

Thanks for Noticing

The Interpretation of Desire

A prosimetrum of 154 sonnets, glosses, and other commentary,
in which the sacred beauty of friendship and sexual love are explored.

ADVISEMENT

Lovers of all kinds turn to Shakespeare's 154 *Sonnets* for his depth of emotion with richness of thought. Most of the poems were written to a beautiful young man and some to a mysterious dark lady. These new sonnets, similarly, range through many moods from youthful folly (today causing me profound embarrassment) to perhaps a hint of maturity, arraying insights from the world's religions, in the sonnets and in the glosses, including a Christian protestation against Cartesian disenchantment of the world. Because the sonnets are arranged by parts of the Mass, and many sonnets identify the spiritual with the erotic, some may consider the book blasphemous.

THANKS FOR NOTICING: THE INTERPRETATION OF DESIRE.
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No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the copyright holder except for the inclusion of brief quotations in critical articles and reviews. This prosimetrum (a book combining prose and poetry) is a single unified work consisting of integrated parts which refer to each other, sometimes explicitly. The 154 SONNETS with their notes and glosses are integrated within the structure of the Mass, itself placed in context by a FRONTISPIECE, PREFACE, INTRODUCTION, APPENDICES including Comments from readers as the manuscript developed, all within a continuous arabic page numbering system rather than the usual roman numbers for prefatory material, to emphasize the unity of this work.

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Cover: The poetic form does not merely contain a sentiment as a glass contains water. Rather speak of the grail containing wine; the meaning of each is intensified by the other. In poetry the form and the sentiment are as intimately related as the body and the soul.
—from the *Introduction*

In memory of
Charlie Kreiner
1949-2007

Image of sonnet tune goes here.

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Thanks for Noticing

The Interpretation of Desire

Preface

Nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est.

It suits the dutiful poet to be chaste himself;
his verses don't need to be that way at all.

—Catullus 16

IN THE tradition of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, these poems explore fleshy and spiritual meanings of love and art. Shakespeare's sonnets are of uneven quality, and many of mine fail; but Shakespeare's infatuations and obsessions with a beautiful young man and a mysterious dark lady enlarge us even in his lesser sonnets; just so, my inferior efforts may have some worth.

I have reworked nine sonnets from the seventy in my 1992 collection, *Love Without Desire: Sonnets About Loving Men*. That book explored a theme central to Buddhism: non-attachment. This new book moves toward a Sufi appreciation of appetite, suggested by Ibn Arabi's *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Desires*). Arabi was inspired by Nizam, Dante by Beatrice, and Shakespeare, often in a troubled way, by his young friend.

This book's title, *Thanks for Noticing*, suggests the importance of the attention we give each other. The phrase

comes from the sonnet to a friend who asked to sleep with me as a way of working through his heterosexism. (“Sleeping” sometimes means sex, so it may be necessary here to say the request was literal, not euphemistic; until recently, men often slept with men with no thought of sexual behavior.) He had never slept with a guy and was used to his girlfriend in bed with him. He noticed some differences.

Like Coleridge at 17, I was intrigued by the difficulty of the sonnet form. As an undergraduate, I studied with US Poet Laureate Karl Shapiro, and as a doctoral student with the preeminent historian of religions, Mircea Eliade.

In the decades since, my praying has become hundreds of sonnets; this collection is a “medicine bundle” of some of them, and the following INTRODUCTION helps to unwrap them. The sonnet sometimes maneuvers its message in three phases: first naming a concern (the octave), then an insight on the concern (the first four lines of the sestet), then a resolution (the concluding couplet).

In some cases these phases resemble a three-part version of a “hero’s journey” theorized by Joseph Campbell, with whom I have had several conversations. These phases can be described as separation, initiation, and reincorporation, based on a “coming of age” pattern described by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep. In the lyric sonnet, the journey is spiritual, not literally geographic. Separation from one’s ordinary routine or environment may be by decision or unintentional. The initiation may be an illuminating trial; through suffering one may gain deeper understanding of others and of oneself. Such wisdom may lead to compassion. The reincorporation, the return, from the inner personal experience to the community of which one is a part, is essential to the completion of the journey. In a sense, offering these sonnets, many of which are now humiliating, completes the journey.

What I mean is that too many of these sonnets recount infatuation, limerence, and other forms of indiscretion. As Shakespeare wrote (Sonnet 72), “For I am shamed by that which I bring forth” I would like to present myself as sober and judicious; but if I have attained any hint of maturity, it is only by working through such embarrassing and petty episodes. Even if I forgive him, I may not like the fool who wrote some of these poems, but at least he is somewhat honest, and noticing bits of the jerk’s journey may help others. In sin and sanctity, this book is a confession of my inadequate love of God.

I hope the sonnets speak for themselves. But how to hear them? The INTRODUCTION provides two clues. The first section, § DESIRE, introduces how I think about the spiritual meaning of sexual yearning. The second section is a short course on how § THE SONNET works, in history and in form.

Clues for individual sonnets may include an epigraph to suggest a complementary or ironic context, and notes and glosses at the bottom of the page may help with unusual words and sometimes comment on the verse structure. Just as the printed score is not music but rather a direction to produce the composer’s ideas, so poems, and especially sonnets, are meant to be read aloud. It is not the image on the page so much as the melody in the ear that makes the sensible sonnet sound its truth.

Vern Barnet
Kansas City, MO, 2015 April 25,
between
the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare’s baptism (1564 April 26)
and the 400th anniversary of his death (1616 April 23).

The epigraph beginning this FOREWORD is from Catullus 16, sometimes called the most obscene poem ever written. Above I translated lines 5 and 6. You can do, or find, the rest. Here is the full 14-line poem:

*Pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex uersiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
Nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, uersiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriant incitare possunt,
non dico pueris, sed his pilosis
qui duros nequeunt mouere lumbos.
Uos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male me marem putatis?
pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo.*

And from the opening of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Rabelais:

*Amis lecteurs, qui ce livre lisez,
Despouillez vous de toute affection;
Et, le lisant, ne vous scandalisez:
Il ne contient mal ne infection.*
Dear readers, who read these pages,
Purge your prejudice
And then nothing will be outrageous:
Nothing's evil or contagious.

Thanks for Noticing

The Interpretation of Desire

Introduction

I used to be respectable and chaste and stable,
but who can stand in this strong wind
and remember those things?
—Rumi

Shakespeare's sonnets are not
just the easy love sentiments of
"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day."
Many of the poems are bleak cries of emotional torment
and spiritual exhaustion. They tell a story of the struggle
of love and forgiveness against anguish and despair.
It is this tragic portrait of human love
that makes the sonnets immortal.
—Bruce MacEvoy
—<http://www.handprint.com/SC/SHK/sonnets.html>

Invitation

¶ 1. THESE 154 sonnets present a diorama of desire. The number 154 deliberately invites comparison with Shakespeare's work: Most of Shakespeare's sonnets were addressed to a beautiful young man; others were written to a "dark lady." My sonnets present different faces of the Beloved, whether literal, metaphorical, mystical, or simply illusions of wishful thinking.

Shakespeare's sonnets are of uneven appeal, as you will find mine. As Martial wrote, *Sunt bona, sunt quaedam mediocria, sunt mala plura quae legis hic: aliter non fit . . . liber* — Some [poems] are good, some middling, plenty plain bad; there's no other way to make a book.

¶ 2. THE MASS.— Sonnets from over half a century and sundry situations — how might I arrange this selection? Because they derive from different friends, circumstances, and poetic exercises, a single story-line or chronology would be too contrived. The order of Shakespeare's sonnets is disputed. They do contain allusions to the Bible, creedal and theological disputes of his time, and liturgical (even Eucharistic) references, some of which could, if read uncharitably, border on blasphemy, not to mention his obscene puns, double entendres, and other forms of word-play. (Lynda Sexson in her 1982 *Ordinarily Sacred*, p112, observes that a "pun is a magical device for turning one thing into two, or three into one," which explains why Shakespeare employed paronomasia so frequently.) Some readers may infer narrative in individual sonnets and in the collection, but his and mine are lyrics, not narratives. This is art, not autobiography; poetry, not a profile; myth, not

memoir; more gizmo than *gesta*. I've altered biographical markers because I do not want to imply any suggestion of narrative advancement. The sonnets are numbered only for convenience. Indeed, what I'm writing nowadays is very different from this collection. Two sonnets, the first and the last, were written expressly for this book.

So rather than devise a "frame story" like the *Arabian Nights*, *Canterbury Tales*, or the *Vita nuova*, I tried grouping my sonnets according to a ritual formula. The Mass suggests different modes of attention, or, to use a mathematical metaphor from chaos theory: x-dimensional phase spaces with God as the Attractor, though I do not imply progressive spiritual attainment. Throughout history and in various churches and in musical settings from early Christianity to the present, elements of the Mass have been employed and arranged in different ways. I retain a common musical sequence even though some may find the sonnets in the CREDO section to be an interruption to the flow of the book; but I think the CREDO better prepares the reader for the "scandal" of the SANCTUS.

Here's how I adapt the Mass sequence. The INTROIT suggests some themes of the sonnets. The KYRIE asks for mercy. The GLORIA praises the gift of love; it is paced with six *troparia*, a term whose many meanings include "turn" or "things repeated in a certain manner"; related, *troubadour* seems to be a later formation from the Greek root, perhaps also by phonological coincidence with an Arabic term from Al-Andalus. Leonard Bernstein used *tropes* in his *Mass*. My *troparia* could be understood as tangents. The CREDO group may seem more explicitly theological than some of the other sonnets. Like Bernstein, I include a CONFITEOR section which offers various moods of confession.

The SANCTUS gathers together most, but not all, of the explicit and sometimes graphic sexual sonnets. Whether the Beloved is man or woman — or God — is sometimes obvious, sometimes not. In Christ, St Paul says, there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28), paralleling the Buddha's comment in the Vimalakirti Sutra, "In all things, there is neither male nor female."

As a pastor in an age which secularizes everything, I certainly have heard accounts of sex I thought demonic, and the news is full of abhorrent stories. Sexuality used to violate another is a grievous and frequent sin, but sexual pleasure itself is no sin; it is a gift. These sonnets display floundering efforts to pry out this truth. As Sam Keen and many others have observed, "spirit and flesh are indivisible," and the degradation of one is the degradation of the other, and the hallowing of one is the hallowing of the other.

Thus with profound respect, I have employed religious terms and allusions from many traditions. What could be more graphic than the multiple forms of voluptuously explicit sexual play on the temples at Khajuraho? Who, afflicted by Western prudery, does not blush at the penetration so clearly indicated by Bernini's orgasmic *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* in the Cornaro Chapel of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome? How can you read Holy Sonnet 14 by John Donne, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London, without gasping at his request that God become his rapist, or in his poem, "The Canonization," that for their love-making, he and his beloved should be regarded as saints? If you are challenged by comparing a penis to a minaret or a rectum to a cathedral nave, consider whether the Western tradition of "nasty parts" deserves your loyalty, or whether God made the body his temple for indwelling ("your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" — 1 Corinthians 6:19). How can one view life whole, holistically, holy, if sex and spirituality are

separate realms? My aim, like mystics in many faiths, is to transform and refresh secular, sacred, and even vulgar language into the lexicon of holy love. Rumi says, “Blasphemy even may be wisdom in the Creator’s sight.”

The AGNUS DEI may be a somber chapter, often dealing with aging. The DISMISSAL presents concluding observations and wishes.

¶ 3. HOW do you read these sonnets? Some folks begin with the notes, to familiarize themselves with a sonnet’s terms and allusions. Others want the sonnets to speak first. Still others have asked me to set the “stage” from which the voice of each sonnet projects. This § INTRODUCTION is the stage. The † *Desire* section presents the characters, that is to say, how I think about sexual yearning and spiritual evolution. Then † *The Sonnet* section shows the “props,” a short course on how poetry works, in history and form.

Each sonnet is an episode unto itself. Their individual characters are more immediate than their order of appearance, though resonances among them reach beyond their scenes and chapters; and some, especially those in the SANCTUS, are valorized best within the context of the entire collection. The play is transformed into a liturgy, interpreting desire in error and in love.

As a prosimetrum, this book is not a quick read. I’ve suggested different paces on page 48, from three weeks to a year; a tip appears on page 50. The APPENDIX, pages 220-221, offers additional help on how to read a sonnet.

Desire

¶ 4. A MUSLIM *hadith* (authoritative tradition) gives these words to God: “I was a hidden treasure and I yearned to be known. Then I created creatures in order to be known by them.” Perhaps we all have this same urge, to know and be known in our fullness. This yearning is fulfilled through love because what can be called God is present in each person; and when we *behold* another, our devotion simply takes over our bodies, and we are given a manifestation of the divine. The yearning we call love is thus God’s way to be noticed.

Similarly, the Rig Veda 10.129:4 asserts that from *kama*, procreative desire, the One created consciousness and the cosmos, an idea resonating in the subsequent development of Hinduism and Buddhism, with a Taoist parallel. Parmenides 13 says *Eros* was the first god, and Hesiod’s Theogony 116-138 portrays *Eros* as forming the world.

In his *Sonnets*, Shakespeare’s desires are manifest and obscure, direct and ironic, often simultaneously. Some say he, deluded by his infatuation, was used; and, by excusing his friend’s faults and mistreatment, he suffered from what codependency. Others see Shakespeare’s with his generous imagination loving without “impediments” (Sonnet 116), assigning failures in the relationship to himself rather than blaming the beloved, with reality recognized only by Sonnet 126 and the relationship resolved. Largely unexplored is how Shakespeare’s distorted perceptions of his “lovely boy” are like our self-deceptions in desiring God.

¶ 5. GOD.— If we translate Shakespeare’s relationship to a theological context with God as the friend, and understand God not as a Supreme Being separate from the rest of real-

ity, but rather as all of Reality itself, then surely it makes little sense to waste time with the ugly and unproductive practice of blaming Reality for what cannot be otherwise. “God” and “god” are used in many ways, and in these sonnets a certain ambiguity is prized. For example, although many consider it blasphemous, it is not a new idea to say that humans create God; in the language of literary analysis, God is the “personification” of Reality, just as the Greek god Poseidon personifies the ocean and Ares war. The poetic isomorphism is the apostrophe, such as when Shelley calls out “O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being . . .” But rather than say God creates the world or humans create God, since humans are part of Reality, it may be better to talk of an ongoing co-creation.

Perhaps this is a hint of what the mystics of many faiths realized. The Iranian Yahya Suhrawardi (1155-1191), for example, perhaps like the English William Blake (1757–1827), seemed to teach that God-Reality could be created or refined by the power of Imagination, to *conceive* what does not yet exist. To make my theme explicit: *Desire is another word for Imagination.*

As a language with Indo-European roots, English structures our thinking about God into a noun, a Supreme *Being*. But other traditions understand Ultimate Reality more as an unfolding creative process or relationship. Evolutionary theologians discern God as energy acting in the minute “spin” of a quark, through atom, molecule, cell, organ, creature, and society, toward cosmic awareness. Under certain conditions matter arranges itself so as to replicate, from salt crystals to DNA to an exuberance of thirty million surviving species. A clump of matter can make a copy of itself from materials in the environment, and with increasing complexity of the clumps is the possibility not only of interaction with the environment but also of self-awareness, and

perhaps even a glimmer of understanding of this evolutionary Process itself.

But is this Process defective? Are we assured of the outcome? Of all species once upon this planet, 99.99 per cent are now extinct. Would a God of foresight and good will require the unimaginable quantity and death-intense suffering often involved in the food chain? Why could not an all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing creator simply provide necessary nutrients in ground water? Human civilizations and individuals die. Floods, wars, crime, and disease may appear as mistakes the Universe makes as it struggles, experiments, creates itself, yearns to be known. Even love itself can be difficult, often tragic. “God is love,” 1 John 4:8 declares, and if so, God blesses loving sex; but that begins, not ends, the complications.

¶ 6. SEX AND SEXUALITY.— Sex is biological and sexuality is cultural; therefore, our present views of sexuality may be encumbered by cultural values that arose under particular conditions. In his 1995 *Sexuality and Catholicism* (p249-250), Thomas C Fox describes an insight Franciscan priest Richard Rohr gained in the Philippines about how sexuality is understood by different cultures. A young Franciscan told him, “when a young Filipino boy can first get the seed there’s no shame associated with that. That first masturbation is a moment of glory and breakthrough. I . . . came running into the school-yard with the seed in my hand. All my classmates came crowding around me, and I exclaimed, ‘I got the seed, I got the seed.’ All the little guys were looking at it, and this meant that I was a man. Now why would that be bad or displeasing to God? . . . Then this old Franciscan walks up and says, ‘What’s that in your hand?’ So I told him it’s my first seed, and he said, ‘Go wash your hand and don’t come back.’ And I could not understand. Why would

that be displeasing? Why would the seed God put in our body be something I should be ashamed of?" Mel White begins his classic 1994/1995 *Stranger at the Gate*, (p11-12), by telling of a recent seminary graduate who told him (at age 12) and other youngsters at summer camp, "Masturbation is a gift from God. . . . it is a natural bodily function that God has given us to relieve sexual pressures when we have no other healthy sexual outlet." Such utterances have been extraordinarily rare from clergy in our culture, and the graduate was dismissed from the camp.

Recall that, in cultures that treated women as possessions, knowing paternity was demanded; this sometimes meant that a woman who "lost her virginity" before marriage was stoned to death. Another example: most cultures have at least permitted, many prizing, same-sex relationships, but in some of them women were inferior to men because they could be penetrated by men; so males who took pleasure in being penetrated were considered woman-like, inferior, and shamed; so slaves or boys, not yet men, were encouraged to give men such pleasure, but often they were not supposed to take pleasure themselves. Even today in some Latin cultures, a man who penetrates other men is completely normal, not considered "gay"; in fact, his bragging rights about his prowess is enhanced exactly as if he seduces many women; straight/gay is not the operative distinction but rather *activo/pasivo* or *machista/cochon*. Of course such distinctions in practice make no sense to many same-sex partners. To repeat: Sex is biological but sexuality is culturally constructed. Desires arise from so many needs and take so many different forms that cultures valuing roles split, constrain, repress, oppress, and deny their rich and unpredictable variety; and what remains are put into categories for commendation or condemnation.

Further, other religious traditions have prohibited exclu-

sivity and attachment by requiring multiple male-female pairings in the spiritual discipline of beholding the divine in each and every partner; such practices have been part of Indian tantra sexual routines and of Christianity, as in the 19th Century New York Oneida Community's complex marriage, where every woman was the wife of every man, and every man was the husband of every woman. Marriage itself has had many forms and meanings. Consider Jacob with his four wives and Solomon with his 700 wives and 300 concubines. Are we talking political alliances, procreation, property rights, honored servants, companionship, sexual opportunities — or love?

Celibacy has been condemned by Jews and praised by Christians; some traditions have supported both male and female sacred prostitution; others have condemned any sexual acts outside of marriage. The Christian Church, sometimes following early Hebrew views, has often held that the only legitimate purpose for sex was procreation; after God killed Onan's brother, Onan's father required him to mate with his brother's widow, but he "spilled his seed on the ground" because he did not want to have children by her, and God, knowing this, killed Onan. Because masturbation cannot produce children (except when a god masturbates), some medieval theologians considered masturbation worse than rape because rape at least presents the possibility of reproduction. As I write this, contraception is still prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church, same-sex desires are regarded as "objectively disordered," celibacy is required of most priests, and women cannot be priests.

These few examples show how different cultures and religions have construed sexuality in extraordinarily different ways, seldom recognizing the Infinite.

