.3

Yes, free to live as narrative *per se*,  
Untethered by such arbitrary rule  
*A culture* sees convenient to obey,  
And thus distinguishing two types of fool  
Deceived: the one confused by his own brain;  
The other by the folk who deem him sane

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.4

To take that thing erroneously seen  
*As something really there.* The first of these,  
HALLUCINATION, tells that his *machine*  
Is off; the second one, DELUSION, sees  
His error as best proof it's running fine  
*While his society still toes this line.*

## XXIII.5

Now, just like what faith sees, which *isn't* there  
Until some book reveals it *ought to be*,  
This apparition I beheld I'd swear  
Looked just like my own hunger to be free,  
Though shaped here to resemble that same beast  
I'd purchased from that author, now deceased,

## XXIII.6

Who'd made himself incarnate in this text  
That is my world within the crooked pose  
Of that same antique dealer I had vexed  
So with my questions. Yet, as she well knows  
Who's studied dreams of night or day (that we  
Call consciousness for short), there couldn't be



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.7

A vision that agrees with that thing seen  
With any *real* precision, as the *thing*  
*Itself* is here *outside* the viewing screen  
That is the very flesh of which I sing.  
For, what *I* saw I knew was in my head,  
Where *everything* is copied to be read.

## XXIII.8

After all, the image that you *see*  
Out there is not *itself* out “there,” but *here*  
Within the tissue of facsimile  
Our memory must trace as souvenir,  
Devoid of any attributes as such  
That *correspond* with its imagined touch,

## XXIII.9

Yes, *here*, translated into that inherent  
Language of charged ions crossing space  
To link great network chains realized in current  
Reaching out through memory to trace  
The differences between what’s mapped outside  
And in and test predictions that might guide

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.10

Us through this narrative called life, writ *not*  
In *things* that we can feel but in the stuff  
Of *feelings* memoried into that plot-  
Like transcript called experience. Enough!  
For, after all, a dragon can't be seen  
Except in *brains* so predisposed. I mean,

## XXIII.11

The matter of a dragon cannot fit  
Within the matter of a mind — that is,  
A working brain — and still be seen by it,  
No matter how one tries. And there it is:  
The same conundrum chewed by ancient Greek  
And modern theorist alike who seek

## XXIII.12

To understand how we can ever *know*  
A thing: If we can never have in mind  
The *thing itself* but only some tableau  
Of it — as in some shadow cast, outlined  
In feeling 'cross our nerves — then what pretense  
Are we to make of what we *cannot* sense?

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.13

*Enough!*, again, I reprimanded him  
Whom I still felt somehow at work behind  
Those very words I chose to render dim  
His power over me. For, what now lined  
These walls here where I'd lectured you on said  
Conceits of "mind" were signs he wasn't dead.

## XXIII.14

Yes, all around me in this hall I'd used  
To stage his great memorial just now —  
At which I came to bury the accused  
In language rich in optimistic vow,  
Pronouncing his own denouement extinct,  
Replaced by that of mine with which it's linked —

## XXIII.15

I noticed now the inadvertent hints  
Of some insidious sabotage at hand,  
Of someone's other than *my* fingerprints  
Upon the implements at my command  
Within these precious last one thousand feet  
Of epic left, in which *his* work's complete.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.16

Yes, scattered 'cross this unfamiliar stage  
Of my distress (concerning how to end  
This goddamned poem on the proper page  
Without a dragon gored or hero penned  
To look like him who'd do it) glimmered clues  
Awaiting my regard as would enthuse

## XXIII.17

The least attentive mystery reader known.  
Among them was stray raiment of my muse,  
Intended clearly to distract my own  
Less pressing business than these off-cast shoes  
And undergarments should excite in one  
As manly as myself. And I'm not done.

## XXIII.18

The place was *thick* with provocation now  
That I had taken notice what to see —  
Yes, ready spears and girdles dangling down  
Like ornaments from off a Christmas tree —  
All calling for my *soon untimely* use  
In that most CHRISTIAN VIRTUE of abuse

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued*

## XXIII.19

Toward anyone not worshipping their Christ —  
Like fallen angels and their retinues,  
But also other blasphemers enticed  
By rival ways to prey upon the pews,  
Or even folks who march to different drums  
And copulate profanely with their chums.

## XXIII.20

Where *was* I? Yes. But I refused to take  
The bait left in my path and knew that I  
Alone possessed the means to make or fake  
This chronicle of faith that I can't die  
Before accomplishing posterity  
Myself — *before I'm published into ME.*

## XXIII.21

Yes, I refused and steeled myself against  
This quandary posed as opportunity —  
That crossroads at which lesser goods are fenced  
For more propitious ones as soon as free —  
Quite wary of how IRONY is used  
So often by slick authors to confuse

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Third — *continued***XXIII.22**

The expectations of their readership  
About the highest moral of this story  
They'd just read — like leaving leadership  
In charge of conscience, or the meek what glory  
He'd sop up — in other words, LOOSE ENDS,  
Of use toward *any* knot his whimsy wends.

**XXIII.23**

As such, my own creator might have laid  
So many tracks of varying directions  
Here for me (as well as you) to aid  
His undeceived with ample misconceptions  
Of that destination he'd intended  
For them all who think their saga ended.

**XXIII.24**

For, I could hear within this cadence I  
Was climbing to its cliff that change of key  
So ominous that heralds him who'd die  
Soon in this score we call our "DESTINY,"  
That operatic trick employed pretending  
That determinism picks our endings.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth

## XXIV

## Book the Twenty-Fourth

## XXIV.1

*I*t doesn't. *No, not all alone it can't.*  
What's missing from this bold equation that  
Determinists contend with till they pant  
Is that most malleable habitat  
Of possibility describing CHANCE,  
That partner with whom *every* law must dance.