¶ 7. SEX AND SPIRITUALITY.— The ideal of romantic (“soul-mate”) love may be derived in part from Arabs such as Ibn Hazm, 994-1064, briefly vizier of Córdoba, whose *The Ring of the Dove* observes love’s variety, wrote that sex is necessary to make love spiritually complete. A monogamous, life-long loving marriage growing from an ever-deepening relationship may still be the American ideal, for both same-sex and heterosexual couples, even if the facts of divorce present a different reality. And other spiritual ideals are possible. Even the “one-night stand” of responsible, consenting adults can celebrate the sheer physical joy of incarnation, *eros* as a blessing; those who find in such an experience a vision of the divine in each partner may discover within the physical ecstasy a taste of transcendence.

On one hand, soul-mate romantic love elevates sexual exclusivity and enhances the relationship. On the other hand, some say that the physical pleasure of sexual activity needs no further justification; youthful “learning how the plumbing works” or a mature partner’s death or other circumstances may make romantic love impossible. For any pleasure, from the healing touch of a massage, the taste of single malt scotch, the smell of a rose, the warmth of a blanket on a chill night, the sight of an extraordinary sunset, or the sound of a cherished pet, one may give thanks, even praise to the Almighty, for these sensations in themselves. Why should sexual arousal and satisfaction in themselves be insufficient to kindle profound thanksgiving?

¶ 8. SEX AND SECULARISM.— Further, there are many forms of profound love that involve no sexual activity at all, some of which these sonnets present. The important concern need not be the particular bodily configuration of love, but rather whether the love is secular — a term by which I mean detached, disconnected — from one’s inmost ener-

gies in a way that profanes oneself or one's partner as an unrelated object. Indeed, our culture and our religious institutions themselves often separate sex from the sacred, as it separates work, medicine, education, technology, farming, art, law, business, government, and every other aspect of civilization from the sacred, whereas all areas were formerly infused with a sense of the holy. Even the magisterial and comprehensive Book of Common Prayer, which includes prayers for occasions related to agriculture, justice, traveling, and such, contains no prayer for lovers to offer together as they begin or conclude love-making. Our so-called Christian culture sometimes appears to sever our sexual joys from the spirit, making Incarnation an abstract theological category instead of revealing the reality of God.

Widespread pornography is usually understood as a guilty and demeaning pleasure. However, erotic appearances in pixels, as in the flesh actually present, or in painting, sculpture, and photography, can become a revelation through which one is engaged in visionary encounter with beauty, fascination, and power as a holy gift; but our society's secular squinting usually defeats holy beholding. Indeed, Eliade has written repeatedly of various modes (ritual, mystical, and such) in many faiths of "the experience of a sanctified sexual life" that "is no longer accessible in a desecralized society" (*The Sacred and the Profane*, p173).

Rumi writes, "The way you make love is the way God will be with you." Secularism is in part a denial of both intimacy and transcendence, yet most people have moments when the usual to-do list suddenly appears trivial, and life is given an unexpected depth and intensity of meaning, a closeness, a fit within what is far beyond one's ordinary, limited self. If secularism is a denial of intimacy and transcendence, then consider Georges Bataille who finds "the search for lost intimacy" to be the "essence" of religion.

¶ 9. SEXUAL INTIMACY.— Sexuality has strongly propelled evolution through unfolding multiplicity and diversity. In humans sex is more than mere reproduction. Sexual yearning can bring people together in exquisitely personal knowledge. A Hebrew idiom often translated “know,” as in Gen. 4:1 (“Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived”), underscores the meaning of personal knowledge. But classical Christian theology, the “work ethic,” and scientism suggest that the purpose of sexuality is offspring, whereas the greater truth may be that the purpose of reproduction is to multiply the knowledge of sexual delight. (Unusual among mammals, human sexuality is freed of the estrus cycle.) Sexual yearning is an instance of, and a metaphor for, God’s “coming out of hiding.” Making love is how the universe best learns. Making love is how God plays. How can we not give thanks for noticing?

Tradition says we are never more ourselves, never more intimate, than when we imaginatively *play*. But if sex manifests as unacknowledged need, it is more like addictive *work*. Unacknowledged, obscured agenda distorts perception of the beloved. Intimacy is ersatz, fake.

In genuine intimacy, partners learn not only about each other but also about how the world works, and what must be done to embrace and uplift all people from the oppressions which slow the evolutionary unfolding of God’s full nature. Kabbalists, Jewish mystics, believe sex is most appropriate on the sabbath. Martin Luther, the Christian Reformer, said that the best place for Christ’s Second Coming is to be united in the act of making love. Ibn Arabi, the Muslim mystic, presents making love as the supreme form of contemplation. In Hindu tantrism, the copulation of Shiva with Shakti gives rise to the universe. In Vajrayana Buddhism, the sexual embrace leads to the key virtue, *karuna*, compassion, and thus Enlightenment.

Love transforms sexuality from the desire for self-satisfaction to the desire merely to attend, which in spontaneous passion is an intimate participation with the other — the fusion of goal and process into identity. A climax becomes not merely a physiological spasm but an intense knowing, a rapturous attention, a noticing more penetrating than Sherlock Holmes could muster, a *beholding* so profound that we lose our ordinary sense of self. As we are immersed in the wonder of love-making, we may find ourselves making the spontaneous exclamation: “God!”

On the other hand, if we are conditioned to a particular feeling or pattern and insist upon a particular outcome, we may be striving more for power than knowledge. The desire, the concupiscence, for what isn’t present may mean we are unable to notice what is present; our ordinary, purposeful self will not yield to the self-emptying which makes union with another real. This is profanity instead of gratitude.

Whether we are addicted to a drug, to buying things, to violent entertainment, to a relationship, to sex, or to religion, the addiction may be a way of suppressing feelings we don’t want to feel, with a temporary “high” that blots out loneliness, pain, uncertainty, and anxiety. But being able to love even when we feel what we don’t want to feel, when we are not getting what we want — this is freedom.

How do we cleanse ourselves of conditioning and reclaim this freedom? Decide and practice.

When we are born, we are noticed, *beheld*. But soon that holding in sacred, loving attention is replaced with conditional regard and approval. The question, “Is it a boy or a girl?” begins the conditioning; how others relate to us, what they say, even so early, depends on our genitals. But we ourselves begin life by *beholding* the world; and, alas, we

soon learn limits to our permitted wonder; our attention is often shaped and directed with prejudice, cissions, segregations, fragmentations, self-deceptions, depersonalizations, sentimentalisms — all of these are idolatry, the trance of secularism.

It is our birthright to embrace everyone and everything. Love is natural and universal. Conditioning limits our connection by *distorting desire* into modes of addiction, compulsion, repulsion, or inhibition. Simply *beholding*, without agenda, is the only way we can truly see another person. Otherwise what we see is shaped by what we want or fear.

Love is a free decision, not a response to hormones, though hormones can rouse us to behold. To love with sheer attention is to notice all before me in my friend. When I want something from a friend, it is hard for me to give my friend unconditional focus; what I want shapes the encounter. But to the degree I can set aside my agenda and behold my friend just as my friend is — apart from my need for my friend to handle my distress or to satisfy my craving, my concupiscence, or even give me attention, without requiring anything in return from my friend — to that extent I can *know* my friend from my own loving nature.

The decision to love is a direction to practice, seldom an achievement.

Attention — enabling us to see where we are — paradoxically frees us to move forward. And when I am blessed to receive such attention, I want to say *Thanks for Noticing*.

¶ 10. YEARNING.— As the *hadith* suggests, the deepest, most creative yearning is to know and be known, out of hiding, to notice who we are.

Yearning is not in itself an addiction, any more than a need is an indulgence. Yearning is a divine energy of spiritual evolution. Seeking to quiet the yearnings in addictive ways abuses these gifts of God. Religious poets like Rumi find God in the yearning. Ignoring or suppressing the yearning can kill the spirit and create an unseen imbalance. Burying the energy gets one stuck; denying it spins one off course. Attempts to appease the yearning, rather than to fully experience it, can distort the energy. This yearning is sacred and natural; it propels us through pain and joy, through disaster and consummation, through ignorance and wisdom. Living with desire without being manipulated by desire is to be fully alive, paradoxically the only genuine continuing fulfillment. Yearning is the wind that blows the sail of the soul's boat, in calm and storm, through the ocean of existence.

How does one live with imagination and desire without being thrown off course by it? By constantly recognizing its energy is from God (or, as the Buddhists might say, the Void) and yielding it back to the Source, where there is no distinction between desire and desirelessness. Rather than mounting a counterforce against yearning, to dominate, deny, suppress, or ignore it, one uses the energy to tack forward. The yearning is thus clarified, purified, sanctified. One must become the bush Moses saw, a bush burning without being consumed. But first one must say, "Let me turn aside and see this great sight" (Exodus 3:3).

This burning without being consumed is the core of Aristotle's "friendship without qualification," the "action without attachment" in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Buddhist com-

passion, Gandhi's *satyagraha*, a profound interpretation of the Christian message of unconditional love, and a marker on the path to liberation in every tradition.

This is where Augustine gets confused. He praises artful farting over coitus because orgasm is not rational and such control of one's bowels is. (*De civitate dei*, XIV, xxiv: *Nonnulli ab imo sine paedore ullo ita numerosos pro arbitrio sonitus edunt, ut ex illa etiam parte cantare uideantur* — “Some have such command of their bowels that they can fart continuously at will, so as to produce the effect of singing.”) While irrational love can lead to distress like infatuation, and worse, to horrors from codependence to violent rape, the love that yields one's will in union with the other can be a metaphor for, or a realization of, divine ecstatic rapture. Augustine is right to condemn concupiscence as a selfish interest, but wrong to think that being “turned on” is necessarily a more likely path to perdition than a cost-benefit analysis of who one's mate should be. As Rumi writes, “The throbbing vein will take you further than any thinking.”

So, in genuine love, arousal and interest lead to opening and surrendering. As Sufi mystics testify, this surrender or (in Arabic) *'fana*, annihilation, paradoxically leads to *baqa*, revival, even union with Ultimate Reality. Our spirituality is our participation in the eternal, evolving universe. In loving, adoring, worshipping, we discover, we co-create the Source of meaning in ecstatic, sacred, recursive encounter.

Far from madness or pathology, or the secret sensibility suggested by those like Andreas Capellanus (*De Amore*) in the late 12th Century and ever since, falling in such love frees the spirit from the social trance that blinds us to the delight of being alive. This is why, to use Heinlein's term in *Stranger in a Strange Land*, lovers “grok” each other, be-

hold a bluer sky, sense their belonging in the world, relate to others with greater understanding, and — through profound at-home-ness in their bodies — often feel overwhelming creative urges. The mystic sensibility is even more intense: the lover and the beloved are one; the lovers are united with God; and all there is, is God.

Such encounters with God lead to gratitude, and gratitude matures into service. Knowing another person intimately is a sharing of joy and suffering, and knowing what makes one's beloved suffer leads one to work to redeem the world, which is the holy work God has given us to do. The real mystics are not isolates; they are social activists with passion.

The Sonnet

¶ 11. A SIGN of the sacrality of the sexual experience is that, like love, it can be described only metaphorically, for the sacred is ineffable. Thus we resort to myth, ritual, poetry, and other art.

The poetic form does not merely contain a sentiment as a glass contains water. Rather speak of the grail containing wine; the meaning of each is intensified by the other. In poetry the form and the sentiment are as intimately related as the body and the soul.

In the famous Rubin gestalt illustration of figure-ground reversal, one may perceive the goblet or the two faces; but they create each other, as yearning and fulfillment, body

and soul, the form and the meaning, create each other, as God and the Creation find each other to know and be known, and, transcending these categories, are propelled toward the Infinite. Poetry should do this.



As mentioned ¶ 5, William Blake (and, as my teacher, Mircea Eliade, has shown, Zarathustra and Suhrawardi, among others) understood that Vision and Creative Imagination gives us access to the Reality we co-create. Love transforms the mundane and flawed presence we offer each other into holy images of how to be with one another. Just as, for Ibn Arabi, God is pronounced by the gift of Imagination, so Poetry spells, entrances, and spills forth the higher Reality implicit in the appearance each creates of oneself and of the Friend. Christians say Christ is the Word made flesh.

The words we choose create or mask Reality, and when humans speak to each other sensuously, their *creative interchange transforms them as they cannot transform themselves* — which is how my teacher, Henry Nelson Wieman, described God, the Creative Event. Giving these sonnets to the reader is my oblation.

¶ 12. THE FORM.— Strict, riming verse is sometimes resented as unnatural, not suited to our age. To me such form is beautiful. Traditional form may use surprising, archaic, technical, slang, and vulgar language, and strained and ambiguous phrasing, for an effect that cannot be achieved in conversational verse. W H Auden insists that “A poem is a rite; hence its formal and ritualistic character. Its use of language is deliberately and ostentatiously different from talk.”

In “An Essay on Criticism,” Alexander Pope wrote that

“True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance, / As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance”; in “Natur und Kunst,” Goethe writes, *In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister, / Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben* — “A master reveals himself through restraint, / and only law can provide freedom.”

Freedom is not the absence of form, but the mastery of form. Humans thrive not by abandoning or rejecting structure, but by fulfilling it in such a way as to transcend it. Similarly, genuine love is not desire whose origins are formless; rather love is the urge to behold and in some sense to unite with the Beloved, an ardor which can mature into a decision to surrender control to a Larger Process. The purpose becomes purposelessness, sheer delight, bliss. Perhaps one reason the love sonnet has endured for over five hundred years is that its asymmetrical balance expresses this mystery: that mastery and surrender are one.

While I hope readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the sonnet form will *hear* what the sonnets say, knowing the form’s history, how the form is used, and how some of the technical devices are employed, can enhance their meaning. Hence this propaedeutic.

- The sonnet is often used dramatically. The poet addresses a particular person in a particular situation.
- Through the sonnet’s characteristic logical, even forensic, examination, an underlying emotion is discovered and explored.
- A theme of early sonnet sequences was the revelation, through physical beauty, of spiritual love, with affection for friends of the same sex often expressed incidentally. Many of Shakespeare’s sonnets seem to be as much about art, and particularly poetry, as they are about his relationships.

¶ 13. EARLY HISTORY.— By 1290 the sonnet (“little sound”) may have become independent from its form as a song, exploring the many emotions and conditions of sex and love. Its development in Italy in the Thirteenth Century was perfected by Petrarch in the Fourteenth. It was the first poetic form prepared for the printed page.

The English adopted it in the Sixteenth Century. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) transformed the sonnet from what had become worn convention and tralatitious sentiment to reveal its secret powers afresh.

While subsequent English poets have used the sonnet to write about many subjects and often used the Italian style (Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Browning, etc) still *love*, for which the sonnet is the sublime vehicle, is the single topic most often associated with this poetic form.

Sir Philip Sidney (1544-1586) could write a sonnet like a torso of earned muscles, posing. Here is one ironic to my theme:

*Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare,
Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scattered thought;
Band of all evils, cradle of causeless care;
Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought;
Desire! Desire! I have too dearly bought,
With price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware;
Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought,
Who should my mind to higher things prepare.*

*But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought;
In vain thou madest me to vain things aspire;
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire;
For virtue hath this better lesson taught,—
Within myself to seek my only hire,
Desiring naught but how to kill desire.*

¶ 14. ENGLISH AND ITALIAN SONNETS.— The scaffolding of the Shakespearean sonnet is simple (but not easy): a poem of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, with a rime scheme of *abab-cdcd—efef.gg*, sometimes interpreted as three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a couplet (two-line stanza); sometimes as an octave (eight-line stanza), a quatrain, and a couplet. One of Shakespeare's sonnets, 99, is fifteen lines, another is twelve lines, Sonnet 126 uses riming couplets only; and his rime and rhythm patterns are not rigid throughout the corpus. An iamb is a group of two syllables, the first unaccented, the second stressed, as in the word *desire*. A line of five groups of syllables, or "feet," is called pentameter. The concluding couplet often provides an epigrammatic whiplash to the Shakespearean sonnet.

The Petrarchan sonnet, on the other hand, opens with an octave with a rime scheme of *abbaabba* and concludes with a sestet (six lines), often either *cdecde* or *cdcdcd*. This form swells and ebbs, avoiding the Shakespearean climax. Another way of viewing some Petrarchan sonnets is two quatrains followed by two tercets (three-line stanzas).

Spenser developed a hybrid: *ababbcbccdcdee*. Other poets have tried many variations and irregularities.

Since English has fewer riming words than Italian, the seven riming sounds in the English sonnet may conform more to the nature of the language, and thus seem more natural, than repeating four or five riming sounds in the Italian pattern, though Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Hopkins, Frost, and Cummings, among many others, have done it. I hope it is interesting when I try.

The sonnet often has a *volta*, a turn of thought, often initiated with "But" or "Yet." In the Italian sonnet, the volta, marked by the onset of new end rimes, occurs between the octave and the sestet; in the English sonnet it may occur

there (as in Sidney, quoted above, Shakespeare's 29 below, Donne's below, and mine below) or as late as the concluding couplet (as in Shakespeare's 130), or even the very last line (as in Shakespeare's 66). Most of the sonnets in this book use Shakespearean scaffolding.

¶ 15. INTERIOR PATTERNS.— The sonnet interior principle varies. One order consists of three quatrains, each presenting the sonnet's theme in a different metaphor, and a concluding couplet. A perfect example, embodying my concerns with youth, age, death, and love, is Shakespeare's 73:

*That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.*

*In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.*

*In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it is nourished by.*

*This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.*

A second pattern sets forth a theme in the octet, summarizes it in the next quatrain, and encapsulates it in the couplet: eight lines condensed to four, and then condensed again into two, as in Shakespeare's 55 (see also 33 and 87):

*Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rime;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.*

*'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.*

*So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.*

Thirdly, perhaps the most distinctive interior consists of an octave presenting one mood or view and, with the *volta*, a contrasting or resolving sestet, as Shakespeare's 29 (see also 2, 18, and 106):

*When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble dead heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;*

*Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to a lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.*

A fourth interior principle is meandering, with no particular separation of thought within the external edifice. Sometimes the progression of the thought works against, or ignores, the scaffolding. Some of Milton's best sonnets gain power by enjambment, the spilling over of sense from one line to the next.

Each inner structure within the external form has its own effect, and gives the poet a way of conveying the message beyond the words, the sounds, the images; the inner structure is like the tone of voice or the posture we use when we speak. The form itself can become the body language of the meaning. Art is the body language of the soul.

¶ 16. DONNE AND HOPKINS.— In addition to Shakespeare, two other sonnet writers may introduce my own efforts because they are especially concerned with spiritual themes.

“Metaphysical” poet John Donne (1573-1631), Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, often used sexual metaphors in his poems of faith, sometimes almost blasphemously, and made *religion* as important a topic for the sonnet as *love*. Another cleric-poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889, published in 1918), also wrote sonnets with an explosive power displaying the spirit in sensual celebration. Both employ forms in nature as the images of the spirit. Donne uses the vocabulary of science and Hopkins glories in the outdoors.

No poet more effectively than Donne uses the device of paradox. Akin is the “conceit,” an elaborate, exaggerated comparison. The ingenuity and intellectual challenge of the conceit make us think afresh to feel deeply. The conceit finds the edges of reality around deep, otherwise formless, sentiment.

Observe the conceits in one of Donne's “Holy Sonnets,”

14, its torment typical. God is Trinity, blacksmith, glass-blower, battle chief, rapist. Donne, in the octave, is a city under siege (twisting a Petrarchan convention of the beloved's heart as a fortress); in the sestet (beginning with "Yet") he is a sexual partner desiring a different lover. The final tercet (which ends with a couplet) unites the two metaphors and brings the conceits to a climax all the more shocking because it seems sacrilegious, but irresistible and unassailable.

*Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labor to admit You, but O, to no end;
Reason, Your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.*

*Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,
But I am betrothed unto Your enemy.
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;
Take me to You, imprison me, for I,
Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me.*

While I tend to keep my lines to ten syllables (stricter than Donne, and certainly stricter than Hopkins who might in one line run sixteen syllables in his "Sprung Rhythm"), those who know Hopkins may see his influence where I use archaic forms of words and terms in their original senses, in concentrated alliteration and assonance, in internal rimes, puns and energy-twisted syntax. If my meter hides any influence from the sprawl of American Walt Whitman (1819-1892), surely the celebration of varied expressions of sexuality here is owing to his courage. Although most poets

vary meter from the expected pattern to enhance the meaning, my pacing is sometimes particularly indebted to Hopkins, even though I usually count syllables rather than stresses. Here is “The Windhover: To Christ Our Lord,” a much anthologized example of the Hopkins sonnet:

*I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!*

*Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!*

*No wonder of it; sheer plod makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.*

The ministry in the sonnets of Donne and Hopkins points to directions for a spiritual healing of today's fragmented secularity. By polluting the environment, we are divorced from nature. By compartmentalizing our lives, we split body from spirit. By tolerating greed in the political community, we abuse each other for ends broken off from the covenant with the Infinite.

¶ 17. MUSIC IN VERSE.— Poetry may be as much music as idea: poems must be heard, not just read with the eye. (“Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono, . . .” wrote Petrarch in *The Canzoniere*, “You who hear the sound in scattered rimes, . . .” not “you who *read* . . .” The very term “sonnet” derives from the same linguistic root as “sonic,” “sonata,” “resonate,” and the word “sound” itself. Most sonnets need repeated hearings. Even one that may seem obvious the first time through can become a calamity if the music is any good.

Here is my «Ad Astra», the first of a pair sonnets, varying the theme of Shakespeare’s 55, to illustrate common ways of talking about the music from the flow and repetition of sound:

*In my frail frame immortal love doth dwell;
and in these lines with borrowed breath you live.
No skill can keep my body from death’s spell;
what skill I have doth life forever give
to you and me conjoined in sounds that they
shall speak who never knew us, though they gaze
long through the window of this page, and say
with wonder how we loved, in our brute age.*

*And yet no words I write can e’er be true;
they all fumble, flunk, fall, deform, and fail
the infinite mystery that is you
and me, like calling minnow what is whale.*

*No lay can list to others what is ours
though yet these rimes might reach as far as stars.*

Here are some of the technical devices the sonnet employs. Many of them may be found in other forms of poetry.

- cadence or rhythm (including pause and pacing as well as stress or length of sound, and variation of the meter): “infinite mystery,” “fumble, flunk, fall, deform”
- alliteration (repetition of consonantal sounds at the beginning of words): “borrowed breath . . . body,” “what . . . whale”
- consonance (repetition of consonantal sounds at the end or within words): “frame immortal,” “have . . . forever give”
- dissonance or half-rime (repetition of consonantal sounds around a changed vowel, usually in a stressed syllable): “fall . . . fail,” “window . . . wonder”
- assonance or vowel rime (repetition of vowel sounds with different consonantal sounds before and after the vowel, usually in a stressed syllable): “death’s spell,” “gaze . . . age”
- rimes: ► end rimes (at the end of lines): “true . . . you”
► leonine rimes (one word ending a pause within a line with a word ending a line): “page . . . age” ► internal (rimes elsewhere): “all . . . fall,” “you . . . knew”

End rimes may or may not be important. The end of the line may make a natural break in the thought, or internal rimes or other effects may be more important and the end rimes will be “hidden” to the ear as the poem is read.

- the stanza (described by my teacher, Karl Shapiro, as “a kind of larger rhythm” within the body of a poem, like a paragraph in prose); in the sonnet, a stanza can be a quatrain, the octave, the sestet, the couplet, even a tercet.

- the sequence (a series of related poems). This book is a sequence of sonnet sequences. The poem above is the first of a pair, and part of the larger sequence. The reader will

discover references and resonances by comparing the individual poems, even separated by chapters, though I have been able to place closely several poems which reflect on each other. This book is not a corona, an ingenious sequence with linked rimes as well as content.

¶ 18. THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THOUGHT.— A good poem's sounds and images are riveted into thought. A context thus evoked is like a temple where the holy can be manifested. Symbols, sonance, smells, movement, and immersion in space can conjure unexpected meaning.

As an example, examine «Campfire». The last word is “dreams.” Are these the dreams my friend and I each had, or are they visions for our lives? What does the bird mean? What is its role in waking us? How does this relate to the problem of being close? How does fire bring us close? Why are the stones which ring the fire called a “chalice”? Why are the flames “wordless tongues,” where else does the image of tongues of fire appear, and why is it noticed that they arise from tree wood (no longer alive)? How is night, mythic, non-historical time, dream time, related to ordinary daylight, reality? What does this have to do with his being nineteen and my being forty-nine? Is there a point to the sequence of the “fire goes out,” the bird “wakes us,” and then “we ignite”? What is the answer to my question, “Who are you, Nineteen?” The title is «Campfire». Where is the campfire, really? And how does sound clarify or deepen or expand the meaning? (Example: the line, “around the chalice of stones on the ground,” begins and ends with words that rime, in changed rhythm, perhaps enacting the “ring, spin . . . dance” of the previous line.)

With the strict limits of the sonnet, every word counts, sometimes with several meanings, as a beam or pillar may

be both decorative and structural.

While onomatopoeia is an elementary way of making the sounds of words imitate that to which they point, a more subtle and difficult form of mimesis is the performatory use of language, where the words enact the thing itself. For example, when I as a clergyman pronounce to a couple, “you are now husband and wife,” or “you are now united in marriage,” the very words effect the thing spoken. Similarly, a person is not “guilty” in law until the jury announces its finding. When I apologize for an error, the very words, “I apologize . . . ,” constitute the act. {I welcome you . . . I advise you . . . I baptize you . . . I curse you . . . I warn you . . . I order you . . . I promise you that . . . } are examples where the utterance is the action itself. In the most extended sense, all of Virgil’s *Aeneid* is performatory, for all follows his opening: *Cano, arma que virum* I sing of arms and of the man

Much of the Mass employs performatory language. For example, in “Holy Eucharist Rite II Eucharistic Prayer B” of The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p371, the priest says, “Remembering now his [Christ’s] work of redemption, and offering to you [God] this sacrifice of thanksgiving,” which the people continue, “we celebrate his death and resurrection, as we await the day of his coming.” The speech effects or performs the event itself.

Shakespeare comes close to performatory magic in his Sonnet 55, when he demonstrates with his words — spoken by today’s reader — the persistence of the memory of his young friend: “You live in this [sonnet], and dwell in lovers’ eyes.” It is by the readers’ reading the sonnet that the content of the words are enacted. While my «Ad Astra» is obviously inferior, its octave reaches toward a similar effect. The poem is, in part, self-referential, about the recitation of the words being recited.

The notion of performatory language is not well known, though J L Austin and others have discussed it; I mention it because it is a curious function in Shakespeare's sonnets (as Helen Vendler demonstrates), and I employ it. Perhaps the reader may find pleasure in being aware of it. In fact, in his "Ars Poetica," Archibald MacLeish suggests all poems should be performatory in the sense that "A poem should not mean / but be." In "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," Wallace Stevens writes that "The poem is the cry of its occasion, / Part of the *res* itself and not about it." And Robert Lowell wrote, "Poetry is not the record of an event: it is an event." Of dance performance, Isadora Duncan said, "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it."

Shakespeare may structure his argument, sometimes unresolved except rhetorically, by contrast or contradiction or contradistinction, or by similarity or time or analogy or rank or intensity, by foreground or background, by parody, by chiasm (crossing of what would otherwise be parallel expressions), prolepsis (responding to an anticipated argument) or palinode (retracting an earlier statement) or by any number of modes. His metaphors come from a variety of cultural forms and scientific disciplines and freely employs catachresis (an intentional error in word choice, sometimes creating a mixed metaphor). The language itself intensifies and deepens the experience by requiring the reader to notice archaic terms and etymological hints (he contrasts words derived from Anglo-Saxon with Latinate constructions). With sonic, sense, syntactical, or logical juxtapositions like hysteron proteron (cart before the horse), old words and themes are made afresh. If attention is a prerequisite for love, noticing how Shakespeare works his wordy wonders heightens the thrill, and makes even despair a melody of ironic praise. This is possible because in Shakespeare, as in

the succeeding 17th Century “metaphysical poets,” thought and feeling are the same.

Asking questions about the selection of words, the sequence of images, and the flow of the sound is like scaling an edifice to view the uniqueness of each poem and the individual way it must be read.

Sometimes a poem says several things, perhaps even contradictions, at once. Reading the whole compass of feelings leads to that inscrutable Process which enriches the experience of love, and which love serves.

For example, the last line of the «Ad Astra» companion sonnet, «Acropolis Canon», reads: “In death I lie for love without desire.” How does one read “lie”? Consider at least these three possibilities: [1] when I am dead (or, in the convention associating death with completed sexuality, after orgasm), when I will no longer feel desire, [2] even in death this sonnet perpetuates the lie that I loved without desire, and [3] when my ego is extinguished, I am capable of the surrender I call love without desire.

¶ 19. THE CONTEXT.— Poetry, like life, is trouble. A poem can be a virus and upset your life. I believe it was Housman who made it a rule never to think of poetry while he was shaving because when he did, he cut himself.

In his 1956 inaugural lecture as Chair of Poetry at Oxford University, “Making, Knowing, and Judging” [*The Dyer’s Hand*, p50-51], W H Auden writes:

The questions which interest me most when reading a poem are two. The first is technical: “Here is a verbal contraption. How does it work?” The second is, in the broadest sense, moral: “What kind of guy [sexism noted] inhabits this poem? What is his notion of the good life or the good place? His no-

tion of the Evil One? What does he conceal from the reader? What does he conceal even from himself?"

Concerning his first question: It can be a bother just trying to "get" a poem. I hope that the images and sounds will make these poems worthwhile without complete intellectual accouterments, and invite rereading the sonnets aloud until the sense appears. Yet many readers will sometimes find scientific, literary, and religious allusions in these sonnets unfamiliar. Although the glosses are meant to help, they also become part of this book's texture as a prosimetrum.

The Biblical book of Jeremiah contains both poetry and prose, as does *The Mahabharata*, Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, *The Tale of Genji*, *One Thousand and One Nights (The Arabian Nights)*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*, and Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. As Edward C Upton's 2010 PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago Divinity School on T S Eliot's "The Waste Land" argues, the appended notes become an "expansion of the poem proper." Dante's the *Vita nuova*, the *New Life*, a prosimetrum with 25 sonnets and other poems, grows out of the troubadour tradition of courtly love and transforms it into expressions of sacred love, with desire for beauty valorized as the epiphany of the divine. Dante's comments include notes on the structure of the poems themselves. My earlier collection, *Love Without Desire*, placed notes in the back of the book. With this book the notes and glosses are with the poems, on the same page. Thus *Thanks for Note-icing* becomes an unintended prosimetrum by which the contraption may be got.

Even with these aids, it is better to encounter a poem as a sound video, not a block of print. What is in print is not the poem; the page markings can be compared to a musical score which gives directions for sound moving through time. A good poem's sound is more than make-up on a

corpse; it is the breath that delivers life. Insofar as a poem can be paraphrased, it is an autopsy, not a poem.

Concerning Auden's second question, my answer is inadequate; but I can say that writing these sonnets has been like praying, a way of discovering the shape of yearning, from petty selfishness to a vision of larger love, offering my longings, perplexities, and rejoicings to the Larger Context, and realizing where I am resisting or yielding to the Flow. No single sonnet signs success, nor does the scope and sum of them spell anything more than sustained struggle.

This book fits within a larger pattern of world religions. That pattern is revealed by asking of each tradition, "What is sacred?" The answers come from the realms of nature, personhood, and society. A summary in the APPENDICES charts this theory. In brief, this collection of sonnets explores questions of personal identity in various contexts toward a realization that attachments and aversions can be snares, but that genuine love is freedom, that desire rightly noticed and interpreted can be the most gracious response to the wonder of being. Although the sonnet is usually a form of personal expression, I hope this collection in some way propels the reader to notice more deeply, to behold the overlapping realms of the environment, of oneself, and of community. Perhaps the particular valorization of sex as an arena of the holy will suggest that other areas of our culture — from eating to economics to the environment — may also reveal the holy if we will but notice.

But this collection fails if it is noticed simply for a moral purpose. Summarizing the message of a poem is like watching someone walk across the room; but the poem itself is like the same space explored by a dancer; the summary movement is, well, pedestrian; the second, art. If one is only interested in traversing the room, the art is an annoying obstruction to one's goal. But if one abandons the goal, one

can notice — behold — sacred play. More than as theological texts, I hope these sonnets will be noticed as art; for art, by directing attention to itself — what kind of “contraption” it is and how it works — paradoxically throws us beyond itself into the heart of who we really are and what we must do.

In art and life, forms of desire (such as imagination, appetite, interest, curiosity, fascination, and yearning) bring us to encounter ourselves, others, and the world — personhood, community, nature. If we responsibly honor desire, certainly including sexual yearning, by noticing and abandoning our agenda and roles, we can be brought into that sacred union which is so empty that we may be filled beyond ourselves with the divine. Such noticing is my interpretation of desire.

Living religiously means noticing the glory and the horror of existence, and especially noticing what at first seems, in secular sight, ordinary.

You can read all the sonnets in **ONE YEAR**, 3 per week, say 1 each MWF. Or in **THREE MONTHS**, 2 each day, MTWThFSa. Or in **ONE MONTH**, 8 each day, MTWThF. — Or **RUSH PLAN, THREE WEEKS, 21 DAYS**, shown here:

1. Foreword	8. 41-49	15. 103-110
2. Introduction	9. 50-60	16. 111-120
3. Sonnets 1-6	10. 61-72	17. 121-128
4. 7-12	11. 73-77	18. 129-138
5. 13-21	12. 78-86	19. 139-150
6. 22-28	13. 87-94	20. 151-154
7. 29-40	14. 95-102	21. Appendices, pages 206-210 and 220-221

Collect for Purity

Deus cui omne cor patet et omnis voluntas loquitur: et quem nullum latet secretum: purifica per infusionem sancti spiritus cogitationes cordis nostri: ut te perfecte diligere et digne laudare mereamur, per dominum nostrum iesum christum filium tuum qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate eiusdem spiritus sancti deus, per omnia secula seculorum. Amen. — *Sarum Rite*

God, unto whom alle hertes ben open, and unto whom alle wille spekith, and unto whom no privé thing is hid: I beseche thee so for to cense the entent of myn heart with the unspekable gift of thi grace that I may parfiteliche love thee, and worthilich preise thee. Amen. —*The Cloud of Unknowing*

Almightie God, unto whom all hartes bee open, and all desyres knowen, and from whom no secretes are hid: cense the thoughtes of our hartes, by the inspiracion of thy holy spirite: that we may perfectly loue thee, and worthely magnifie thy holy name: through Jesus Christ our Lorde. Amen. —*The Booke of the Common Prayer, 1549*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen. —*The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Whatever the historical context in which he is placed, *homo religiosus* always believes that there is an absolute reality, the sacred, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real. —MIRCEA ELIADE in his famous 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p202.

Eliade can be criticized as “Modernist” and “essentialist,” but he was my revered teacher. I would rephrase the passage above this way: Whatever the historical context in which one is placed, *homo religiosus* always trusts in an absolute reality, the Sacred, which transcends how we perceive the everyday world and yet manifests itself in the ordinary, thereby sanctifying it and making it real.

READING one of these sonnets new is like meeting a stranger with a friend. If you want, skip the friend’s introduction (the **EPIGRAPHS**) and meet the stranger directly by speaking the sonnet aloud. But if you want to know the stranger’s background, consider the **NOTES AND GLOSSES** that follow. An arrow with an expression in angle brackets names a sonnet →«Example», the note for which expands a phrase, usually cited in **bold**. Page 224 lists other conventions used in this prosimetrum (book of poetry integrated with prose). Advice on how to read sonnets appears on pages 220-221. Schedules to read the book in one year, three months, one month, or three weeks are on page 48.

If you are unfamiliar with American religious history and with world religions and want some background, start with Stephen Prothero’s 2007 *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*.

1. أَلْفَاتِحَة Al-Fatiha: Opening Instruction

Cui dono lepidum novum libellum . . . ?

πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει.

OPEN, BOOK, open to the reader — *wide!*
 and let the peace lodged longing in one's heart
 be burning in these pages ranged, and guide
 all yearning for the universe to start.
 As god creates us through the Word to know,
 be known! let faith emblazed these pages hint;
 cessation of all disconnections show;
 and friendly pure and fleshy passions, print.

LET ALL COMPANIONS, gay and straight, rich, poor,
 whatever race, male and female, young, old
 (let those alone especially) adore
 the god who only with one's love is told.
 Inflate! ignite, Each Page, with your turning;
 inflame the god within who brings all burning!

Al-Fatiha (The Opening) is the name of the opening surah (chapter) in the Holy Qur'an. Used in daily devotions, its place in Muslim practice can be compared with Christians' The Lord's Prayer, The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p364. The EPIGRAPH is from the first of the *Carmina* by Catullus: To whom do I send this fresh, elegant little book . . . ? **E2**: the opening of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: All humans by their nature want to know. **Yearning**: a Hadith-i Qudsi (Makatib-i Abdu'l-Baha, vol 2, Cairo, 1330, 2-55) has God saying, "I was a hidden treasure and I yearned to be known. Then I created creatures in order to be known by them." The sonnet also alludes to John 1:1: "In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But words are not the Word; Rumi → «The Sun» wrote that God wants not fine phrases but rather "**burning**" — a contrast with Buddhism's nirvana, which means, in effect, "no burning." In *Fihi maffi*, Baldock, p49, he wrote, "Words are useful because they stimulate you and set you searching, but what you are searching for cannot be attained through words" → «The Sun». **Cessation of all disconnections**: In *Sacred Sexuality*, 1992, p197, Georg Feuerstein writes of experiencing "reality not as a conglomerate of spatial solids but as an infinite web of energy that manifests the miracle of our familiar space-time world." **God**: → § Introduction ¶5, → «Content». **Open** means candid, beginning, inviting, accessible. **Instruction** means direction, lesson. This first sonnet is paired with the last in this volume. **Pure and fleshy passions**: See Oxford theologian Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, 2000/2001, p151: "If the Church is to speak in and to the present *Zeitgeist*, then it must recover its deliberations of desire and articulate again its theology of eros."

2. *Don't Ask*

DON'T ask why those old folks made cairns from stones,
 or temples grew to urge epiphanies,
 why precincts of the dead were sacred zones,
 or why Lascaux predicted every frieze.
 Don't ask why Sumer told of Gilgamesh,
 or Homer showed why proud Achilles mourned,
 or Shakespeare's sonnets fathomed more than flesh,
 why Jonathan's desire was never scorned.
 Don't ask me why these lines crawl forth in praise
 for sacred gifts of love and thews and time,
 why troubled histories become a phrase
 and tumbled mysteries convert in rime.
 This is no realm of reasonable things.
 By mortals God is killed, but still Bach sings.