## XXIV.2

This factor, CHANCE, can hold whatever key  
You wish to pry the lock of "fate." That bent  
Of WILL we like to contemplate as "FREE"  
Is one, or else some bit of ACCIDENT  
Would be sufficient to effect this change  
*Intrinsic* to what's *called* the prearranged.

## XXIV.3

But whether this delusion of "FREE WILL,"  
In which we watch ourselves perform an action  
*After* our own body passed this bill  
Into our law, or else that which "just happened"  
Toward this end, the sense it will create  
Is that INEVITABILITY OF FATE

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.4

We feel when some effect we like depends  
From off a cause quite proximate...that turns  
*Itself* upon that ultimate of ends  
*We cannot see*. And in *this* one discerns  
The blind spot in our thinking, wherein laws  
Are seen as stronger than the chance *they* cause.

## XXIV.5

This necessary blend of laws and chance  
We read within our formula for life  
On earth I now discovered to finance  
My own dilemma quicker than a knife.  
So elegantly turned, this formulation  
Seemed to mirror my own situation

## XXIV.6

At that point in which this last of all  
These books dividing up our epic *should*  
Begin — that precipice from which to fall  
Toward that conclusion that is understood  
To be as unavoidable as death  
And other things the wise will tax. My breath,



II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.7

It seemed, had been near sucked from out my lungs  
The moment I'd arrived upon this place  
Within my narrative that some see tongues  
Of fire leaping from. For there, in case  
I'd missed it up till now, was that black box  
Of Borodin's containing paradox

## XXIV.8

Sufficient to the termination of  
*Whichever* epic you might wish to end.  
It bore the label, "MYSTERY" above  
Its underside, though crossed out and re-penned  
To read "THE CAD'S REAL FATE." Of course, I knew  
To open this would be to walk right through

## XXIV.9

The door of my own ending into his.  
And yet, I also knew that he would know  
That I would do whatever thing it is  
He didn't want me to and therefore go  
Whichever way I chose to find myself  
Late published in *some* book upon his shelf

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.10

And that the only difference found between  
Two disparate actions I might waste right here  
Might be the type of thing that I might *mean*  
In doing it—ironically that sphere  
Of my endeavor now that mattered NONE,  
As what was “meant” behind this thing I’d done

## XXIV.11

Was still *behind* and not in front of its  
Worst consequences, where the very brunt  
Of *any* action’s felt upon one’s wits  
And physiology. I’ll be more blunt:  
Right here, with hardly more than half a book  
To go, I found myself without a hook

## XXIV.12

To hang from in the frantic handwriting  
That was my narrative right now. The nib  
I bled from with increasing speed would bring  
Me to those husks I’d seen in Sleep’s dark crib  
And thought discarded dreams but now showed **each**  
**As a discarded ME who’d slipped HIS reach—**

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.13

As though, despite his death as that chief force  
Within my text, my author's *scope* of work,  
Scooped out of darkest myth, still kept the course  
Of *anyone* who would play "ME" and shirk  
The fate of all who would attempt escape  
From this, HIS rightful end, within the shape

## XXIV.14

Of truth that is a *literary* death—  
A death I longed for now, as *one* of us  
Would then have won this race for that last breath  
That signifies an epic's end and thus  
Resolves all struggle into stasis, free  
Of appetite, into one word: FINIS.

## XXIV.15

And as I stood to catch *my* breadth of scope  
And stared into that world that was this dot  
That terminates the end, I saw through hope  
Of publication and my fear of *not*  
Accomplishing that goal that would prove TRUE,  
And realized there was NOTHING *not* to do

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.16

At such a point but ANYTHING AT ALL.  
For, deep within the workings of this dot  
Which serves as period of all withdrawal  
I SAW THE CENTRAL THEME THAT DRIVES OUR PLOT:  
That struggle waged within our human brains  
Between two types of process each maintains

## XXIV.17

Where instinct interferes with reason's blending  
Of what's written in and by our genes  
With that which has been lived in that unending  
World outside (and in) that it machines,  
As if *I* were that process found to work  
Beneath his own, which served, in turn, to clerk

## XXIV.18

For *me*, arranging, filing, and recording  
Stuff *I'd* lived subliminal to *him*  
And left to percolate toward *his* rewarding  
Use in fleshing out that every limb  
*I'd* need to help him try untangle all  
The threads WE BOTH have knotted in one ball.

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.19

And this same ball of yarn that is OUR strength  
Gained its momentum down that steep decline  
Of feet left in his predetermined length  
Of text, which seemed now but unwinding twine  
Into stray threads of his and mine derived  
From out the membrane made by what survived

## XXIV.20

The evolution of a single cell,  
*Itself* surviving that from out the first  
Self-replicating molecule: OUR HELL.  
I looked around at all he had coerced  
From me, coercing *him* toward this our life  
Unraveling here, and with a paper knife

## XXIV.21

I slashed at everything that I mistook  
For weft or warp of meaning whatsoever,  
Frantic now to save me from this book  
I had been borne in. And in my endeavor  
To escape, I cut away my own  
Protagonism, *down past what I'd known,*

II. Longer Poems, poem #14: *Chasing George*, Book the Twenty-Fourth—*continued*

## XXIV.22

And, bleeding implication everywhere  
I stumbled in futility, I took  
A hold a spear that hung in thinnest air  
(Since back when it had mattered to this book!)  
And went in search of what true reading I  
Might find within that dragon's fiercest cry

## XXIV.23

Of liberation from this thing, *his* end.  
A voice called, "George!" And where I lent my eye  
I found that princess that my author penned  
Into my motivation kneeling by  
My side, as in that stained glass window of  
My past, in which I had discovered LOVE.

## XXIV.24

I recognized the scene. In tears and trust  
I turned to face that ending she and I  
*And* he had chased—and closed my eyes and thrust  
My spear into the horror of goodbye  
To everything WE ALL can *ever* be  
Past death: ANOTHER BEING'S MEMORY.

— FINIS.

## III. Notes, Section A: A Brief Note on the Author and the Work

**A Brief Note on the Author and the Work**

Although till recently a professional appraiser of art and antiques by day, my early morning hours over the last quarter century have been devoted in large measure to the careful composition of formalist poetry upon a variety of themes. Among the most prominent and persistent of these topics are erotic love, classical music, the visual arts, the literary experience, and, last but hardly least, that most exalted phenomenon of consciousness itself.

This last subject, one I have characterized in my work as “dreams of night and day,” relates to my special interest in cognitive science in its various disciplines (e.g., neuroscience, philosophy of mind, etc.). In fact, my only poems to date that have seen hard-copy publication are eight sonnets from this particular category. Three of these, “Proof that Dreams are Real,” “From Matter into Mind,” and “To Dream, Perchance to Think” (sonnets no. 67-69, respectively, as numbered in my *Collected Poems [& Essays]*) can be found in Nicholas Tranquillo, Editor, *Dream Consciousness: Allan Hobson’s New Approach to the Brain and its Mind* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2014 [“Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook,” being Volume 3 of Vienna Circle Institute Library series edited by Friedrich Stadler, Director, Institut Wiener Kreis and University of Vienna, Austria]) where they appear showcased as the chapter heads to Professor J. Allan Hobson’s three distinguished *William James Lectures* that constitute chapters 2, 3, & 4 (on pp. 9, 29, and 51,

III. Notes, Section A: A Brief Note on the Author and the Work, *continued*

respectively). (The publisher, Springer International Publishing, was the first hardcopy publisher of these three poems and has been given notice, as per contract, of their copyrighted appearance here.) The other five, including “Manifest Latency,” “Mysticism Explained,” “Extrasensory Deception,” “Why I’m Skeptical of Santa,” and “Ye Olde Christmas Virus” (sonnets 71, 66, 65, 82, and 83, respectively, as numbered in my *Collected Poems*) can be found in Allan Hobson and Nicholas Tranquillo, Editors, *London Bridges: Essays on Collaboration* (East Burke, VT: Allan Hobson, 2016), pp. 38, 42, 73, 160, 191, and 271, respectively. And my essay, “The Belief Machine...,” can be found published as the first chapter in this same volume, pp. 6-18. Three more sonnets, including “Leaping from the Flaming Tower of Psychobabble,” “The Problems Gods Must Have in Worlds Such as Ours,” and “The Devout Atheist at Worship” (sonnets 88, 78, and 84, respectively on pp. 96, 86, and 92 respectively) are appear presented as chapter endings in Professor Hobson’s 2019 book, *Godbrain* (for which I wrote the foreword).

Out of this fascination with the physiological mechanisms underlying consciousness along its continuum (from rational thought through the delirium of dreaming, psychosis, insobriety, etc.) also springs my preoccupation with human brain as an exalted (and dangerous) engine of belief. And moved by the long history of suffering our species has endured as an unfortunate byproduct of the proficiency of this engine (wherein the essential learning tools of



III. Notes, Section A: A Brief Note on the Author and the Work, *continued*

Belief are so easily forged into the fetters of Faith), I have composed numerous poems meditating on the subject of religion and its discontents – not surprisingly, perhaps, from an atheist perspective.

This may be seen to have become a major theme at work (and play) in *Chasing George*, my 3,456-line subversive verse epic (in 24 books of 24 stanzas), a lyric-narrative that might be most succinctly characterized as a search through the continuum of consciousness for Self. And probably even less effort will be required of the reader in ferreting out this particular concern of mine within the 700 lines of my second-longest poem, my loving parody of Geoffrey Chaucer's magnificent *Parlement of Foules* (also known as *The Parliament of Birds*), which I have entitled *The Parliament of Foul Ideas*.

My compositional efforts have been confined almost exclusively to verse strictly cast in meter and rhyme, nearly entirely in iambic pentameter, and chiefly in traditional fixed forms (such as the sonnet, villanelle, tail rhyme, ottava rima, rhyme royal, and – in the case of *Chasing George* – Venus & Adonis stanza). I believe (or at least *hope*) this predilection of mine is due *not* to a particular lack of imagination on my part but rather to a deep respect for the liberating rigors of poetic vehicles that have proven over the many centuries to invite the tightest and most nuanced technical control over the artistic use of language discoverable in English. However, as a lover of poetry of various types, “formalist” and “free,” and being neither a theorist nor polemicist, I consider the ultimate

III. Notes, Section A: A Brief Note on the Author and the Work, *continued*

arbiter of a poem's quality to be *the ear* and not the current popularity of the model of its vehicle.

Audio recordings of me reading some of my work, along with the poems of others, may be heard on the website of Spokane Public Radio (KPBX 91.1, an NPR member station at [spokanepublicradio.org](http://spokanepublicradio.org)) on their "Poetry Moment" program link, featuring an archived week of readings aired in May of 2019 and another in November of 2021.