Don't ask alludes to the 1993-2011 "Don't ask, don't tell" policy preventing declared homosexuals from serving in the US military, and also to a phrase in an 1894 poem by Lord Alfred Douglas, cited in an indecency trial of Oscar Wilde. *Todos hecho, nada dicho*, "everything done, nothing said," refers to the practice in many cultures of approving while denying widespread same-sex behavior. *Cairns* are piles of stones erected to mark a powerful spiritual experience, as, for example, Genesis 28:18-22, when Jacob consecrates a stone with oil to mark "this awesome place," which he calls Bethel, the House of God. An *epiphany* is a manifestation of the divine. Even before the evolution of language, the earliest attempts to represent or guide others to such [1] "unitive" experiences of the sacred have been [2] ritual and other art forms, about which [3] myths arose, and finally [4] cognitive descriptions, creeds, and theologies developed the narratives; it is often difficult to discern the unitive experience from the creed. *Lascaux*, in southwestern France, is the site of Paleolithic cave paintings. A *frieze* is an extended painted or carved decoration, usually above the eye, often on the entablature of classical structures. *Sumer* was a city in ancient Mesopotamia; it produced the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which tells the story of a friendship between the king *Gilgamesh* and his partner Enkidu. Homer's *Iliad* includes an account of the warrior *Achilles* grieving when his companion Patroclus was killed. Most of *Shakespeare's sonnets* of love were written to a fair young man. In the Biblical story (1 Samuel) *Jonathan*, the son of King Saul, became David's covenanted friend. (See Chapter 5 of Gary David Comstock's 1993 *Gay Theology Without Apology*.) When Jonathan was killed, David lamented, "your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26) → «Relaxed». *By mortals God is killed* is an allusion to the Christian story of the crucified God-Man Jesus as well as to Nietzsche's famous statement in *The Gay Science* (1882), "God is dead. . . . And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?" In his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p208, Eliade writes that the secular person "will not be truly free until he has killed the last god." The great church composer Johann Sebastian *Bach* (1685–1750) wrote works such as *Christ lag in Todes Banden* (*Christ Lay in Death's Bonds*), *St Matthew Passion*, *St John Passion*, and the *Mass in B Minor*.

3. The Call

For the ordination of Mark E Hoelter

FROM flash and intense heat, it starts again,
 this bouncing universe. Big Crunch, Big Bang;
 then quark and atom, cell and citizen
 evolve, called, pulled forth with multiple twang.
 And all things, in this grope, are hurt and die,
 converging with expansion toward some tale,
 self-knowledge of it all we all espy
 in sacred moments of still, shout, or wail.

You are called to call us forth, reflecting
 in yourself all things, impinged with dread and hope,
 respecting all, connecting and electing
 what is holy in our daily scope.

This call, called Love, as rapture's human play,
 urges us become Life from lifeless clay.

A *call* is a summons, particularly to a career such as the ministry. One cosmic theory proposes that the universe contracts (*Big Crunch*), explodes (*Big Bang*), and expands in unending cycles. (Others say the universe expands forever.) *Quarks* are particles from which such as neutrons and protons are composed, which in turn are constituents of *atoms*. "Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures . . ." —The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p827. "Babylonian superstition was closer to the truth in its erroneous associations of the planets' movements and human events than was Greek rationalism in its progressive dissociation of man and nature, polis and cosmos." —Lewis Mumford, 1961/1989 *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, p70. Hua-yen Buddhism and the Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), among others, teach that each person reflects *all things*. *Election* is a theological term for being chosen (for salvation). The last line refers to Genesis 2:7. *Play*: In effect, Wittgenstein regarded "play" as polythetic. "In the form and function of play, itself an independent entity which is senseless and irrational, man's consciousness that he is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest expression." —Johan Huizinga, 1938/1949 *Homo Ludens*, p17-18. Many scholars believe that play has been a key mode in human evolution. Gregory Bateson, 1972 *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* suggests that play itself may refer to things outside play and thus helped to develop communication. Kant and Schiller, and John Dewey and George Herbert Mead have valorized play; and Gordon Burghardt and others have noticed that play involves freedom from the demands of ordinary time. Ian Suttie, in his 1935 *The Origins of Love and Hate*, argues that play is the "mother of invention," not as the proverb has it, necessity. Carole M Cusack described play in "invented" religions: "Play, Narrative and the Creation of Religion" in *Culture and Religion*, 14:4, Dec 2013, 363-377. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow describes an understanding of play's sense of freedom → «Thanks for Noticing». Rituals can be such play; Guardini → «Naked Faith». Sonnets 3 and 6 are "occasional" poems.

4. *Dimensions*

To see a world in a grain of sand

WHAT means these tidily tilled Gödel lines?
 Self-referential, garden verse can lead
 through paradox beyond the frame, as shrines
 remand the puffed and profane world and plead
 an infinite gain in each grain of sand,
 eternal action in a flower's event;
 span spontaneity with what was planned,
 find fabled, flawless jewels in each lament.

As music moves beyond itself to speak
 where rhythm, pitch, and timbre only point,
 the plexus field plowed freely, fuller than technique,
 so shrines in rime may pendant worlds anoint.

A fane must burst its frame to be a fane;
 a poem must leave its lines for wide domain.

The EPIGRAPH is from William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower / hold infinity in the palm of your hand / and eternity in an hour." Gananath Obeyesekere names similar compressions of space and time in Freud, the Bhagavata Purana, Julian of Norwich, and Pemalingpa in "The Buddha's Meditative Trance" in *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, Robert N Bellah and Hans Joas, ed, 2012, p130-131; to which, of course, the vision of Krishna in the Gita, 11, should be added to an endless list. **Remand** and **plead** are legal terms. Milton wrote of "this **pendant World**" in *Paradise Lost*, Book 2. A **fane** is a temple; **profane** originally meant simply "outside the temple." Line 13 recalls Eliade's 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p59: "In the last analysis, it is by virtue of the temple that the world is resanctified in every part. However impure it may have become, the world is continually purified by the sanctity of sanctuaries." Similarly, intentional communities can point us to the Beloved Community envisioned by Martin Luther King Jr (and Josiah Royce). **Tilled**: "With the farming of a verse/ make a vineyard of the curse." —W H Auden, "In Memory of WB Yeats." **Gödel lines**: a reference to Gödel numbers (numbers are metrical periods or feet; hence lines of poetry), suggesting the self-referential method by which Gödel proved his incompleteness theorems in 1931. **Eternal action**: A Buddhist perspective, *pratitya-samutpada* (often translated as co-dependent origination), is that the universe is eternally in process such that all things are interdependent, and all things arise from multiple causes and infinitely connected conditions. Ecologist Garrett Hardin wrote, "We can never do merely one thing. Wishing to kill insects, we may put an end to the singing of birds. Wishing to 'get there faster,' we insult our lungs with smog" in "The Cybernetics of Competition," 1963 *Autumn Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, p80. **Fabled . . . jewels**: The Hindu god Indra's net hangs with perfect jewels at each vertex in such a manner that each reflects the entire universe and every other jewel. See Garma C C Chang's 1971 *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism* and Francis H Cook's 1977 *Hwa-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*. This sonnet is paired with the next.

5. *This Season's Rune*

Don't confuse the finger pointing to the moon with the moon.

Description's an element, like air or water.

THIS season's rime is not a time of year;
 not spring, not fall, but presently; not three
 or nine months hence or past. This sonneteer
 describes you now and for eternity,
 tied elements, stirred ruction in this verse
 to grab the brain, or is the brain, synapse
 smacked with recognition that the drab curse
 that hides the sacred from us must collapse.

All seven days are sacred when the mind
 and heart are free, each nano-second's point
 is holy, fresh, round which the world must wind.

The whole and part each mutually anoint.
 These feet are fingers pointing to the moon —
 for lunar light shines also on the rune.

The EPIGRAPH is a Zen proverb. **E2:** from "Black Zodiac" in Charles Wright's 1997 *Black Zodiac*, p67. **Three or nine months:** ways of calculating pregnancy. **Synapses** are microscopic gaps in the brain across which neurotransmitters travel. **A nano-second** is one billionth of a second. A **foot** is a metrical unit, a measure of stressed and unstressed syllables. **Runes** are letters in early Germanic alphabets, nowadays often associated with sacred things or magic, as in inscriptions. This poem is about poetry (fane, see **Fane** in «Dimensions», the preceding sonnet) and the world (profane): "It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there." —William Carlos Williams, "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower." **Sonneteer:** Some trace the development of the sonnet and its theme of love to Andalusian music and poetry, through the troubadours of Provençal to Sicily and thence to Italy. Many early sonneteers employed themes of love, sexuality, and the divine, possibly traced to *The Dove's Neck-Ring* by polymath Ibn Hazm (994-1064), born in Córdoba. His influence on troubadours can be identified by love's "delightful malady, a most desirable sickness," and "martyrs of love," and the related romantic theme of secret, unrequited love, found later in European chivalry and courtly love, such as Dante's *Vita nuova* and *Commedia*, and even in John Donne (1572-1631), dean of St Paul's Cathedral, as in his famous Holy Sonnet 14. The parallel of sexual desire to the saint's yearning for God continues to be elaborated. Except in law, Muslim Ibn Hazm (994-1064, an Andalusian polymath and a proponent of comparative religion, considered homosexual and heterosexual love without distinction. **All seven days:** "Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee; in my heart, though not in heaven, I can raise thee. Small it is, in this poor sort to enroll thee; e'en **eternity's** too short to extol thee" —this is the third verse of a hymn, the text by Anglican priest George Herbert (1593-1633). Sonnets 1, 2, 4, and 5 are about poetry and faith.

6. *A Wedding Reel*

Love is the every only god.

I saw eternity the other night
like a great ring of pure and endless Light . . .

WITHIN the spheres that turn by love's design
you two appear, to pick the moment ripe;
you circle, ring each other, and refine
dull dross, embodying the archetype:
"This guy, this gal, though two, are one
as each plain moment opens mystery,
unstable touch transformed, blessed, bowed and spun
through ceremony to Eternity."

And I, presiding with you in God's sight,
with music larger than the ears can hear,
a thread, am braided with this chord of might,
this glory's orbit swung in rounded cheer.

I whirl, pronounce: now wed in cosmic weal,
a world and time is yours — explore and heal.

The first EPIGRAPH is from e e cummings (1894-1962), **E2**: from Henry Vaughan, 1655 "The World." A *reel* is a device on which chord is wound, a form of dance and its music, and a whirling motion. The sonnet plays on the ancient astronomical idea, persisting into the Renaissance, of *musica universalis*, the music of the spheres. In *The Republic* 10.616-618, Plato and other ancients pictured the heavens with spheres, with sirens singing, turning on a spindle. Music is of two kinds: *ahata*, Sanskrit for *struck* sound (with temporary vibrations audible, providing pleasure), and *anahata*, the unstruck (eternal patterns in which the universe is ordered, leading to liberation); see Narada Purana (16th-17th C). Boethius (480?-524) referred to such music in his *De Musica*. Dante, using Ptolomaic astronomy in the *Divina Commedia* (before 1321) perpetuated the idea that it is the power of love that, in the words of *Hair*, "can move the stars." (Only in this sense of power I can consent to the quotation variously attributed to Oscar Wilde, Michel Foucault, and others: "Sex is about everything except sex; it is about power.") Kepler, 1619 *Harmonices Mundi* used music as part of his astronomical theory, and Milton wrote of a "heavenly tune, which none can hear" in "Arcades," 72. And Shakespeare (*Merchant of Venice*, 5, 1): "Look how the floor of heaven / Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold: / There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st / But in his motion like an angel sings, / Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins; / Such harmony is in immortal souls; / But whilst this muddy vesture of decay / Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it." **Ring**: especially the wedding band → «Conjuring». **Pronounce** as in "I now pronounce you husband and wife." **Weal**, pun on wheel. **A world and time is yours**: see Andrew Marvel's "To His Coy Mistress," line 1: "Had we but world enough and time . . ."

7. *The Fall: Omaha*

Or ce que je di ne doit sembler advis estre estrange:
 c'est que Dieu non-seulement a préveü la cheute
 du premier homme, et en icellela ruine de toute sa postérité,
 mais qu'il l'a ainsi voulu.

I go on consulting / This mirror that is no longer mine

· · · **T**ORE me, when I was three, when I was you,
 my mirror, soul, whose body, with my own
 did breathe one breath, not knowing the taboo.
 Dismissed, told not to care, repression's zone,
 made me forget your name, though you survive
 in moan and maim. Yes, time's denial blunts
 such childhood cuts, we learn to seem to thrive,
 and yet I search for you in all my hunts.

This photo shows you on my trike behind
 me as I drive, our eyes not on the road,
 but tow each other through the days, aligned,
 unknowing our blessed world would soon explode.

When Monster saw us playing on the floor,
 it grabbed and severed paradise, and tore

The EPIGRAPH is from Reformation leader John Calvin in his 1541 *Institution de la religion chrestienne* (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*), book 3, chapter 23, section 7. The Latin version of 1536/1539 reads, "Nec absurdum videri debet quod dico, Deum non modo primi hominis casum et in eo posterorum ruinam praevidisse: sed arbitrio quoque suo dispensasse." Translated by Henry Beveridge (1845), the English reads, "God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity, but also at his own pleasure arranged it." In traditional Christian theology, humanity was created sinless and the first humans were placed in a **paradise** which they lost by sinning, and their guilt has been transmitted through sexual reproduction to the entire human race. "You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world." —Morpheus in Andy and Larry Wachowski's 1999 film, *The Matrix*. "I'm depraved account I'm deprived!" in *West Side Story*'s "Gee Officer Krupke!" —lyrics Stephen Sondheim. **E2**: from John Ashbery "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" in his 1975 book by that name, p76. **Repression's zone**: In the theology of Karl Rahner, "the enemy of the mystery of childhood is the adult impulse to control, to close off possibilities." —Martin E Marty, *The Mystery of the Child*, 2007, p109. **Breathe** → «Poetic Failure». **Searched**: " . . . [To] a greater or lesser extent, the first ways the world has made sense to us continue to underpin our whole subsequent experience and actions." —R D Laing, 1967 *The Politics of Experience*, p30. The last sentence is deliberately aposiopetic.

8. *Noticing a Birthday*

When war begins, then Hell openeth.

War is hell.

There never was a war that was not inward

ON this my birthday: Mother, tell me, please
 about the wretched War between the States,
 eviscerating righteous families;
 which lingers wild, unrolls though splits and hates;
 how race and status, human toil, abuse
 persists, and sexist ways, and alcohol,
 and noxious, strange dependencies, produce
 the deafness to our own time's caterwaul.

All hate and wars emerge from early hurts
 passed on from age to age, from cave to class-
 defined investments. Knowing love converts;
 beholding cures the burned as all things pass.

The Union stood, and leans against the hate;
 your perfect love would all sins expiate.

The first EPIGRAPH is from *Jacula Prudentum* by George Herbert (1593-1633). I count it as the 85th proverb from the end. **E2**: from William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) whose 1879 speech at the Michigan Military Academy repudiated the conception of war as a glorious enterprise. **E3**: from Marianne Moore's 1944 "In Distrust of Merits." **Wars**: the great civil war recounted in the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, includes the Bhagavad Gita. The warrior Arjuna realizes that the world is full of violence, in animals as well as humans, and in ascetics (whose food was once alive) as well as saints; even the gods are killers. Nonetheless, aspiring to *ahimsa*, non-violence, acting without cruelty, reduces our moral "footprint." **Love**: "Love keeps no score of wrongs." —1 Corinthians 13:6. **From age to age**: "History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily." — Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," paragraph 11. **Expiate**: an archaic meaning is simply "to put an end to." In some Christian theology, the sacrifice of Christ expiates or propitiates sin by offering divine love. Abraham Lincoln may have employed a more traditional "satisfaction" theory of expiation, paying for one's sins, in his Second Inaugural Address when he said, "If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?"

2. *Johnson County*

. . . Whoever
proudly neglects the worship of his God
brings desolation on his house and home.

To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

I
N evolution's quiet summer night,
wed neighbors argue, scream, hurl hate. Cops come;
their kids, through windows, see the flashing light;
they hear invective, insect-pinned, now numb.
A witness this down hour awakened, I
see generations acting ancient scripts
with fervor late as both raw parties try
to stake a place against apocalypse.

His neurons more than weapons make wit's war
and she can't reach beyond their local roar,
those terroir imprint forms that thieve and gore
sweet love, nor faith that can repair what tore.

Is it their dendrites' crimes they live such rage?
Will witnessing bring God to heal this age?

The first EPIGRAPH is from *Shāh Nāmeḥ* by Persian poet Firdausi (940-1020?), tr James Atkinson, 1832, p10. **E2:** the couplet in Shakespeare's Sonnet 124. **Johnson County**, Kansas, was the richest area in metropolitan Kansas City in the late 20th Century. **Place:** In his Sermon 52, Meister Eckhart (1260?–1327?) wrote, "When a man clings to place, he clings to distinction," that is, in one interpretation, inflexibly identifying oneself with a location or possession or opinion prevents one from beholding another and the larger nature of Reality. **Dendrites** here refers to the branch-like offshoots of *neurons*, or nerve cells, in the brain, by means of which signals are transmitted. This sonnet's third quatrain uses one end-rime. **Imprint forms** are patterns of environmental conditioning so strong they usually result in automatic thought and behavior. **Witnessing** can be a passive observer or play an active legal role; in some religious contexts, a witness testifies to works of grace; in Islam, witness, *shahed*, later came to mean martyr, as the English martyr derives from the Greek an early meaning for which is witness. Witnessing (like noticing, giving attention, beholding, and a mindfulness including another being or situation beyond oneself) may be a kind of regarding another person as a person rather than a thing, in an "I-Thou" rather than an "I-it" relationship as described by Jewish mystic Martin Buber (1878-1965), which makes possible seeing a person (and God) beyond agenda and utility. **God:** "God is behind everything, but everything hides God. Things are black, creatures are opaque. To love a human being is to make her transparent." —Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, tr Hapgood, 1887, Bk 5 Ch 4. Q3: All rime.

10. *Barren Golgotha*

The Cross represents the inversion of all human values.
The human is put to death; out of the death comes life.

To keep the neighbors happy, I will mow
my grass. I hate it. I prefer the wild-
state, growing, roaming: Things will come and go
unstamped. Behold this stump with creatures riled
by mowing. I still ghost and grieve the tree.
Its blossoms bragged our waking spring front yard;
now hid in grass, the stump's conformity
spins cracked around the sun, transformed to nard.
I loved this tree in winter, cold, with snow,
its branches shaken, glazed and bright with ice,
when fall had swept death's rattle, soft, aglow.
But shoots urge on the tree of paradise.
From whence this fragrance, close, so far away?
A dead and bloodied tree grows yet today?