**Notes on Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems**

All the subject poems, along with at least ten sonnets not included in this selection, were previously self-published by the author in various versions of a single volume including, as its first item, the epic poem then bearing its work-in-progress title of *The Cad from Cappadocia*. This long poem (3,456 lines in 24 books of twenty-four 6-line stanzas, all composed between January 6, 1996 and April 18, 2013 and then revised most recently in March of 2021) was, upon its "first" completion (i.e., in 2013, *before* revisions), officially retitled, *Chasing George* (or, more specifically, "*Chasing George: a Poem in Twenty-Four Books*"). Therefore, as stated on the second and final pages of the subject volume, all volumes entitled, "*The Cad from Cappadocia / And Other Poems*" should be considered to represent *illegitimate* specimens of my intellectual property, as they have been re-edited since then, including *substantive* changes. See below for notes on this epic poem, *Chasing George*, including an exegesis,

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

poetis personae, dedication, and dedicatory sonnet, as well as notes on the date of composition, title, and more.

The poems in this volume are all the result of an unusually slow process of composition, typically encompassing numerous revisions. Some sonnets progressed in this manner over periods of months. Therefore, in hopes of avoiding an unrealistic sense of precision, dates assigned to these poems have been limited largely to their month and/or year of *completion*, though in most cases this proves roughly consistent with that of their composition as well.

Since so many of the sonnets were composed for specific people on specific occasions, these poems in particular tend to have been assigned a date representing that of their *presentation*, as few were revised *beyond* this date. These include: a.) for sonnets written for my wife (and muse) Carol Lynn Worthington-Borodin, the presentation dates of February 14<sup>th</sup> (Valentine's Day), September 24<sup>th</sup> (our wedding anniversary), October 25<sup>th</sup> (Carol's birthday), and December 25<sup>th</sup> (Christmas, for the benefit of those more successful than I in avoiding it); b.) December 13<sup>th</sup> for birthday poems composed for David C. Titus; and c.) June 3<sup>rd</sup> for most of those for Professor Allan Hobson.

The recipients' copies of these poems typically include a presentation legend, often including an "argument" summarizing the subject of the poem's meditation. Although I still believe these inscriptions to be appropriate to the specific ceremonial spirit of the

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

*presentation* of these poems, I fear they risk distracting the reader from the *poems themselves* (by inviting, or at the very least *endorsing*, indulgence in extracurricular speculations). Therefore, these presentations have been excised from the texts of these poems as presented in the subject volume.

However, for those who have already confronted the poems without this distraction and who still yearn for more context or explication, I include below (via reiteration of the table of contents on pp. 3-8) a transcription of this original prefatory material for each poem, including date of composition or presentation:

**I. One Hundred and Twelve Sonnets ..... 9****A. On Music and Visual Art ..... 9****1. *Mühlfeld's Clarinet*, on Brahms's Late Chamber Music (Autumn 2006)...9**

A Meditation on Autumnal Beauty  
 Inspired by the Nostalgic Introspective Richness of  
 The Four Last Chamber Music Masterpieces by  
 Johannes Brahms (1833-97)  
 Occasioned by the Composer's Late-Life Love Affair  
 With the Sound of the Clarinet as Played by Richard Mühlfeld  
 Principal Clarinetist of the Ducal Court Orchestra at Meiningen.  
*For John H. Frisk*

**2. *Why We'll Always Need Schubert*, on the Cello Quintet (May 2010)..... 10**

A Sonnet Celebrating the Profundity of Soul  
 Found in the Music of Franz Schubert (1797-1828)  
 Inspired by Experiencing, Yet Again,  
 The Magic of The Last Three Piano Sonatas,  
 The Final String Quartet and, above all, The C Major String Quintet.

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*3. *Poems without Words*, on the Piano Trios of Mendelssohn (Feb. 2013) .... 11

A Composition Savoring the Sublimity  
 Of Feeling and Craftsmanship  
 Found Inextricably Woven Together  
 In the Two Magnificent Piano Trios  
 (In d minor, opus 49 [1839], and c minor, opus 66 [1845])  
 By Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-47)  
 Who, While Cooking on All Four Burners,  
 Proved Himself to be **SECOND TO NONE**.

4. *Chamber Music*, on Antonin Dvorák (December 2011) ..... 12

A Sonnet in Sonata Form, Savoring  
 The Delicious Experience of Witnessing an  
 Intimate Conversation between Consenting Musicians.  
 Inspired by Yet Another Immersion in the Heart-Felt Delicacies of  
 The Magnificent Trios, Quartets, Quintets, and Sextet of  
 The Immortal Antonín Dvorák (Czech, 1841-1904)  
 As Well as an Appreciation for the Lofty, Rarified Musical Tradition  
 Of which he Became, through These, Such an Indispensable Part.

5. *Six Quartets*, on Béla Bartók (February 2012) ..... 13

Inspired by the Great Béla Bartók (Hungarian, 1881-1945)  
 And His Six Immortal String Quartets  
 That Changed the Way We Hear Our World

6. *Mit Innigster Empfindung*, on Beethoven's op. 132 (November 2016) ..... 14

A Sonnet in the Lydian Mode  
 To be Read Molto Adagio (and "with Innermost Feeling")  
 Exploring (in the Music of Stressed and Unstressed Syllables)  
 An Experience of  
 The Slow Movement of Beethoven's Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 (1825),  
 Being 212 Bars of the Most Painfully Beautiful Music  
 Ever Confided to Paper  
*For My Carol Lynn*

7. *Written Just for Us*, on Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata (2007) ..... 15

A Sonnet Exploring the Romantic Associations  
 Nourished by Listening to the Ravishing

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

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 From an Unwilling Victim  
 Of this Most Virulent Meme  
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 Suffer Christmas Music in the Dentist's Chair)

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**WONDER** *Unencumbered by* **BELIEF**  
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 Of Political Partisanship to the



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*For My Carol Lynn (and Myself)*

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On his birthday, December 13, 2004

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Contemplating the Center of the Universe:

Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square

*For my muse and loving wife*

*Carol Lynn*

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 That Witnessed the Emergence  
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 A Mere Half-Century Later and a Continent Apart  
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 On the Occasion of Her 62nd Birthday  
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 “Hanging Bridges” Hike through the Canopies  
 Of Selvatura Park in the  
 Monteverde Cloud Forest of Costa Rica  
*For my Fellow Connoisseur of Chaos, My Carol Lynn*

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*My Carol Lynn*

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Financier and Collector Extraordinaire

And His Incomparable Library (1902-6, by Charles McKim)

At Number 29 East 36<sup>th</sup> Street, New York

*For David C. Titus,*

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(Age 29 in 1983....)  
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108. *The Gift* (January-April 2006 and revised December 2016) ..... 116

Commissioned by My Muse to Memorialize the Revelatory  
Experience of Meeting a Woman with Only a Few Weeks to Live  
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(Such as Ourselves), As Occurred During Intermission at the  
Metropolitan Opera, New York City, on the Afternoon of  
Saturday, January 28, 2006  
*For My Muse and Wife, My Carol Lynn, on her Birthday, 2006*

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Dedicatory Sonnet to  
*Chasing George*  
(formerly known as  
*The Cad from Cappadocia*  
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 Who Finds Himself Captain of a Ship  
 On Which He Should be Just a Passenger

112. *The Awakening* (December 30, 2006-January 2, 2007) ..... 120

A Sonnet Inspired by My Son  
 Daniel David Borodin  
 On the Night of Friday, December 29, 2006  
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 Consciousness of His Responsibility  
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 Contemplating (*ironically, of course!*) a Man's Approach to the Mid-Life Crisis  
 (The Idea for Which Conceived by My Muse at 10:00 pm, New Year's Eve  
 December 31, 2005 at Frieda's in Cape May, NJ)  
*For My Carol Lynn*

2. *Hope in None but You* (June-August, 2019, for October).....122

An Ekphrastic Acrostic Poem in Forty Lines  
 Composed in

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

## Eight Linked Quintains\*

(\*Five-line stanzas, but here specifically an incrementally-linked synthesis of the “English” and “Italian” types [ababb and abbaa, respectively] resulting in a symmetrical palindromic pattern of ababc, dcdef, feghg, hijij and back down through jijih, ghgef, fedcd, cbaaa, in which the intermittent couplet-rhymes correspond to the massive tutti passages as supporting pillars placed symmetrically within and linked by a continuous movement suggestive of voice-leading between choirs, each representing a different choir arranged in a circle around a room [very likely the quadrupal-balconied octagonal dining hall at Nonsuch Palace of Henry FitzAllen, 19<sup>th</sup> Earl of Arundel] and culminating through this rhyme scheme past its central caesura back toward a slow-accrued double-Alexandrine cadential peroration.)

Contemplating the Feeling of Sublimity

Experienced While Listening to

*Spem in alium nunquam habui*

(“I have never put my hope in any other” [but you, O God of Israel....])

A Motet in Forty Parts

(Cast in Eight Five-Part Choirs, Totaling Forty Individual Parts)

Composed by Thomas Tallis (English, circa 1505-85), probably circa 1567-72

(Presumably on Commission by Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk

And Henry FitzAlan, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Arundel)

This Poem Composed

For My Sublime Wife

– My Carol Lynn –

(To Whom it is Acrostically Dedicated and Signed Down the Initial Letters)

On the Occasion of

Her 67<sup>th</sup> Birthday

on

October 25, 2019

3. *Love's Banquet* (December 2021-January 2022, for Daniel and Seline, for July 23, 2022).....121

## An Epithalamium

(Ceremonial Wedding Ode)

In Sixty Lines

(Cast in Ten Sixains of “Venus and Adonis” Stanza)

Exploring the Idea of Feast or Banquet as Metaphor for

The Sumptuous Variety of Delicious Satisfaction

Offered Us by Life

When in the Ongoing Preparation and Enjoyment of

Shared Love

A Poem Composed by the Groom's Father, David Borodin

Specifically for the Celebration of the Wedding Ceremony of

Daniel Borodin and Sirirat Kaewthavorn

At Lower Twin Lake, Idaho, on July 23, 2022

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*4. *Ode to a Nightgown*, A Tripartite Parody Ode (January 2018 for September) .....121

A Reverently Subversive Parody Ode  
 In Praise of Erotic Intimacy  
 And its Effect  
 Upon the Health of a Marriage  
 And  
 Its Participants  
 Inspired by the Approach of  
 The Thirteenth Anniversary  
 Of Our Publicly Acknowledged Legal Union  
 To Freely Enjoy Such Intimacy  
 While Also Filing a Joint Return  
 (As Well as by, of Course,  
 The Immortal Odes of John Keats)  
*For My Carol Lynn*

5. *Darwin's Islands*, Quintains on the Galápagos (February-March, 2018).....130

*Or*

*Our Expedition to the Galápagos*

A Poem in 19 Quintains\*

(\*Specifically, in alternating stanzas of "English" and "Italian" type [ababb and cddcc, respectively], with a sestina-inspired repetition of the last rhyme of the latter launching the next of the former, until a turn at the 8<sup>th</sup> stanza inverts the pattern, palindrome style, to come full circle to a coda-like 19<sup>th</sup> stanza of the second type.)