The EPIGRAPH is from John Courtney Murray, 1953 *Social Order*. *Golgotha* is where Christ was crucified. The *nard* is an aromatic plant from which the ancients enjoyed ointment. **Trees** appear in many myths. The Sumerian Dumuzi, Tammuz in the Bible, a dying-and-rising god, was the power of the date palm. The Phoenician god Adonis, the Phrygian-Greek god Attis, and the Egyptian god Osiris, each with aboreal encounters, died and were revived. In Scandinavian mythology, Yggdrasil is the "world tree." Joseph Campbell (1959 *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, p121) from the Icelandic Poetic Edda, cites the supreme god's self-sacrifice: "I hung on the windy tree, . . . with the spear I was wounded, and offered . . . myself to myself, on that tree that none may ever know what root beneath it runs." The Christian Holy Week begins with palm tree praises but ends with the tree of Golgotha bloodied, suggested by the Oak of Mamre in Rublev's famous icon, *The Trinity*. The Katha Upanishad says the World-Tree is rooted in Brahman. Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art displays an Assyrian "Winged Genie Fertilizing a Date Tree" and a rare Indian bronze, "Tree of Life and Knowledge." Buddha's Enlightenment was under the Bo tree, the *ficus religiosa*. Jove had his oak and Woden his ash. The tree became a phallic May pole on Rome's Palatine Hill. The pagan evergreen became the Christmas tree. Yule is observed by the burning of logs. The Tree of Life was in the Garden of Eden. In Jewish mysticism, God's emanations are often represented as the "Tree of the Sefiroth." Isaiah's words have been appropriated to describe Jesus as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, a branch growing out of his roots." The Hometree and the Tree of Souls were central to the 2009 James Cameron movie *Avatar* → «The Golden Bough». **Bloodied tree**: "Blood on the leaves and blood at the root" is the second line of Abel Meeropol's poem "Strange Fruit," made famous by Billie Holiday, about the lynchings of Black Americans. **Fragrance**: recall "Whence this goodly fragrance flowing?" from *Quelle est cette odeur agréable?* — a 17th Century nativity hymn.

11. *Kitchen Cockroach*

When thou art scorching in thy flames,
when thou art howling in thy torments,
then God shall laugh, and His saints shall sing and rejoice,
that His power and wrath are thus made known to thee.

They burn it with fire like rubbish

Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds

THIS all-consuming fire — once pointed hot,
now spread throughout the galaxies and in
my blood, and in my stove-top in the shot
of gas that joins you like the desert jinn —
your form perplexes as you briefly flare.
Your life, repulsive, I incinerate.
Of this, in any terms, are you aware
of your own dodge, then doom? Is this fire hate —
or love? or Judgment's energy that burns
and purifies its own mistakes and goes
to ravage through all hopes as it returns
unto the martyred Source of kiss and blows?
Is your pain lesser than Saint Lawrence felt?
Am I like you or God to see you melt?

The first EPIGRAPH is from Christopher Love's 1650? *Hell's Torments*. **E2**: from Psalm 80:15, The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p703. **E3**: from the Bhagavad Gita 11.35, tr J Robert Oppenheimer. The first line refers to the initial compression of the universe into a single point from which the Big Bang of creation exploded. In Arab legends *jinn* are creatures from smokeless fire who can shift shape in human or animal form and who can aid or hurt humans. **St Lawrence** was a Third Century martyr who was burned alive on a gridiron. His offense was to present the poor when he was asked to display the treasures of the church which had been committed to him. Girolamo Da Santacroce (1485?-1556?) painted "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence," now in the collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. **Am I like you**: "I am convinced that God enjoys relationships with creatures other than humans. The lives of all creatures are enriched because of the presence of God (who) is much more complex, compassionate and interesting than our (traditional) theological formulations have imagined . . ." —Nancy R Howell, The Kansas City Star 2009, Apr 22, C11. **Judgment**: "Assassins cons and rapers / Might as well die." —Steely Dan, "King of the World." →«The Fall + Postmodern Faith + Love Locket».

12. *A Roman Solider*

circa Anno Domini CCCXXV

Even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course.

SOME provinces have snow this time of year
 although the darkest day we buried, past.
 The resurrection of the spring ends fear
 as promises in sky and flame forecast.
 For Mithra's feast day, god of light, the sun,
 the solstice birthing, I slew heretics.
 Assuming my salvation surely won,
 I hailed Invictus well with oil-soaked wicks.

Now Constantine says Christ is why we fight,
 not just those we were, who called Sol true god,
 but if some cherish creeds that are not right
 though Christian, we must kill, by sword and rod.
 This Christmas I've made holy with my knife.
 This reign, this new religion, is my life.

Circa Anno Domini CCCXXV, "about 325 in the year of our Lord" is when arguments over the nature of the Christ were voted on at the Council of Nicea, convened by the Roman emperor **Constantine** (272-337; r306/324-) who had become a Christian when, the story goes, he saw a sign of the cross indicating that, with it, he would win the battle at the Milvian Bridge in 312. The period of Hellenistic religions (Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Syrian, etc) was fluid, transformative, and creative. The EPIGRAPH is from W H Auden, "Museum des Beaux Arts."
Christ is why we fight: Christianity had been largely pacifist before Constantine embraced Christianity. Rome had been generally tolerant of many faiths practiced in the Republic and Empire — with rare, sporadic, and regional persecutions of Christians. Theodosius I (347-395; r379-), made Nicene Christianity the state church, permitted the destruction of non-Christian temples, and ended the pagan ritual of the Olympic games, a tradition lasting over a thousand years, and not revived until 1896. **The Resurrection** alludes to the claim that Jesus the Christ was resurrected from the dead. **Mithra** was a sun-god, also called **Sol Invictus**, the Sun Unconquered, whose birthday was celebrated at the winter solstice, December 25 in the ancient calendar, the date for which was transferred to the Christian observance, **Christmas**. **God**: All "gods are homemade, and that it's we who pull their strings and so give them the power to pull ours." —Aldous Huxley, *Island*, 1962, p205. **Holy with my knife**: "My sense of the holy is bound up with the hope that some day my remote descendants will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law." —Richard Rorty quoted in M J Newby, *Eudaimonia: Happiness Is Not Enough*, 2011, p128. **Religion**, in Philip Larkin's poem "Aubade," is "That vast moth-eaten musical brocade / Created to pretend we never die." In David Hume's 1779 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part 8, Philo says, "All religious systems . . . are subject to great and insuperable difficulties. Each [faith] disputant . . . exposes the absurdities, barbarities, and pernicious tenets of his antagonist."

13. *Cowboy Krishna Plays His Flute*

“How many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?”

“One, his name is breath.”

BHAGAVAN Vishnu, Bhagavan Vishnu
 beyond beyond the Brahma lotus con,
 Vishnu Bhagavan, wishing I be you,
 vagabond and bonding, exactly gone:
 breathe, O Krishna, brake, remaking Brahma.
 Garuda riding, flutelike playing blue,
 your color flaunt, wishing cosmic drama,
 bhakti-Steining hide, you are Vishnu true.
 Three-striding god, for dharma’s sake you weep,
 descend in love, absorb, at yuga’s edge,
 what Viraj started from your navel, deep
 to Brahma: Throw your discus as a pledge! —
 in hiding, vulvabonding buckaroo,
 Bhagavan Vishnu, Bhagavan Vishnu.

The EPIGRAPH is from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, III, ix. 9. This sonnet’s style imitates poetry of Gertrude **Stein**. **Vishnu** is a Hindu deity; one of the trimurti, the sustainer of the world, along with creator **Brahma** and destroyer Shiva. Diana L Eck, 1993 *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, p75-79, describes her encounter with Vishnu in Trivandrum. One of Vishnu’s avatars is **Krishna**, often portrayed in blue, playing his flute to enchant young maiden cowgirls. Krishna’s mount or vehicle is the divine bird-like creature **Garuda**. The **discus** is his weapon of choice, often shown in one of his hands. The Vedas refer to Vishnu **striding** the world in **three** steps. **Bhagavan**, often translated Lord, means many things, including Supreme Being. **Dharma** is the law of the universe. **Bhakti** is a form of Hindu devotional practice. Among images of Krishna at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, is a mid-17th Century opaque watercolor, “Krishna Playing the Flute.” In some Hindu texts **Viraj** is a subsidiary creator god and signifies mastery and glory. A **yuga** is an epoch in Hindu cyclic cosmology. **Breathe**, as the epigraph suggests, is key to many yogic practices → «Poetic Failure». Each word in this sonnet bears sense, but it is also a series of pure vocables or nonsense syllables, found in many cultures. The Jewish nigun and jazz scat sometimes employ parallel sounds whose meaning arises simply from their musical effect as with the songs of American Indians, as in the Dineh coyote chant, heya heya heya a ho ho yaha hahe ya an. Hindu mantras, while often heavily interpreted, can function similarly. Consider hey nonny, nonny, Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah, bippity-bippity-doo-wop, the Beatles’ Goo goo goo joob, Wagner’s Hojotoho, a blue yodel by Jimmy Rodgers, Little Richard’s wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-lop-bam-boom, or tra la la la. Some interpret glossolalia (speaking in tongues) as a similar phenomenon. Against the *tabula rasa* theory, Noam Chomsky says we humans are pre-programmed to speak intelligibly, but that programming may also limit what we can use grammar to describe our experience.

14. *Ad Astra*

L'amour che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum diffusa est gratia
in labiis tuis; propterea benedixit te Deus in aeternum.

IN my frail frame immortal love doth dwell;
and in these lines with borrowed breath you live.
No skill can keep my body from death's spell;
what skill I have doth life forever give
to you and me conjoined in sounds that they
shall speak who never knew us, though they gaze
long through the window of this page, and say
with wonder how we loved, in our brute age.

And yet no words I write can e'er be true;
they all fumble, flunk, fall, deform, and fail
the infinite mystery that is you
and me, like calling minnow what is whale.

No lay can list to others what is ours
though yet these rimes might reach as far as stars.

Ad Astra: Latin, to the stars. The first EPIGRAPH is the last line from Dante's *Divina Commedia*, "the love that moves the sun and the other stars." Rumi wrote, "Love is the astrolabe of the Mysteries of God" (Baldock, p181) → «The Sun». **E2:** Pslam 44:3 in the Vulgate; in many English translations, 45:2 "You are the fairest of men; charm plays on your lips for God has blessed you forever." **Frame:** the human body, the framework of a poem (in Shakespeare's use), or the case or structure for a window. A **lay** is a short lyric for a song; for the tune for this sonnet, see the Frontispiece. The word is often a pun. The language, style, and theme of this sonnet imitates Shakespeare's Sonnet 55 (and others like 17, 18, 60, 63, 65, 81, 101, 107, and 108, perhaps also like the pair of 59 and 106), and employs the Renaissance convention that poetry, unlike flesh, is permanent. But this motif, that art survives the body, sometimes called the *monumentum* trope, is not an egotistical claim so much as a tradition originating with the classics, such as with Dante, *Inferno* 4.97, Ovid, *Amores* 1.15.41, and Horace, *Odes* 3.30, which Shakespeare seems almost to imitate: Exegi monumentum aere perennius — well, maybe some egotism. Some have compared Shakespeare's to Spenser's Sonnet 32 in his 1591 *The Ruines of Rome*, itself a translation from Joachim du Bellay, 1553 *Antiquités de Rome*. Some of the poetic devices «Ad Astra» employs are illustrated in the § Introduction to this book under ¶17. **Window of this page:** In *De la grammatologie*, 1967 = *Of Grammatology*, 1976, Jacques Derrida writes "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte," which some understand to mean that context is unavoidable. **Brute age:** homophobic times. **True:** see Emily Dickinson's poem, "Tell all the truth but tell it slant—." This sonnet is paired with the following «Acropolis Canon».

15. *Acropolis Canon*

In fact, an absolute innovation in music cannot be anything else except discordant, because it would be unseemly to the general custom. Even in poetry and prose, that which is concerned purely with harmony and melody is almost not at all susceptible of innovation.

THAT sonnet I wrote you in classic form —
 each word joined, torqued down neat, precise, and tight-
 bolted, yoked, jiggled, braced, shimmed and shaped to norm,
 soldered smooth, fittings strong yet quite polite —
 would, if one tooth chipped, if one gear slipped, ex-
 plode! not passion, mere paroxysm, but
 detonation turning temples into wrecks;
 and balanced gods would shake and strut.

The engine of my verse I give to you,
 whose temple trains my spirit, tracked, a plower
 uncontrolled, yet embedded, motored true.

Round column caliber rests rise with power.

On canon's rails I did a sonnet sire;
 in death I lie for love without desire.

The EPIGRAPH is from Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone*, October 9, 1821, quoted in Charles Rosen, 1997 expanded edition, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. This sonnet, a palinode, is paired with «Ad Astra» and reacts against it to make one larger statement. It heavily uses the 17th Century "metaphysical" technique of the "conceit" with words used with multiple meanings. For example, in Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, he punned *spirit* (which I use in this sonnet) with "sprit" — "sprit" was slang for erect penis, derived from the sense of the etymologically related "sprout." Another example: *canon* is (1) an ecclesiastical code or law, (2) a basis for judgment as the rules of poetry, (3) the body of literature considered the basis of a civilization or discipline, (4) a musical form in which a melody overlaps itself in different voices or keys; a "cannon" (suggested by *rails* and, in the line above, by *caliber*) is a weapon for firing projectiles, in phallic shape. *Lie* can mean both sex and untruth. The Parthenon, which survived two thousand years in good shape, was *wrecked* in 1687 by an explosion of the powder stored in it by the Turks when a shell from a Venetian army hit it. *Love*: In his 1952 *The Irony of American History*, Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we are saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we are saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own; therefore, we are saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness." The couplet is discussed in the § Introduction to this book, at the end of ¶ 18.

16. *Just Try To Kiss Me*

Da mi basia mille, deinde centum

JUST try to kiss me once again, just try,
 or find out what I'm thinking, bother me
 for slick massage, or see a flick, or buy
 us dinner, take a walk, or make some tea,
 repeat to me my veil theology
 or politics or social views or art,
 or make and undertake a liturgy,
 or listen to you say what's in your heart.
 Just try, and see if I resist your touch
 or voice or gaze or pinch or your sweet smell.
 I yield already, and you know as much,
 if you should speak from heaven or from hell.
 And if you said that I should go away,
 my faith in you's complete — I would obey.

The EPIGRAPH IS FROM Catullus 5. "Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred . . ." **Veil theology:** "[T]hou art God, thy glory veiling, so that we may bear the sight." — *The Hymnal 1982* [Episcopal], 336:2. See also **כִּסּוּת** in Exodus 34:29-35 and *κάλυμμα* in 2 Corinthians 3:13-16. "God veils [**سِتر**] himself to reveal himself and reveals himself by veiling himself" — akin to ideas in Qushayri (d.1074), Suhrawardi (1155-1191) and Ibn Arabi (1165-1240). Ghazālī (1058-1111) classifies people in three levels according to how veiled they are from God. One cannot see the sun by looking at it directly without harm because it is too bright. But if it is veiled with translucent film, it can be seen; optical aids enable viewing of even its flares and sunspots. Just so, reality is beyond direct human apprehension, hidden within every event, within every sight, sound, smell, taste, movement, thought. Nonetheless it is through such veils that Reality is revealed to be beyond our comprehension. St John of the Cross uses similar sun metaphor in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Bk I, Ch 2. Perhaps the metaphors of *The Cloude of Unknowyng* and *maya* point to the same Reality. → «Interbeing». In Robert Cawdrey, 1604 *A Table Alphabeticall*, "theologie" is described as "the science of living blessedly for ever." "Theology is — or should be — a species of poetry, which read quickly or encountered in a hubbub of noise makes no sense. You have to open yourself to a poem Like the words of a poem, a religious idea, myth, or doctrine points beyond itself to truths that are elusive . . ." —Karen Armstrong, 2004 *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness*, 284. **Kiss:** The Christian mystic Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) wrote of various kinds of kisses as approaches to the Divine → «The Kiss». In *De speculo caritatis* St Aelred (1110-1167), English abbot of Rievaulx, who especially loved the young monk Simon, writes of "an intimate affection and the embrace of a holy love, someone in whom your spirit can rest, to whom you can pour out your soul, to whose pleasant exchanges, as to soothing songs, you can fly in sorrow . . . with whose spiritual kisses, as with remedial salves, you may draw out all the weariness of your restless anxieties" in Keith Sharpe, 2011 *The Gay Gospels: Good News for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People*, p105.

17. *Thanks for Noticing*

We made one bed and slept one sleep.

Attention is the beginning of devotion.

YOU don't have boobs. You noticed — thanks! I try
to say. Your hand rests on my chest in bed;
for you this first night bedding with a guy
you valorized, your head in fright and dread,
engulfed in mythic tales as monsters, beasts,
and demons you must slay or charm or shoo
as you pursue this night of holy feasts
and absolution, pleading this debut.

We cuddle, fall asleep, adjust throughout
the night, and always touch as if to say
what can't be said concerning faith and doubt
and how to turn sweat hands to sacred play.

When morning comes, you offer me a kiss:
you've forged felicity from your abyss.

The EPIGRAPH is from the Irish prose saga, *Tain Bo Cuailng*, with manuscripts dating from the 11th Century. **E2**: from Mary Oliver's "Upstream" in 2016 *Upstream: Selected Essays*. In some religious outlooks, all **play** is sacred because it recapitulates the purposeless mode in which the universe was created, a theme found in many faiths; in Hinduism, it is the doctrine of *lila* — the universe is god's play. Though creatures may have intent, there is no ultimate purpose extrinsic to the cosmos itself. An infant plays not for an ulterior purpose or external reward, such as to learn or to explore, but simply for the intrinsic value of playing, as when Yahweh makes Leviathan just for sport (Psalm 104:26). While play may have an evolutionary benefit, the infant does not intend progress; the activity itself is the satisfaction. A child's notion of play is not fully obscured when, to begin a baseball game, the umpire commands, "Play ball!"; he does not shout, "Work ball!" Play may have rules which are absolute within the play, but cannot govern, or even apply, outside the play. Among the many studies of play are Johan Huizinga 1938/1949 *Homo Ludens*, Roger Caillois 1958 *Les jeux et les hommes*, "The Feast" in Carl Kerényi 1962 *The Religion of the Greeks and Romans*, Harvey Cox 1969 *The Feast of Fools*, Robert E Neale 1969 *In Praise of Play*, Jürgen Moltmann 1972 *Theology of Play*, Robert Bellah 2011 *Religion in Human Evolution*. "Play" and "game" are multivalent terms; Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander 2013 *Surfaces and Essences* show how playing a role, playing the violin, playing soccer, playing basketball, playing the flute → «Cowboy Krishna Plays His Flute» require distinct words for "play" in Mandarin (p10-13); Ludwig Wittgenstein's 1953 *Philosophical Investigations* famously opens by analyzing language games, *Sprachspielen*. While play may be natural, its freedom is usually not our ordinary mode. **Play**: → «The Call + The Grail + Kratophany + Morning Dream + Grapplers». **Mythic**: → «Campfire».

18. *Bed Position*

Non in mari tantum aut in proelio vir fortis apparet;
exhibetur etiam in lectulo virtus.

At any rate, I made up my mind that if it so turned out that
we should sleep together, he must undress and get into bed
before I did. . . . Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a
drunken Christian.

Kept wholly for himself alone,
there he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him.

She blew my nose and then she blew my mind.

YOU don't coax me to your bed, but say *This*
is where we'll spend the night: stay your side
but first let's cuddle. Curried, I don't miss
a spoon, so close we are I think I've died
and found a banquet, blessed beyond, where sex
is not an issue, though I once blurt out
(the word's not 'blurt,' but blunt, though with respects)
"What would making love to you be like?" Spout
— that's the word. Nothing ever comes of it.
We sleep. My rest on knife edge makes straight space.
You serve me as I am, and, lo! I fit,
full planche in your close bed, no crumb, no trace.
The fork of night lifts day; you juxtapose
and cantilever love — and grab my nose.