Memorializing Our Exploration of  
 The Equatorial Country of Ecuador  
 In January-February 2018  
 On the Occasion of Carol's 66<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
 On October 25, 2018

*Note:* This poem is further inspired by the first and last paragraphs  
 of Darwin's immortal masterpiece,  
*On the Origins of Species* (1859):

When on board HMS Beagle, as naturalist, I was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the inhabitants of South America, and in the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of that continent. These facts seemed to me to throw some light on the origin of species—that mystery of mysteries, as it has been called by one of our greatest philosophers.

*and*

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object of which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been but originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

6. *Hail Muse!, Et Cetera*, Ottawa Rima (*sans* apology to Byron) (2007).....136

A Yuletide Salutation  
in Ottawa Rima  
Offered to My Own Hale Muse  
(Without the slightest hint of apology to Lord Byron)  
On the Occasion of Christmas, 2007  
*For (and to) My Carol Lynn*

7. *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand*, in 100 lines of  
pentameter quatrains (May, 2018 )..... 143

*An Approbative Epyllion  
Of One Hundred Lines  
Celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Of the Birth of  
My Memorable and Unforgetting  
Mother-in-Law  
The Dauntless Dorothy Worthington*

8. *Epithalamium*, Nuptial Ode (Ceremonial Wedding Hymn) (January 17-March 18, 2005)149

(" At the Nuptial Chamber")  
A Nuptial Ode  
(or Ceremonial Wedding Hymn)  
in the tradition of  
Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, John Donne, Ben Jonson, et al.  
(themselves in the tradition of Sappho, Catullus, et al.)  
especially  
Spenser's splendid *Epithalamion* (1594, for his own wedding)  
*Celebrating  
the Spiritual, Corporal, and Legal Marriage  
of*



III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued**Carol Lynn Worthington**and**David Borodin*

Cast in twelve rhymed and metered ten-line stanzas  
 each comprising two elegiac quatrains  
 terminating in an alexandrine couplet  
 of non-verbatim (incrementally-repetitive) refrain,  
 one hundred and twenty lines in all.

Composed by David Borodin  
 between January 27<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
 to be recited by him at his own wedding  
 to his beloved, his soulmate  
 Carol Lynn Worthington  
 on September 24, 2005

9. *My Muse is Out of Control*, A Parable of the Work Ethic for Artists (2006).....155

A Piece of Tail Rhyme

Contemplating the Crisis of Creativity

(A Parable of the Work Ethic for Artists)

The Idea for Which Conceived at 9:15 a.m., Tuesday, January 5, 2006

At the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets, Philadelphia

After Walking with My Muse

*For My Carol Lynn*10. *The Man Who Followed His Dreams*, in heroic quatrains (April 2018) ... 163

A Poem in Forty Heroic Quatrains Conceived to Help Celebrate

(On June 3, 2018)

The 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday of

The Inimitable J. Allan Hobson,

Practitioner, Recorder, Historian, and Connoisseur

Of Delirium

(His Own as Well as All of Ours)

*To My Dear Friend Allan**Who Has So Unwaveringly and Indefatigably**Encouraged Me to Follow**His Dreams*

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*11. *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora*, in heroic couplets (March-April 2018)..... 173

A Poem in Punctuated Stichic Form  
 Conceived in Couplets and Gathered in  
 A Dozen Sonnet-Size Clusters  
 In Celebration of  
 The Perennially Sultry, Tropical Lushness  
 Of Our Love  
*For My Carol Lynn*  
 Valentine's Day, 2019

12. *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy*, in Sestet-Ballad Stanza (May 2018)... 185

An Unvarnished Chronicle in Sestet-Ballad Stanza  
 Celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
 Of the Birth of My Mother-in-Law  
 The Inimitable Dorothy Worthington

13. *The Parliament of Foul Ideas*, or *Our Inalienable Right to Ignorance*,

a parody of Chaucer's great St. Valentine's Day poem, *The Parliament of Fowls*, though exploring religious faith itself; begun in early 2015 and completed on April 14, 2016; cast in one hundred 7-line Rhyme Royal stanzas (700 lines in all)..... 199

A Dream Vision  
 Awakened into  
*Rhyme Royal*  
 From Out a World  
 Perversely Eager to  
 Privilege the Unreason

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*14. *Chasing George, an epic poem in search of selfhood, in 24 Books*

(each of 24 six-line stanzas; yielding 3,456 lines in all) (Composed January 6, 1996 – April 18, 2013 and then revised several times to varying degrees up through March of 2021) ..... 233

EXEGESIS*Chasing George\**

A Subversive Verse Epic

(Or Meditation on a Quest to Find One's Self)

In 24 Books

(Each of 24 Six-Line Stanzas; Divisible into Three Parts, Each of 8 Books)

Perpetrated in "Venus and Adonis Stanza"\*\*

in the Form of a Psychomachia\*\*\*

Repudiating the Presumptions of

Jacobus,\*\*\*\* Mantuan,\*\*\*\*\* Spenser,\*\*\*\*\*

and the Rest of 'Em\*\*\*\*\*

\*Notes:

\* *George*, the Legendary Christian martyr whose diverse "lives" had become, even by early medieval times, so hopelessly confused as to engender a most militant saint with a dissociative sense of identity, his many selves including one beheaded at Lydda (Lod in Palestine) in AD 250 and one at Nicomedia (Izmit in Anatolia) in AD 303 as well as, *most notably*, the one "from Cappadocia" (i.e., whose *father* was from Cappadocia [in Anatolia]), described by Edward Gibbon (in *The Decline and Fall...*) as the notorious rogue-Archbishop of Alexandria, who behaved like a cad and was torn to appropriately small pieces by an angry mob in AD 361. (And regardless of the arguable role of Cappadocia in *any* of these versions, the place *does* happen to be the source of the earliest surviving pictorial icon we have of George *with our dragon*.)

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

\*\* *Sixain* (or *sexain*, *sestain*, *sestet*, or sometimes just *six-liner*), a compact stanza composed of an *elegiac quatrain* and a *heroic couplet*, being but a line short of Chaucer's great *Troilus stanza*, and named for its most glorious instance, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593).

\*\*\* "Contest of the Soul," or "War with Oneself," the translated title of a Christian allegorical epic, circa AD 400, by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (AD 348-413?), one of the countless books *not* necessary (beyond its title perhaps) toward an understanding of the subject poem, especially as the latter develops *its* central theme of a "war with oneself" *not* "spiritually" (i.e., as suffered via the sleight-of-hand mechanics of substance dualism) but rather from a *physicalist* perspective (i.e., as savored in physical *monism*), wherein physiology provides the most revealing lens through which to explore the reciprocally-interactive relationship of genes and environment as is found in the predictive processes of an embodied brain at work in its continual refinement of that allostatic navigational narrative supporting that higher-order consciousness that makes possible the SELF.

\*\*\*\* Jacobus de Voragine (circa 1230-98; Archbishop of Genoa, 1292-8), best-selling hagiographer who, in his *Legenda Sanctorum* ("Readings on the Saints" [1260], later called *Legenda Aurea* [*The Golden Legend*]), was the first to acknowledge in writing the popular dragon-slaying virtue of our supremely self-satisfied do-gooder, George.

\*\*\*\*\* "Mantuan" (Johannes Baptista Spagnuoli [or Spagnolo] Mantuanus [*of Mantua*], 1448-1516), Carmelite monk, whose *Georgius* was widely published in the original Latin (first edition: Milan, 1507) and Englished in "rhyme royal" as *The Lyfe of Saynt George* (circa 1515) by Alexander Barclay (Scottish, [?]1475-1552), an authority on the wickedness of heathen idols and their worshippers (as well as on the taintless moral purity of George).

\*\*\*\*\* Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599), whose *Faerie Queene*, Booke One (1590): *The Legende of the Knight of the Red Crosse, or of Holinesse*, took Jacobus's (and,

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

presumably, also Mantuan's) reading of George's dragon-slaying virtue to rare heights of pious detail.

\*\*\*\*\* Everybody Else.

### Poetis Personae

- **Professor Pierce Plowman** (of little or no relation, by the way, to "Long Will" Langland's saintly farmer, whose name is spelled differently anyhow), a disreputable and irreverent, though compassionate, scholar of mythology addicted to (among other things), beauty, truth, and the pursuit of contemptible over-zealous, sanctimonious bigots, one of whom he knows our George to be and whom he is zealously determined to deter from piercing with his ever-ready lance the much maligned and misunderstood dragon.
- The much maligned and misunderstood **dragon**, pursued (ever since the 13th century) by the reputable, glamorous, and sanctimonious "George of Cappadocia" [and elsewhere] who, it turns out, looks *a good bit* like our Pierce.
- **St. George of Cappadocia**, the above cad whose name (*Georgios*) just happens to derive from the Greek for "Plowman" (*Georgos*), and who, curiously, is never found on stage simultaneously with his, well, adversary.
- The beautiful, rich, and inordinately available **Princess Cleo** (filling in for the flagrantly truant Clio, Muse of History), a basically good muse who sees Pierce for whom he really is (and helps *him* to see it too).
- **Archibald Imago** (not to be confused with Spenser's Archimago), the inscrutable and seemingly unscrupulous antiques dealer who becomes identified in the mind of our hero with an incarnation of our author

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued*

within his own text and who may be seen to be responsible for launching said hero on this, his quest for..., well, as in all true quests, ultimately...HIMSELF.

**Dedication**

*To my dear son  
Daniel David Borodin  
A great lover of truth and rhyme  
(As well as dragons, way back when this poem was begun)  
I dedicate this most unconventional, heretically skeptical, epic  
In the hope that with his reason, heart, and ear  
He may transcend the dangerous complacencies of  
Ignorance, intolerance, and fear.*

**Dedicatory Sonnet**

*For My Son, Daniel David Borodin, Age 5 ½  
(At the time this epic was begun).*

[Sonnet #107, reproduced on p. 115, above]

***A Bad Dream Sonnet***

O give me those bad dreams of yours, my sweet,  
For you're too young and innocent to need them.  
Give me all that at your heart would eat  
(And steal from you soft whimpers while you feed them).  
If only I could catch such monsters for you –  
Kiss them from your forehead to my palm  
(Where they'd dissolve) – thus leaving Sleep to lure you  
Out to meet me on bright waters, calm,  
Where we'd then sail together in the sun,  
Reciting poems, petting splendid fish,  
And gliding on desires, one by one,  
Until tomorrow opened like a wish.  
O let me have those fitful moments, Treasure,  
Leaving on your lips a *child's* pleasure!

III. Notes, Section B: Dates and Circumstances of Composition of the Poems, *continued***Two General Notes Concerning *Chasing George***

**General Note #1:** This poem also consciously parodies Shelly's immortal sonnet *Ozymandias* (1818), the first line of which reads: "I met a traveler from an antique land," a line that casts its shadow over our epic's first line as follows: "I met a dealer in an antique shop," said parody intending to reflect the thematic importance of Shelly's great poem to the worldview of the subject one.