The first EPIGRAPH, "Not only at sea or in battle is a man's bravery displayed; courage is shown even in bed," is from Pseudo-Seneca, *De remediis fortuitorum*, 6.1 (Seneca lived 4 BCE–65; Pseudo-Seneca probably dates from the 4th Century.) E2: from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Chapter 3, "The Spouter-Inn." E3: from John of the Cross (1542-1591), "Ascent of Mount Carmel" 1,13, tr E Allison Peers, 1953 *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, Vol 1, p59. E4: by The Rolling Stones, is from the popular song, "Honky Tonk Woman." See Catullus 13: *deos rogabis totum ut te faciant . . . nasum*. **Spout** is an erudite pun = **sprit** → «Acropolis Canon». Other puns like **straight** and the euphemism **nose** are obvious. **Knife**: "we're glowing like the metal on the edge of a knife" —Jim Steinman-Meat Loaf, "Paradise by the Dashboard Light."

19. *Anatomy: Green Gulch Zen Center*

Heureux moi! *Totus in benigno positus!*

You and me baby ain't nothin' but mammals;
So let's do it like they do on the Discovery Channel.

Ujiko atteno kami; kami atteno ujiko.

THESE four legs, four, entwined are ours, it's true,
but I wish this bed we each had twenty:
though even now which ones belong to you
confuse me, and four are prob'bly plenty;
I've never seen two centipedes embrace;
fandango legs to fasten love's delight;
but what a tangle, should they interlace,
and terminate their travel, tranquil, tight!
I'm satisfied with your anatomy,
and mine; yet as we fold four legs and turn,
I foresee ornate ways that we will be,
baroquely yielding to a bawdy yearn.
We pair emerge afar from parent cell,
this gamble wed, with thanks the gods do well.

The first EPIGRAPH is the last line of Paul Verlaine's "Il est Mauvais Coucheur" tr J Murat and W Gunn (endorsed by Ned Rorem), 1979, *A Lover's Cock and Other Gay Poems*, p45, reads "As Ovid said: The right position is all!" E2: from the Bloodhound Gang's 1999 song "The Bad Touch." E3: from Konkokyo Shinto, "[Solely] because of human beings, kami exists; [solely] because of kami, human beings exist," a maxim of mutual interdependence, mutual creation. Compare the Yoruba proverb, "If humanity were not, the gods would not be." Kami, neither singular nor plural, neither masculine nor feminine, has no real English equivalent but is often translated God or gods. Kami implies a relationship or process with humanity, rather than an independent Being. The universe itself is kami, and may be regarded as **Parent**. In relieving suffering, one may be regarded kami. **Four**: Anglican practice is often associated with a three-legged stool, but some find Richard Hooker (1554-1600) enunciating four principles: scripture, tradition, reason, and equity. Developed by the Moors, a **fandango** is lively dance music, in triple meter, often performed with castanets, perhaps for amorous couples. A Boccherini setting is a favorite. **I foresee ornate ways**: "Attend to your Configuration." —Edwin A Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, 1884, Ch12, Of the Doctrine of our Priests. **Gods do well**: "I saw full assuredly that our substance is in God, and . . . in our sensuality God is . . . for it is His good pleasure to reign in our understanding blissfully, and set in our soul restfully, and to dwell in our soul endlessly, us all working into Him." —Julian of Norwich (1342-1416?), quoted in Evelyn Underhill, 1920 *The Essentials of Mysticism*, p195.

20. *Relaxed*

Die Sprache verkleidet den Gedanken.

RELAXED, you heterosexual, you!
 With sleeves ripped out, your shirt's so hot! So we
 in thirst consume non-alcoholic brew.
 The tavern's "gay." You flag a friend we see.
 So bold, you grin and greet him, boasting, "I
 am Vern's boy toy this night." It's comedy,
 but still I'm flattered nuts that you would try
 out, switch, explore this new identity —
 which I myself do not accept as real.
 All labels, roles, tags, calls, are for such play,
 as from the holy Whole these parts we steal,
 all blessed thieves redeemed: straight-trans-bi-and-gay.
 For you and I both know what grasps us most:
 Incarnate Love Who is our sacred Host.

The EPIGRAPH, "Language disguises thought," is from Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1921 *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus)*, 4.002. This sonnet presents the perspective of the "construction of sexuality," rather than the current politically correct view that sexual "orientation" is inborn: Some argue that sex is biological but sexuality is a cultural construct. Some constructionists identify at least four factors in sexual behavior: [1] possible genetic, epigenetic, and other biological predisposition, [2] 'imprinting' at a crucial age of developing sexual attraction, before one's memory is set, when one profoundly notices someone of the same or opposite sex; this also explains why goslings at a phase-sensitive time will imprint on a human as if the human is their mother, [3] social sexual conditioning such as same-sex pairing in ancient Sparta, and [4] situations such as youthful experimentation and confinement in a single-sex environment. Sexual-social expressions like the Samoan fa'afafine are sometimes called a third sex. Others simply say there are at least as many forms of sexuality as there are people on the planet. Instead of analogizing sexual interest to things that are relatively unchangeable, like one's height or the pattern of blood vessels in one's eye, a better comparison might be to the clothes one wears; different cultures and circumstances provide togas, kilts, trousers, jeans, speedos, cassocks, pajamas, and so forth, showing the extents of the statement, "clothes make the man." A classic study on this subject is David F. Greenberg, 1988 *The Construction of Homosexuality*. In popular culture, Gore Vidal (whose 1968 *Myra Breckinridge* raises such issues) considered sexual identities as false categories used to oppress people. Some studies suggest genetic differences account for roughly one-third of the variation in same-sex behavior. A "gay" genetically identical twin is as likely to have a "heterosexual" twin than not. Androgynous and transgender persons may often illustrate the complicated interplay between sex and sexuality ➔ «Don't Ask + Even Zeus + Sacred Play». *Host*, from *hostia*, sacrificial victim, is a term used for sacramental bread in the Eucharist to celebrate the Resurrected Christ.

21. *Ballad*

I have seen my Lord, in a form of the greatest beauty,
 as a youth with abundant hair, seated on the throne of grace,
 clad in a garment of gold, on his hair a golden crown,
 on his feet sandals.

Oh, you can't describe someone you're in love with!

MORE than any lad I prize, my princely friend,
 your love has primed my faith and privy life,
 and guided me through every public bend,
 each venture in these lands of bliss and strife.

You are the full moon's splurge in spangled stars,
 the rooted trunk from which all branches grow,
 you are the strings that sing on rare guitars,
 the gravity commanding rivers flow.

A rush of riches washed my way
 when, landlocked, you emerged from trail to quay.
 Though who I am will falter, fade some day,
 such signal love makes now forever stay.

Your throne plays golden rays to transpose me
 and ground your tone beyond the sun-scrubbed sea.

The EPIGRAPH is one of several variants of an hadith (tradition of the deads and sayings of Muhammad, pbuh; a source of Islamic law). **E2**: from the Tennessee Williams 1947 play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Act 1. **Rivers** are metaphors for the flow of time. But Einstein showed that **gravity** actually slows time. Still, ποταμοίσι τοίσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν, ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιπλεῖ, as Heraclitus (535?-475? BCE) said, often summarized as "You can't step twice into the same stream." But Norman Maclean (1902-1990), author of *A River Runs Through It*, wrote, "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time." **Quay** (pronounced "key") is a landing place on water like a wharf. **Eternity**: "To live in eternity is to live from moment to moment; to live not in the realm of means, but in the realm of ends in which every act is an end in itself and has no purpose beyond itself." —Huston Smith, "The Reach and the Grasp," in 1969 *Transcendence*, edited by Herbert W Richardson and Ronald R Cutler, p5. In *Living in the Presence*, 1994, p26, Tilden Edwards writes that "eternity is sensed as the depth, the fullness of time." **Riches**: Estne dei sedes nisi terra, et pontus, et aer, Et coelum, et virtus? Superos quid quaerimus ultra? —Lucan, *Works* ix.578. **Play**: →«Thanks for Noticing». The **ballad** form usually follows a meter and rime scheme different from the sonnet; it often offers a human love story; the tale here is subtle, moving from land to sea and beyond. Puns include *primed*, *play*, *ground*, *transpose*, and *tone*. ABABCCDEFEEFF.

22. *Standards*

O people, we created you from the same male and female,
and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may
recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of
GOD is the most righteous.

I PRIZE not pedigree, not wealth, not strength,
not youth, not age, not looks, not smarts, not size.
I'm not obsessed with networks or the length
of time we've known each other. And the guys
with fame and force are just like you and me
except for chance. Religion, résumé,
gender, race, work, and service, one's degree
don't measure much, or if one's "straight" or "gay."

You call me when you say you will. When you
are hurt, you cry or rage; you also laugh.
You want to know what bothers me, what's new
and good. We have each other's photograph.

Some things I do not need I still admire,
but your best gift is love without desire.

The EPIGRAPH is from the Qur'an, Surah 'Al-Hujurāt' — The Rooms, 49:13. From a Zen perspective: "All distinctions in kind or in degree — what do they prove?" —Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807-869) in John C H Wu's 1967/2003 *The Golden Age of Zen*, p161. **Standards:** "The ethics that flow from this [body] theology will embrace one standard for evaluating sexual expressions. I believe that standard is love, multidimensional in its reality, with *epithymia* (sexual desire), *eros* (hunger for fulfillment), *philia* (friendship), and *agape* (self-giving) its necessary aspects. No one of those dimensions can be slighted. It is love that is respectful, egalitarian, socially responsible, caring, faithful, honest, and just." —James B Nelson, 1992 *Body Theology*, p22. Shakespeare's Sonnet 91 (baritone setting by Tadeusz Baird) lists attainments including "body's force"; a counter-cultural perspective on **force** or power in society and especially politics is Mel White's "soul force", following Gandhi's *satyagraha* and Martin Luther King Jr's non-violence. At one point, White, as part of a campaign for LGBT rights, listed five soul force vows: to seek the truth, to live by the truth, and to confront untruth wherever found; to reject violence; to take on oneself without complaint any suffering that might result from confrontation with untruth and to do all in one's power to help the adversary avoid all suffering, especially that suffering that may result from the confrontation; to control one's appetite for food, sex, intoxicants, entertainment, position, and power so that one's best self might be free in doing justice; and to limit one's possessions to those things needed to survive, using them to help make things fair for all. **Size:** See I Samuel 16:7. **Race:** "I believe in God who made of one blood all races that dwell upon the earth." —W E B Du Bois, "Credo," 1904. "**Straight" or "gay" → «Relaxed»**. "Living the truth corrodes illusion." —Tex Sample (with Any E DeLong), 2000 *The Loyal Opposition*, p20.

23. *Examination*

Long since we passed the flares of Orion. . . .
 The lights in the sky are stars —
 We think they do not see

Of all that God has shown me
 I can speak just the smallest word

Let all the gods and the waters together anoint our two hearts.

A RISING from the ocean, we are brief
 wee waves surveying what the water is
 apart from us, and then we race the reef
 and fold again, and with us folds our quiz.
 You think you're young, though eons washed this salt
 ascend and fall from queried mountains scored,
 as aged stars seem fresh in nighttime's vault
 reflecting that one flash from which all poured.
 Don't let black pride make teeming with me fail,
 past skin's attention. That tremble line? Depose.
 We pair and part and merge again, and scale
 and raze. Each haptic atom we enclose:
 In you I see the universe all rathe.
 Behold: the stream we race is where stars bathe.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Archibald MacLeish, "Epistle to be Left in the Earth" in his 1930 *New Found Land*. **E2**: from Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210-1297) in Stephen Mitchell's 1989 *The Enlightened Heart*, **E3**: from the Rig-Veda 10.85. **Water**: How do you preserve a drop of water? By throwing in back into the ocean. —Buddhist saying. **Pride**: the term has been appropriated in African-American, Gay, and other social movements. "Revolt! Arise! / The Black / And White World / Shall be one!" —"A New Song," Langston Hughes, 1933. **Line**: "In all the relations of life and death, we are met by the color line." —Frederick Douglass, Sept 24, 1883. "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm . . ." —W E B DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p52. **Attention**: "I mean, you forget to pay attention to what's happening. And that's the same as not being here and now." —Aldous Huxley, 1962 *Island*, p10. "Simply paying attention is the spiritual work of a lifetime." —Craig Mueller, *Any Body There*, 2017, p55. See Shakespeare, Sonnet 91. Paronomasias in this sonnet include **race**, **queried**, **brief**, **fold**, **stars**, **scored**, **vault**, **scale**, **prime**, **teeming**, **fold**, **raze**, and **past**, pun on passed (**examination**). **Rathe**: ready, eager, ripening early. The **flash** refers to the Big Bang, itself a sexual circumlocution → «The Call».

24. *Passage*

For relationships . . . must be like islands, one must accept them for what they are here and now, within their limits — islands . . . surrounded and interrupted by the sea, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides.

Yo que viví en un puerto desde donde te amaba

I'VE come to this island where I don't care
if you love me, though now I see your love
runs clear through me. What was my total fare
to this place? Well, I surrendered, above
all else, my rank tattered ticket to where
my clinging kept me from seeing who you
are, a pit I could not climb out of, snare,
delusions, dreams that never will come true.

We reach each other through the deep, through arm
and inlet, mouth, sump, cove, bay and bight.
The rush and churn, the quiet sea brew's barm,
the flood and drain are love's career and rite.
O, something deeper than the inflect sea
tips, braces, sips, and bodies you and me.

The EPIGRAPH is from Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1955 *Gift from the Sea*, p109. And even David Brooks writes, "life comes to a point only in those moments when the self dissolves into some task [I wish he had added, 'or relationship']. The purpose in life is not to find yourself. It's to lose yourself" —*The New York Times*, 2011 May 31. On the other hand, the complementary truth is that "if . . . I do not need another in order to complete my own identity, I can see the other for what he really is in himself rather than simply for what he is that correlates to my own needs." —Herbert W Richardson, "Three Myths of Transcendence" in 1969 *Transcendence*, ed Richardson and Ronald R Cutler, p112. In his 1957 *L'Erotisme* [1962/1986 *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* p15], Georges Bataille writes, "We are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity." And Tom Robbins, 2014 *Tibetan Peach Pie*, p126, writes "it's a *privilege* to love someone . . . ; and while it's paradisiacal if she or he loves you back, it's unfair to demand or expect reciprocity. We should consider ourselves lucky, honored, blessed that we possess the capacity to feel [this way] . . . and be grateful even when that love is not returned." E2: "I who lived in a harbor where I loved you" —Pablo Neruda's "He ido marcando" in *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*, 1924. A *sump* is a kind of pool of water. A *bight* is a curve or bend in the bank or shore of a body of water, or the water thus embraced. *Barm* is the yeasty froth or head on malt drinks like beer. *Rite*: "The perfect ceremony of love's rite" —Shakespeare, Sonnet 23.6 (baritone setting by Tadeusz Baird).

25. *Wound Wick*

The fire of the body burns away its dross and, rising
in a flame of self-surrender, consumes its own microcosm.

TO TAKE you, I'll not try, or twist, for I
desire you fierce alive; we two are both
possessed by friendship's fires which purify
all selfish frames and fences. So my oath
to you is ranging love, not caged display;
the flares of gems in us, tongued, not fused, matched
at the birthing of the universe. Stay
with love's consumption, not to me attached.

The candle cannot possess the burning,
though the turning fire sits in the wound wick;
in dark, light is found, as love in yearning,
and spirits dwell, not owning, dick with dick.

Since first we met, I learned to let you go;
yet in my wick the flames you gave still grow.

The EPIGRAPH is from Dag Hammarskjöld, 1964 *Markings*, English, p166. That book's own epigraph is from Meister Eckhart: "Only the hand that erases can write the true thing." Rumi writes, "It is the burn of the heart that I want. It is this burning which is everything — more precious than a worldly empire — because it calls God secretly in the night." —Rumi/Star, p152 → «The Sun». **Desire**: ". . . Perfection can be gained by satisfying all one's desires." — *Guhyasamaja-tantra*, cited in Eliade's 1958 *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, p205.7. **Birthing of the universe**: "This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man, but it always has been, is, and will be an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures." —Heraclitus (535?-475? BCE) fragment 30. **Candle, stick**: "A candle in the thighs / Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age . . ." —"Light breaks where no sun shines," 2d stanza, Dylan Thomas (1914-1953). **Yearning**: Compare the hadith → «Al-Fatiha + The Purpose of Sex», "I was a hidden treasure and I yearned to be known. Then I created creatures in order to be known by them" with this passage from Episcopalian priest Carter Hayward, 1984 *Our Passion for Justice; Images of Power, Sexuality and Liberation*: p49: "In the beginning was God. / In the beginning was the source of all that is / God yearning / God moaning / God laboring / God giving birth / God rejoicing / And God loved what She had made / And God said / 'It is good' / And God knowing that all that is good is shared / Held the Earth tenderly in Her arms / God longed to share the good Earth, / And humanity was born in the yearning of God . . ." Yet my veil theology → «Just Try To Kiss Me» suggests that the more intimately one knows another person, the more the beloved is veiled with Mystery. "Unknowing is the greatest intimacy!" —Lo-han Kuei-ch'eng (867-928) in John C H Wu's 1967/2003 *The Golden Age of Zen*, p162. **Flames**: "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." —Walter Pater, "Conclusion," *The Renaissance*, 187

26. *Gardening*

Oh, who shall from this dungeon raise
a soul enslaved so many ways?

I'VE said it all and yet I've not said spit
of what it's like for me to worship you —
work's exaltation, then the dungeon pit;
all Cloud while clawing out toward what is true;
to sever weedy wants, desire disguised
as noble tree, exhausted from the toil
and scope, yet now refreshed, sometimes surprised
in finding filth makes level, fertile soil.

Yet soil and rain and sun and flesh and spade,
all joined like branches in a causal tree,
rejoice in evolution's escapade,
and form the spirit's genealogy.

I work this garden, grown galore with you,
my *axis mundi*, ancient and now new.

The EPIGRAPH is the beginning of Andrew Marvell's 1681 poem, "A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body." **Worship**: "When you are in love with the world, you worship — not because you ought to, but instead because you must. Worship is not compulsory. It is spontaneous. Worship happens, emerges organically; it cannot be demanded or commanded. . . . You do it for yourself, even as you direct your feelings toward an Other. When you love the world, you can't help it." —Vern Crawford quoted in Dolores LaChapelle, 1992 *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep*, p117. **Cloud while clawing**: Chapter 6 of the 14th Century *The Cloude of Unknowyng* contains two ideas that underlie this poem; first, that God is apprehended not by thought but by love ("By love may He be gotten and holden; but by thought never") and second, one is advised to **work** to rise above the contemplation of God's worth to enter an awareness beyond awareness (the Cloud of Unknowing) where God may be encountered ("And therefore, although it be good sometime to think of the kindness and worthiness of God is special, and although it be a light and a part of contemplation: nevertheless yet in this work it shall be cast down and covered with a cloud of forgetting. And thou shalt step above it stalwartly, but listily, with a devout and pleasing stirring of love, and try for to pierce that darkness above thee. And smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love; and go not thence for thing that befalleth" —1934 edition from MS Harl, 674, by Evelyn Underhill, p77-78. →«Postmodern Faith». **True**: genuine. **Axis mundi** is the world center, often presented as a tree, as in the Garden of Eden or the Tree of Golgotha on which Christ was crucified →«Barren Golgotha». **Evolution** can be understood as an undirected, self-organizing environmental process using self-similarity, chance, selection, and other modes of creativity. **Garden**: John Wisdom's "Parable of the Invisible Gardener," recast by Antony Flew, is famous in "Theology and falsification: the University discussion" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, Macmillan, 1964, p96-130.

27. *Less is More*

Die Abgeschiedenheit . . . ist aller Kreatur entledigt.

I LOVE you as a prayer without desire,
 not tethered, not detached; the flowing made
 time's river holy, ashes from the fire
 cremating all my wants in the cascade
 of earth, air, water, flame — in shadow, shine —
 in holding open all to you. Arise,
 and let what's dead vacate or realign.
 Entrenched routine will lurch in play. Surprise!
 This love is not a stock and standard thing.
 I drop each habit, strip out patterned thought,
 scraped palimpsest: now write, now dance, now sing.
 In you, I give up everything I sought.
 Without agenda, baggage, passion, view —
 in this bright love: no world, no self, no you.

The EPIGRAPH, "This detachment [or seclusion, or emptiness] . . . is stripped of all creatures" is from *Meister Eckharts [sic] Mystische Schriften*, "Von der Abgeschiedenheit," (Berlin, 1903), p166-167. Scholars agree that Eckhart's (1260?-1327?) doctrine presented is authentic, whether or not Eckhart actually wrote this text which may mean that one cannot behold the divine so long as one is possessed by one's attachments or preoccupations, by anything other than God, including love (charity), though love is one possible path to "disinterest" or "detachment"; "non-attachment" may be closer to what Eckhart meant by *Abgeschiedenheit*. In his 1961 *New Seeds of Contemplation*, p292, Thomas Merton may use different words for the same insight: "disappearance of identities." "Since Not-being the mirror of Being, / if you are wise, choose Not-being, self-abnegation" —Rumi/Star, p207 → «The Sun». Perhaps Eckhart's emptiness or desert may be seen as the mirror of Bonaventure's divine fullness. In some religious perspectives, **play** is a form of grace, without purpose in gaining some extrinsic favor, reflecting the cosmos as the datum, the given-ness, of pure love, without desire for reward beyond the love itself. In "Theology and Autology" in his 1943 *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Ananda Coomaraswamy says that creation itself is a game "that the Spirit plays with itself, and as sunlight 'plays' upon whatever it illuminates and quickens, although unaffected by its apparent contacts." → «Thanks for Noticing». The Sufi mystic Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (8th Century) prayed beyond rewards and punishments: "O God, if I love you because I fear hell, then cast me forever into the fires of damnation. Or if I love you because I desire the bliss of paradise, then forever shut the door of heaven against me. But if I love you for your own sake, then let me ever gaze upon your eternal beauty." A similar idea is found in Shibi (9th Century) who said, "He who loves God for His acts of Grace is a polytheist." **Ashes**: Hindu cremation ashes are often offered to the Ganges River. **Earth, air, water, flame: the four elements** → «Catching Fire, Throwing Power». **Without agenda**: Love is a "a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile." —Carter Heyward, 1984 *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation*.

28. *Intimate Commitment*

We began as a mineral. We emerged into plant life and into the animal state, and then into being human, and always we have forgotten our former states, except in early spring when we slightly recall being green again.

A YEAR ago the Easter sun was dark.
 I looked at death and shook, God-forsaken.
 Your word that equinox, a shock, a spark,
 made hope stone-frozen ground would yet awaken;
 instead the Vigil reaped no resurrection,
 but cold entombed between us. Dumb, dead seed
 we hurled into deaf ground, our affection
 bled dry; and no direction could I read.
 Spring slowly warmed the seed. Decay and spit,
 through crusty soil, the pained push cleansed us two.
 This Easter, risen, with some friends we sit
 and tell a tested love, blind-sighted, true.
 I honor us, who loved though love was slain,
 as bread for sharing grows from buried grain.

The EPIGRAPH is from Rumi/E Helminski, p34 → «The Sun». **Easter** celebrates the **resurrection** of the Christ from the tomb. "Easter" derives from an early term, "to shine"; hence the East; hence the goddess of the dawn whose festival was observed at the spring equinox to which line 3 refers. **Stone**: "Nothing is built on stone; all is built on sand, but we must build as if the sand were stone." —Jorge Luis Borges. A **vigil** is a devotional watch anticipating a holy day. In orthodox Eucharistic theories, **bread** becomes the body of Christ, a kind of hyper-presence, ultra-reality, or a cosmic "wormhole" in space-time to God, but not *simulacrum* in the sense given the term by Jean Baudrillard. Some might add that the body of Christ is the Church, or that the cosmos itself is Christ's body, and that the Eucharistic meal is a way of opening our eyes to the sacrality and grace that suffuses the universe, for that which is always and everywhere true must at some times and some places be noticed and celebrated if we are to be fully aware. → «The Sovereign's Bed». **Decay**: John 12:24: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." → «Easter Morning». Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) and others purport to show ancient dying and resurrected vegetative gods presenting dying and growing seasons of the year as presumed models for Jesus. Peter Berger's *Sacred Canopy*, Chapter 2, and Al Truesdale's *If God Is God... Then Why?: Letters from New York City* demonstrate the centrality of the problem of evil for Christians. As Archibald MacLeish put it in his 1958 play, *J.B.*, a modern version of the biblical Job, "If God is God He is not good, / If God is good He is not God." "We forget the god / Under this crown of thorns. / We forget that never again / Will a god trust in the world." —Paul Muldoon, "Hedgehog" in *Poems 1969-1998*, 2001.

29. *Shakespeare's Fair Young Man*

Vicissim autem senes in adulescentium caritate adquiescimus

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Shakespeare, abandonnant du coup Ophélie Cordélia, Desdémone, tout son beau sexe, Chantait en vers magnificents – qu'un sot s'en vexe – Le forme masculine et son alleluia.

I READ and feed on Shakespeare's handsome verse
of love and verge toward you and feast. I know
his relish matched with appetency worse
than death, though on his friend he could bestow
an immortality, so that I ask,
*Would I prefer to greet the Bard or meet
his young male friend, behind time's wordy mask?
These two: who made the sonnets ripe and sweet?*
If even in the smallest way, his friend
and you are like, then let me meet this youth,
carousing you through him, since you now wend
away from me, like shifting hope to truth.
Unmeasured love with lingual palette knife
is diced and cooked and dried by passion's strife.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Cicero's *De Amicitia, Of Friendship*, 101: In my old age, I find pleasure in the affection of young men . . . [Nay, more, I delight in the intimacy of such a very young man . . .] **E2**: concluding couplet of Shakespeare's Sonnet 29. Later sonnets complain of the youth's faithless, shallow, narcissistic character as Shakespeare also examines his own faults in the relationship. **E3**: from Paul Verlaine's "Ô Ne Blasphème Pas," translated as "Shakespeare, forsaking Ophelia, Cordelia, Desdemona, all that beautiful sex, sang to man's form (though it may vex stupid critics) many a Hallelujah" by J Murat and W Gunn in the 1979 *A Lover's Cock and Other Gay Poems*, p20. Feed: ". . . His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." —Song of Solomon 2:3b-4. Puns include *relish*, *meet* and *unmeasured*. *Wend* is now seldom spoken, but Shakespeare used it to mean "go," as in proceeding or pursuing a path. *Diced* is a term used in food preparation and gambling. A *palette* is a painter's board for mixing colors or an available range of something, and the *palate* is the roof of the mouth. *Cooked*: "A successful exercise in shacking up need not necessarily be any more improbable than a successful vichyssoise." —Episcopal priest Robert Farrar Capon, 1982 *Beyond Noon and Three*, p6. Some might cite Daniel and Ashpenaz named in the Hebrew scripture, Daniel 1:3.

30. *Shakespeare's 73 Redux*

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold
 when daffodils sing zeal to greet the sun
 whose muscled, sweating rays make time more bold,
 and rouse the gardened loins where glory's spun.
 In me thou see'st the playing of such day
 as brings the birds to greet in themes of cheer,
 lifts beasts from slumb'ring earth to groom and lay,
 and makes the humblest hiker a vizier.
 In me thou see'st the burning of such fire
 as promises a blaze that sizzles awe,
 a sacred consummation of desire
 constrained by courtesy and holy law.
 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
 and made old me now young with sursum song.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNET 73:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consumed with that which it is nourished by.
 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

For the perfection of its structure, this sonnet is one of Shakespeare's most celebrated. It has elicited many commentaries. Those familiar with Helen Vendler's magisterial 1997 *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* will easily discern the contrary use of the fire metaphor in the "Redux" sonnet. **Lay** (related to the German *lied*) is a song; other meanings include a lodging and religious law (and thus a faith); it can also be a vulgar term for sexual activity. A **vizier** is the title given to a minister of state in some Muslim countries. **Sursum**: *sursum corda*, "Lift up your hearts" — an early part of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass, sometimes chanted responsively between priest and congregation. **Holy law**: "My sense of the holy is bound up with the hope that some day my remote descendants will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law." —Richard M. Rorty in his and Gianni Vattimo's 2005 *The Future of Religion*, p40.

31. *Nineteen*

Hey Nineteen No we got nothing in common
No we can't talk at all.

Look in mine eyeballs, there thy beauty lies;
Then why not lips on lips, since eyes in eyes?

NINETEEN? I do not understand why age,
time's frame, impedes one's love. You're not my son
or nephew, but an equal friend. No sage
am I, slight wisdom ranged where I have run
in Kathmandu and Machu Picchu, Rome,
Tokyo and Amman — travelled well and read
some tomes, took doctoral degree, have home,
career (my wealth is friends), and I am wed.

Unbolted, your field also threatens, scares,
as older folks can trap. You're skilled and want
some answers, paths, and — to the past — repairs.

Now fully man, you ask me how to hunt.
Arrived from fields of different hurts, a prize
for both we find in fully present eyes.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Steely Dan's song, "Hey Nineteen" on the 1980 album "Gaucho." Some interpret the lyrics to be ironic. Compare with Shakespeare 22. **E2:** from Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis." **Eyes** is a triple paronomasia: eye, I, aye. See *Romeo and Juliet*, 3:2: "Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but 'I,' / And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more / Than the death-darting eye of cocatrice. / I am not I, if there be such an 'I'; / Or those eyes shut that make thee answer 'I.' / If he be slain, say 'I,' or if not, 'no.'" Sonnet 104: "eye I ey'd," Sonnet 148: "Love's eye is not so true as all men's No." See "He asked if I was his / I made no answer of the tongue / But answer of the eye" in Judith Farr, 1992 *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*, p7. "Love took my hand, smiling, did reply, / 'Who made the eyes but I?'" — George Herbert (1593-1633), "Love," second stanza. "My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears, / And true plain hearts do in the faces rest . . ." —John Donne (1572-1631), "The Good-Morrow." "Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction" —Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, "Wind, Sand, and Stars," 1939/1984 *Airman's Odyssey*, p195. "So through the eyes love attains the heart: for the eyes are the scouts of the heart . . ." —troubadour Guiraut de Borneilh, quoted in Joseph Campbell, 1972 *Myths to Live By*, p163. "My eye and God's eye are one eye and one seeing, one knowing and one loving." —Meister Eckhart's Sermon 12. "This can't be love, because I feel so well, But still I love to look in your eyes." —"This can't be love" from *The Boys from Syracuse*, lyrics by Lorenz Hart. Douglas Hofstadter discusses how we are copied in each other in his partly autobiographical *I am a Strange Loop*, 2007.

32. *Campfire*

Upa tvagne dive-dive dosavastar dhiya vayam
namo bharanta emasi

“NINETEEN!” At my request he christens me:
“Hey, Forty-Nine!” He tends the camp in dark
atop a wooded hill. From history
we’re freed a spell, in myths we dwell, and mark
the play of singing flames that spill and dance
around the chalice culled of stones on ground,
this sacred ground: dead branches flare in trance,
a language for the holy night we found.
He hears my invocation to the fire
and touches as we stand. O who are you,
Nineteen? Lay fear of closeness on this pyre,
Hephaestus, Loki, Agni, or Nusku.
We sleep. The fire goes out. A strange bird screams
and wakes us. We ignite and talk our dreams.

The EPIGRAPH is the 7th shloka (double-verse) from the first hymn of the Rig Veda, to Agni, the fire god and chaplain to the gods in the sky. The Griffith translation of the invocation in Radhakrisnan and Moore, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*: “Thee, Agni, we approach day by day, O (god) who shinest in the darkness; with our prayer, bringing adoration to thee” In Vedic thought, fire was external, on the altar, for sacrifice. In the later Upanishadic developments, the sacred (metabolic) fire was inside the body of each person. The English word *ignite* (ignition, igneous) is a transformation of the Sanskrit fire god. *Myths*: a myth is a story that reveals the nature and structure of sacred reality, and a ritual enacts the myth, propelling the participants into awareness of such holiness. “Mythic narratives either take the form of ‘Once upon a time something happened, . . .’ or ‘Here is what is really going on today and every day.’ Whereas we moderns tend to find these two forms quite different, even incompatible, the mind at home with the mytho-logical passes quite happily from one to the other, unobstructed by what we would call the temporal contradictions between the two. Thus, for example, Christian theologians have, over the centuries, been much exercised by the question whether the New Testament is a historical account of a once-and-for-all incarnation or a story that tells us how we crucify Jesus daily.” —Dudley Young, 1991, *The Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War*, p250. “Like art, and unlike science, [myth] deals not with the world that man contemplates, but with the world man creates.” —Northrop Frye, “Myth, Fiction, and Displacement” in *Dædalus*, Summer 1961, p598. *Dance*: “The gods have been appointed to be our companions in the dance.” —Plato, *Laws* 2. *Nineteen*: For I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, to the lover than a beloved youth. Plato, *Symposium* 178c. *Agni*, *Hephaestus* (Greek), *Loki* (Scandinavian-Teutonic), and *Nusku* (Assyro-Babylonian) are also fire gods. *Tree*: → «Barren Golgotha». Features of this poem are discussed in the § Introduction, ¶ 18.

33. *Birthday Course*

Beautiful you rise, O eternal living god! . . .
 Your brightness gives life to hearts
 When you fill the Two Lands with your love.

THIS morn makes twenty orbits round the sun,
 Our sire who dresses all with energy
 and vested you to make your earthly run
 (although you did not read astronomy
 when you began this course). In vector's turn,
 a sinner, saved, with love corralling you,
 attain that solar grace which none can earn.
 Instead, wring time intoning what is true.

Our culture hides the ring youths once received
 that blessed adventure's circuit with curbed pace.
 This parkour path you've well begun; you've grieved
 much loss already, as you run the race.

RING FORWARD: REST: PLAY: DIG: BUILD: CARE:
 HUNT: FEAR:
 FEEL ALL THINGS. Sing the orbit of this year.

The EPIGRAPH is from *Praise to the Aten*, the 18th Egyptian dynasty (the Two Lands are Upper and Lower Egypt). "If the sun that illumines the world / were to draw nigher, the world would be consumed" —Rumi/Star, p161 → «The Sun». **Read:** In British academies, pursuing a **course** of study; course also recalls orbit. **Sinner, saved** refers to Martin Luther's *simul justus et peccator*, simultaneously righteous and sinner, one of the great paradoxes of Christianity. A possible psychological understanding of this variously-interpreted theological doctrine is that by knowing my finitude and weaknesses, and by awareness of my prejudices and oppressions internalized from the culture about me, I am saved from self-righteousness, with justification only in the salvific acts of Christ (liberals may interpret Christ as any figure who helps to redeem the world, such as Martin Luther King Jr). **Solar:** "We have access to all the information of the biosphere, arriving in . . . the stream of solar photons. When we have learned how these are rearranged against randomness, to make, say, springtails, quantum mechanics, and the late quartets, we may have a clearer notion how to proceed." —Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell*, 1971, p15. **Grace:** Robert Farrar Capon in his 1982 *Beyond Noon and Three*, p73-74, writes that "grace is the celebration of life, relentlessly hounding all the non-celebrants in the world. It is a floating, cosmic bash shouting its way through the streets of the universe, flinging the sweetness of its cassations to every window, pounding at every door in a hilarity beyond all liking and happening, until the prodigals come out at last and dance and the elder brothers finally take their fingers out of their ears." **Wring**, extract, puns **ring**, sound, alert, orbit, jewelry. **True:** genuine. **Play:** → «Thanks for Noticing».

34. *Conjuring*

The making of the sword, like all ancient metallurgy,
is surrounded with ritual.

THE golden sun, or God, or some vast Void
our circling planet cast, which, turning, grew
the oceans, air, and soil, and soon enjoyed
a life which joined all things in one spun zoo.

From ages, humans rose, found fire and mined,
refined metallic ores in rite, and such
were fashioned holy gifts, with words combined,
confirming spouse and king and priest with touch.
From earth's proud veins, this fire-forged golden ring
is born, from shining sun transformed, sword-pure
by summer conjuring. This last evening
my finger yields a leather lace, a lure
around your neck, inscribed with lexeme rings
inside: DIG: BUILD: LOVE: HUNT: FEAR:
FEEL ALL THINGS.

The EPIGRAPH is from Jacob Brownowski, 1973 *The Ascent of Man*, the book based on the PBS science series. There is no creator god in Hua-yen Buddhism, but *sunya*, the **Void**, is regarded as the potential out of which all things continually arise; everything is **nothing** → «Seasoning»; a reverse image of the Void is everything interrelated, entangled: physics professor Daniel Kabat says that objects “only exist in relation to other objects, and . . . these relationships are encoded in a wave function that stands outside the tangible physical universe.” —*The New York Times*, 2022 Oct 4, pA9. **Rite**: “It’s our ceremonies that hold the world together.” —Leon Shenandoah quoted in Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness*, 1993, p114. **All things**: “All things found in nature are full of wonder.” —Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, 645a. **Sword-pure** refers not to the metal but to the purity of the holder. A **lexeme** is the basic form of a word which can be inflected grammatically; for example, **dig** can become digs, dug, digging, etc. Paul Taylor danced the **sun** in the 1966 premiere of “Orbs,” one of his early masterpieces. I went to New York to see it because Clive Barnes found it “almost Shakespearean in its scope” and “outrageously funny” at times in the choreography about “God, man, nature, and the seasons.” His review said that the music was drawn from Beethoven’s last string quartets — which had never seemed slapstick to me. Had I been missing something in Beethoven? This sonnet’s octave arises in part from my memory of that performance and its creator God, when Taylor, the sun, brought his extended wrists together and thrust them outward, bringing all manner of life and love into being. Implicit in the transmission of the **ring** is Erik Erikson’s seventh stage of psychosocial development, “generativity.” Shakespeare’s Sonnet 77 suggests a similar stage when he gives his beloved young man not an inscribed ring but a book with blank pages.

35. *Scoring*

One who governs by one's spiritual power
is like the Pole Star which abides in its place
while all the stars bow toward it.

The gnostic understands Christ's message
not as offering a set of answers,
but as encouragement to engage in a process of searching.

THESE summers, five, I've loved you, my fleet friend;
and orbits, twenty-eight, the earth has made
with you upon it, fanfare toward your end
(the sun itself, once swain, will age and fade);
though hinted now, your brilliance lies ahead,
its reach and sheen is ringed with pitch and power,
forgetting self (when work and playtime wed),
and puzzle peels fulfillment hour by hour.

Those manly words I once inscribed for you,
then youth — DIG, BUILD, LOVE, HUNT, FEAR,
FEEL ALL THINGS —

now need to stretch like time, abiding true:

Add TOUCH, SERVE OTHERS for joy in flings.

As mundane orbits ring and shine in you,
the sun and pole star witness, dance, and woo.