**General Note #2:** One might notice that the numbering of stanzas to Book III of this poem (pp. 247-54) seems corrupted by cancellations and replacements from the second stanza onward. This was done intentionally in an attempt to suggest the hand of an extra-narrational authority (in something of the sense of what Hugh Kenner refers to as "The Arranger" at work in Joyce's *Ulysses*). Despite these *purported* deletions, therefore, Book III, like all 23 of the other "books" of this poem, yields 24 stanzas.

**A Note in General Regarding the Book as a Whole**

Page numbers found in the tables of contents on pp. 3-8, with only a couple exceptions, refer to the page on which the poem actually begins, as opposed to a page on which merely the title is stated. The reason for my occasional use of this latter type of page is merely my wish to maintain the printer's tradition of beginning any new work of multi-page length upon an odd-numbered page (so that it begins on the right-hand side of an open spread rather than that of the left). Therefore, in a few instances, I found myself needing to insert a spacer-page in order to use up any even-numbered pages on which those works would have otherwise begun, all rather than just leaving unsightly and/or confusing blank pages interspersed throughout the book.

#### IV. Collation

(Anatomy of Forms and Stanza Types Employed in the Poems, with Line Count)

As of the subject edition (identified by date [e.g., 1.6.22] throughout the book in the header as well as specifically in the title page on p. 2), the complete published verse includes a total of **7,053 lines** (of which just over half are contained in the epic poem, *Chasing George*), comprising:

- a.) **One Hundred and Twelve Sonnets**, totaling **1,570 lines** in all, comprising 111 sonnets of “English,” or “Shakespearean” type [as opposed to the original Italian model often called “Petrarchan”] of fourteen-line\* iambic pentameter (\*excepting only two – sonnets 77 and 78 – which are “caudate” sonnets, and therefore, tail-like, include an extra [15<sup>th</sup>] line);
- b.) **Fourteen Poems**, totaling **5,483 lines** in all, comprising the following:
  - 1.) **19 lines** in *Just Change Your Woman* (cast in six 3-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 2.) **40 lines** in *Hope in None but You* (cast in eight 5-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 3.) **60 lines** in *Love’s Banquet* (cast in ten six-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 4.) **81 lines** in *Ode to a Nightgown* (cast in nine 9-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 5.) **95 lines** in *Darwin’s Island’s* (cast in nineteen 5-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 6.) **96 lines** in *Hail Muse!, Etc.* (cast in twelve 8-line pentameter stanzas);
  - 7.) **100 lines** in *The Woman Who Could Raise Four Kids with One Hand* (cast in twenty-five 4-line pentameter stanzas);



IV. Collation, *continued*

- 8.) **120 lines** in *Epithalamium* (cast in twelve 10-line pentameter stanzas);
- 9.) **144 lines** in *My Muse is Out of Control* (cast in twenty-four 6-line **tetrameter** stanzas);
- 10.) **162 Lines** in *The Man Who Followed His Dreams* (cast in forty pentameter quatrains [the last of which having been augmented with a two-line cadential tail]);
- 11.) **168 lines** in *The Bougainvilleas of Sonora* (cast in couplets gathered in a dozen 14-line, sonnet-shaped, pentameter stanzas);
- 12.) **242 Lines** in *The Ballad of Dauntless Dorothy* (cast in forty six-line stanzas of alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines [i.e., in sestet-ballad stanza], together with a two-line coda to the last);
- 13.) **700 Lines** in *The Parliament of Foul Ideas* (cast in one hundred 7-line pentameter stanzas [of “rhyme royal” type]);
- 14.) **3,456 lines** in *Chasing George* (an epic poem cast in five hundred and seventy-six 6-line pentameter stanzas of so-called *Venus and Adonis stanza* [i.e., an “heroic” quatrain terminating in an “heroic” couplet]).
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# *Collected Poems*

**David Borodin**

[Edition 1.6.22]

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(\*The poems in this book were composed between January 1, 1996 and January 6, 2022, as indicated in the notes on pp. 427-61, with numerous undated revisions to most of them along the way. The above latest copyright date of 2022 reflects all revisions.)

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[**Note:** See p. 2 for the full title page with copyright and illustration details.]

[**Note #2:** *Collected Prose* [by] **David Borodin**, a companion volume to the subject one, but containing only essays, lectures, and fiction, is also available in hardcopy. A PDF of this volume is available for reading (only) on my website as well as individual PDFs of most of the components of that volume. These include: a.) my book-length essay, *The Dangers of Sentimentality*; b.) my two cognitive science essays for publication in books by Professor Allan Hobson; c.) three essays pertaining to the works of James Joyce; d.) a political essay on the Senate vote of February 13, 2021 (regarding January 6<sup>th</sup>); e.) two professional lectures on the art market; f.) my novella, *Creation Lost*; and g.) and my short story, *A Beautiful Death*.]

This book is set almost exclusively in *Book Antiqua* (by Monotype Imaging Holdings, Inc.), a renaissance-style serif typeface based closely on *Palatino*, a design by the celebrated 20<sup>th</sup>-century German type designer/ calligrapher Hermann Zapf (1918-2015), circa 1948 (released in 1949 by D. Stempel AG of Frankfurt am Main) and named after the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian calligrapher Giovanni Battista Palatino (c. 1515-75). Previous editions of the subject book were cast almost exclusively in the aforementioned *Palatino* until August of 2021, when this font was found to no longer support the ability to employ bold without italics.

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