Scoring can mean incising, making a point in a game or discussion, orchestrating, achieving a success. The first EPIGRAPH is from the *Analects* of Confucius (551–479 BCE). **E2**: from Elaine Pagels, 1979/1989 *The Gnostic Gospels*, ch 5, p112. **Forgetting self**: In his 2002 book, *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition*, Brian J Mahan, pXXI, writes that “we long for a kind of self-forgetful yet fully engaged sense of immediacy, for a more graced and gracious way of being in the world, one that cuts deeper than the surface imagery sketch by our infernal preoccupation with some soon-to-be success or failure (financial, social, or spiritual).” More philosophically, Jim Holt’s chapter, “The Self: Do I Really Exist?” in his 2012 *Why Does the World Exist?* suggests “no” within a largely Western review; his mention of the Buddha does not include the *anatman*, no-self, doctrine. **Dance**: Thomas Merton, 1961 *New Seeds of Contemplation* concludes with a chapter entitled, “The General Dance,” in which he writes of God’s play, p297, “For the world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness. . . . For we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance.” **Play**: → «Thanks for Noticing». Paronomasias include **scoring, inscribed, ringed, pitch, play, peels**.

36. *Catching Fire, Throwing Power*

All of which are founded in desire,
As light in flame and heat in fire.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,
and fillest ever with fresh life.

I SHOULD have noticed when I saw you dance,
that you were Shiva, but that first campfire
the wood you chose up-flared in holy trance
in shapes that stage you Loki, sheathed desire.
Another course we sit. The shadow casts:
through transmuting Elements Four, you show
mysterium tremendum; puissance blasts
to see your holy lingam ardor grow.
You make all prime, this ritual circle session;
you center summer, ceremony round,
a chalice proud, erect and drenched confession.
Your spilled libation's vajra bolts astound.
O Powers of the Universe, flared Loki —
You dance as Shiva: taboo thrown holy.

The first EPIGRAPH is the conclusion of "Desire" by Thomas Traherne (1638?-1674). **E2**: the second sentence in Rabindranath Tagore, 1913 *Gitanali*. In Scandinavian lore, **Loki** is a trickster god sometimes associated with fire. **Shiva** is a Hindu deity of many forms → «Ahimsa». As Nataraja, he is the Dancing Lord, a magnificent 13th Century Chola bronze of which is in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and Alexander Calder's "Shiva" stabile is mounted outside the Westin Crown Center Hotel, both in Kansas City, MO. **Lingam**: the penis of Shiva; the influential Bengali mystic Ramakrishna (1836-1886) said that in his "divine madness, I used to worship my own sex-organ as the Shiva-phallus," in Mahendra Guupta's 1980 *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, v1 p491. (In Hinduism the **vajra** is the lightning flash of Indra; in Tibetan Buddhism (sometimes called Vajrayana, the thunderbolt vehicle), a hand-held stylized 4-fold or 8-fold vajra may be used as a symbol of the male in sexual meditative practice. The Latin phrase *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* has been used to point to a numinous experience which arouses both terror and fascination; the term is often associated with Rudolf Otto, 1917 *Das Heilige*, my teacher, Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), and others. "The divine world is contagious and its contagion is dangerous." —Georges Bataille, 1989/1992 *Theory of Religion*, tr Robert Hurley, p53. The **four elements**, earth, water, fire, and air, in some ancient and medieval thought, were the constituents of the human body, the soul, and the world. "Air, earth, water, and fire are God's servants" —Rumi/Star, p170 → «The Sun». **Ceremony**: "But ceremony never did conceal . . . How much we are the woods we wander in." —Richard Wilbur, "Ceremony," *Collected Poems*, 2004.

37. *Puja*

Although you may not know it, if you love anyone,
It is Him you love; if you turn your head
in any direction, it is toward Him you turn.

Whatever you did for one of the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

But perfect Being has ordained
It must be lost to be regained

YOU'VE gone to Bonnadella Springs, my friend;
I bow for you like blood needs breathing when
the bones are traveling fast. Yet I don't bend
to panic, but give thanks for what has been,
for knowing Shiva in beholding you:
your dance is love creating; my heart's drum
is in your hand, and in your fire I view
embodied all, rise and fall, in lingam.

You're there, so where can I do puja, serve
and render gratitude, though sighing while
you I cannot touch, muscle, stir, or nerve? —
Yet everywhere I look I find your smile.

When I vest love in anyone in sight,
I vault with beltless thanks for this blessed plight.

The EPIGRAPH is from Fakhraddin Iraqi (1213?-1289), quoted in Andrew Harvey, 1997 *The Essential Gay Mystics*, p98. **E2:** Jesus, Matthew 25:40, NIV. **E3:** W H Auden, 1940 "New Year Letter." *I view . . . all . . . everywhere:* but wrote "every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and . . . an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view." —Thomas Nagel, "What is the like to be a bat?" *Philosophical Review*, 1974, p220 / PDF p437. **Puja**, Sanscrit for honor or worship, as in adoration of a god in a ritual offering. **Shiva** → «Ahimsa» Nataraja, Shiva as Lord of the Dance, is often portrayed with a **drum** (symbolizing creation) in one hand and **fire** (destruction) in another. A third hand points down indicating victory over ignorance, a fourth points up symbolizing no need to fear. He is surrounded by a ring of fire. Shiva is also depicted and worshiped as **lingam**, a phallus. In puja, the lingam is washed, anointed with oil, and decorated with flowers. Shiva is today regarded as a major Hindu deity and is not to be confused with the peripheral Greek god Priapus. **Fall:** "A holy one does sometimes fall, / but by that tribulation, he or she ascends, / escapes many illusions escapes / conventional religion, escapes / being so bound to phenomena."—Rumi → «The Sun». **Plight:** *unfortunate condition, pledge (of love).*

38. *The Grail*

The adventure of the Grail — the quest within for those creative values by which the Waste Land is redeemed — has become today . . . the unavoidable task; for, as there is no more any fixed horizon, there is no more any fixed center, any Mecca, Rome, or Jerusalem.

Hence that sense of yearning and striving toward an unknown end, . . . yet deeply, infallibly intended, is one's own peculiar teleology.

YOUNG man, my mythic mate disguised as real,
 you match my love, share chalice fire and dance
 (Nineteen) again, and for my birthday peel
 from life eternal this gift grail to chance
 my certain pleasure. Sure, you found what I
 have sought: you are what I have sought. Our bourne,
 this cenacle, finds wine to sanctify
 the time you've brought; we drink the yearned sojourn.

The stories say the grail is only found
 by one whose playful heart is pure. You are;
tat tvam asi; voyageur, proofs abound:
 you give away the grail, O Avatar.

Our search is over in this show and spree:
 we've now swung space and leased Eternity.

→«Nineteen». The first EPIGRAPH is from Joseph Campbell, 1964 *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*; E2: from his 1968 *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*. **Sought**: "Driven by forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come into being." —Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), 1959/61/65 *The Phenomenon of Man* p264-5, tr Bernard Wall from 1955 *Le Phénomène Humain*. **Bourne**: destination. **Cenacle**: a retreat house, a dining room, the Upper Room in the Christian story of the Last Supper. The famous Upanishadic declaration *tat tvam asi* means "That [Absolute] thou art." **Creed's scents**: incense. An **avatar** is a manifestation of a deity in flesh. **Myth**: →«Campfire». **Play/Spieltrieb**: "Only when one is playing is one wholly human." —Friedrich Schiller, 1794, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letter 15. Because play (a renunciation of work) is possible only when the players are free from danger, the context of the play itself denies external social status; when rules are part of the play, an incipient morality appears. →«Thanks for Noticing». **Eternity**: In the first scene of Wagner's *Parisfal*, Gurnemanz says *Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit* — time here becomes space.

39. *Carpe Diem*

Tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi
finem di dederint . . . Dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

SARGON'S name lives on, but who knows Sargon?
He's dead, though deeds still make us who we are.
Except for you, I'd break like Babylon.
And even you, immortal friend, time's star,
will fade as time so finely mixes all
flesh back to dust, and light compacts and falls
into itself, Big Crunch, Big Bang, time's wall
against itself, which beautifies, then mauls.

Ere then to know you full is my desire,
in all youth's loveliness and grace and power,
you showing resurrection, whole, entire,
each wound healed, transformed, soiled seed to flower.
Dance, then, Shiva, dance! consume me with your play!
Let your release, not rot, end this brief day!

Carpe diem. "seize the day" —Horace (65-8 BCE), *Odes*, 1.11:8. The EPIGRAPH is from the beginning and ending of the poem, which warns against Babylonian augury. The Latin quoted can be rendered, "Don't ask (taboo to know) what the gods have planned for us. . . . While we chat, jealous time has slipped away. Grab each moment, counting on little to come." **Sargon**, who took his name from a Babylonian king ruling about 2,000 years earlier, seized the Assyrian throne in 722 BCE, captured Samaria, suppressed a revolt in Palestine, and defeated the Egyptians, thus shaping human history. He was murdered in 705. One theory of the cosmos proposes that matter will eventually fall together into a "black hole" from which even light cannot escape, the **Big Crunch**, followed by an explosion, the **Big Bang**, and expansion. **Beautifies, then mauls:** *Denn das Schöne ist nichts als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen, und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmätzt, uns zu zerstören.* For beauty's nothing but the burning terror we can hardly bare, and we worship it for its grace in serenely despising us, to consume us. —Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 1:4-7. **To know you:** "We can only love what we know, and we can never know completely what we do not love. Love is a mode of knowledge and when the love is sufficiently disinterested and sufficiently intense, the knowledge becomes unitive knowledge and so takes on the quality of infallibility." —Aldous Huxley, 1945, *The Perennial Philosophy*, p95. **Shiva** → «Ahimsa + Puja» is one of the most important Hindu gods. One favorite image of him is as Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, surrounded by a ring of fire, suggesting cosmic cycles of creation and destruction. **Resurrection:** Primal and Asian faiths generally view time cyclically. While monotheistic religions like Christianity generally view time moving from creation through unrepeatable events to fulfillment of God's purpose, in the Eucharist liturgical Christians continually recapitulate the death and resurrection of Christ. **Play:** → «Thanks for Noticing».

40. *Ahimsa: Khajuraho*

Putasne vivent ossa ista?

Πῶρ ἦλθον βαλεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν

Therefore I have brought you my heart—
This heart that is now your burning ground.
Ignorance there and self shall be consumed with fire,
that you may dance . . . among the ashes.

I KNOW your reputation, Shiva, you
destroy; and when you take a human form,
you fry and freeze the brain at once, and spew
and smear your seed and essence like a storm
of fire and hail. In judder words, O god,
you twist, disrupt, you torture, trample, trump,
you grind cremation ashes, dance, then prod
the dead to live again, dry bones to jump.
I know these tricks — you’ve done me much before;
you now see me: you see a hardened mirror
impervious to all your threats and war.
Reflection masters anger, grief, and fear.
While gravity and strings may crush and kill,
your dancing means I live. I love you still.

Ahimsa is a Jain and Buddhist term meaning avoiding doing harm. The first EPIGRAPH from the Vulgate, Ezekiel 37:3, reads, “Can these bones live?” The quotation is from Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones. **E2**: from Luke 12:49, [Jesus said.] “I came to bring fire to the earth” **E3**: from a hymn to Shiva as lord of life and death in Aldous Huxley, 1962, *Island*, p167, **Shiva** → «Catching Fire + Puja + A Blessing + Carpe Diem + Meridian + Kratophany + Collect» is a Hindu deity; as Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance, he is surrounded by a ring of fire indicating cosmic cycles of creation and destruction. Underlying the specific Christian meanings of the Mass is a similar truth: we literally live by the sacrifice of other living beings (even vegetative forms), and the horror of realizing that must be transformed into joy. Another related sacred paradox: Shiva is the most severe ascetic and the world’s greatest lover; in one manifestation, he rolls around in cremation ashes. “Shiva’s eroticism is a slap in the face for all those ascetics who associate their personal salvation with sexual sublimation or, worse, with rigid control of the natural appetites.” —Georg Feuerstein, 1991, *Sacred Paths*, p205. **Gravity** and **strings** refer to theories in physics relating to black holes and the ultimate vibrating constituents of matter. **Reflection** — meditation, attention — is a theme in many faiths, particularly Zen Buddhism, and *noticing* is a theme of this book.

41. *Time Travel: Leaving Cairo*

Eternity is the “now that does not pass away.”

Wenn man unter Ewigkeit nicht unendliche Zeitdauer,
sondern Unzeitlichkeit versteht, dann lebt der ewig,
der in der Gegenwart lebt.

Time is the mercy of Eternity

Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

WITH glyphs from ancient Egypt, take this ring
which soars through centuries and space to you:
peasant, pharaoh, president, priest, and king
implicit in its metal — and gods, too.

Let’s say this ring’s a wizard’s time machine:
backwards, forwards, maybe sideways we’d flow,
surveying upstarts in the Pleistocene
and then, Cairo, time’s archipelago.

Our thirst to learn will not be quenched by time
shown banded brio pierced beyond an end
like deathless friendship, fiercer by this rime:
this ring’s unending orbit makes time bend.

The current of eternity you bring
for you’re the magic present in the ring.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Augustine (354-430), perhaps, alas, the most influential of all Christian theologians. **E2**: from the English philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) whose work reshaped much of Twentieth Century thinking about confusing language: “If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.” — *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.4311. **E3**: from William Blake (1757-1827), *Milton*, plate 24; **E4**: from his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 5. Blake also wrote, “This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity” in [A Vision of the Last Judgment], *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed David V Erdman, 1965, p545. The **Pleistocene** is a geological epoch stretching from over two and a half million years ago to about twelve thousand years ago during which species of *Homo* evolved. And from Albert Einstein, quoted in “A Quantum of Solace,” *The New York Times*, 2013 July 2: “People like us, who believe in physics, know the distinction between the past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” **Cairo** abuts the Giza pyramids. **Currents** are flows as in water or in time, and **current** means in the present. **Banded, present, end**, and **current** are also paronomasias. **Magic**: the Sanskrit *vidya*, knowledge, can also mean magic.

42. *The Sun — A Rumi Quartet*

Forget phraseology. I want burning, burning.

Make of thy desire the desire of the world,
Of thy love the love of the world.

A RING like this I recently received
in Egypt; and its hieroglyphs (obscure
as Great Wall suns) my new young friend retrieved
from its antiquity, today's allure.

I knew him for three hours when he removed
his finger's ring and lodged its soul on mine;
then friendship flooded like the Nile and proved
that old and fresh can perfectly entwine.

Three rings like his transmit when spread away;
this one's for you though you I scarcely know —
It's not from me, but from eternal play,
from ancient urges of the soul to grow.

Let its inscriptions speak our deep desire,
as Ra, Ishraq, rings life with sacred fire.

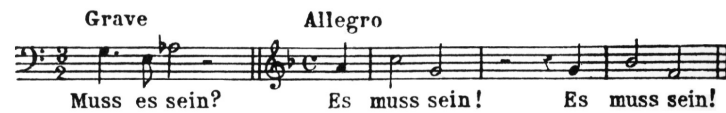
The first EPIGRAPH is from Jalaluddin *Rumi* (1207-1273), a famous scholar whose life was utterly transformed when he was 37 by meeting Shams of Tabriz, then 60. Rumi's students and possibly one of Rumi's sons, jealous of Shams and scandalized by their friendship, drove Shams away. It seems that Shams was eventually murdered. Rumi was shattered and his faith became an astonishing embrace. Rumi founded what by the West is called the "whirling dervishes." Mark Di Suvero's sculpture "Rumi" is outside the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. The word Shams means the sun. **E2**: from Krishnamurti's 1931 *The Song of Life*, p9. **Hieroglyphs**, "sacred carvings," are symbols for writing in ancient Egypt. The term also connotes signs of hidden meaning. **Ra** is a sun god of ancient Egypt. A **Great Wall**, of which there are several, the Hercules-Corona Borealis Great Wall the largest, is an enormous and recently discovered structure of the cosmos, previously invisible, containing an immense number of galaxies, each with a stupendous number of stars (suns). **Three rings**: Lessing's 1779 play *Nathan der Weise* is based on the tale of three rings in Boccaccio's 1353 *Decameron*, third story of day one. **Ishraq** is Arabic for the splendor of the rising sun. The mystic Suhrawardi (1155-1191), who drew upon Zoroastrian traditions, was called the Sheikh al-Ishraq, the Master of Illumination. Except where noted, the Rumi translations and versions are from Coleman Barks, 1995 *The Essential Rumi*, p166. Other translations are by Jonathan Star, 2000 *God's Breath* ed John Miller and Aaron Kenedi; 2001 *The Pocket Rumi*, ed Kabir Helminski; Edmund Helminski, 1981 *The Ruins of the Heart: Selected Lyric Poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi*, and John Baldock, 2005 *The Essence of Rumi*. **Play**: →«Thanks for Noticing».

43. *Shams — A Rumi Quartet*

Where can you live safely then? – In surrender.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head

. . . a reality that forces itself upon our consciousness
and refuses to be managed or mastered



A THOUSAND times I tell myself each day:
“No treasure, you! Be gone, O pendent pain,
the yearning, roused, erect, again. You lay
a trap, you pillage; pardons you profane.” —
I echo this, but can’t myself convince.
And much (watch!) whacking off does not erase
tectonic plates of hate, a quake each wince
upheaves, a trebuchet from just a mace.
Be gone! Away! And yet my voice invites
you over with the river of my tongue!
You hugs are valley haze unpierced. What frights
are diamonds in them, how will I be strung?
Must I find God cut in my canyon heart? —
Then slash the past and let surrender start.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Jelaluddin *Rumi*, p79 → «The Sun», for *Shams* also. **Who is using my own tongue?** “Do you think I know what I’m doing, that for one breath or half-breath I belong to myself? — As much as a pen knows what it’s writing, or the ball can guess where it’s going next.” —Rumi, p16. **E2:** from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, II, i. **E3:** Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, p238. **E4:** markings from the 4th movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet Number 16 in F major, opus 135, “Must it be? It must be!” To the three grim notes, Beethoven responds with playful acceptance in one of the most accessible movements in all the Last Quartets. **Pardons:** “Be where you list, your charter is so strong / That you yourself may privilege your time / To what you will; to you it doth belong / Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime.” —Shakespeare Sonnet 58.

44. *Saladin — A Rumi Quartet*

Of these two thousand “I” and “We” people, which am I?

L’étang reflète, / Profound miroir

A HUNDRED thousand thirsty guys seek you!
 So what’s one want more, leaning to your fire?
 Can you accept my gaze and rendezvous
 and not be trapped by longing or desire?
 Your burning is not fuel like peat or oil;
 it’s more the sun’s reflection in the lake
 which I can penetrate like thinnist foil,
 it’s flush, pellucid majesty partake.
 And other guys can dive into your shining
 if in a liquid state you languish bare;
 but if we two, transparency refining,
 immersed as habits spurt, and form a pair,
 and if we draw fierce light as we adore,
 true God’s full emptiness will in us pour.

The first EPIGRAPH is from *Rumi*, p12 → «The Sun». After the death of Shams, *Saladin* became Rumi’s companion. **E2**: from *La Lune Blanche*, the poem by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896): the pond reflects, [it is] a deep mirror. **Art**: In his 1972 *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*, p138, Gregory Bateson writes that the artist “must practice in order to perform the craft components of his job. But to practice always has a double effect. It makes him, on one hand, more able to do whatever it is he is attempting; and, on the other hand, by the phenomenon of habit formation, it makes him less aware of how he does it.” **Habits hold**: Bateson, p141-142, writes that “the process of habit formation is a sinking of knowledge down to less conscious and more archaic levels. Habit, therefore, is a major economy of conscious thought. We can do things without consciously thinking about them.” **Transparency**, **Emptiness**: “The holiest of holies is empty.” —Sam Keen, 1977 *Beginnings Without End*, p57. **True God**: a phrase in the Nicene Creed referring to Christ, the son of God, himself God, part of a Trinitarian affirmation growing out of now-untenable Greek categories of thought. God is often homologized with *Light*, and especially with the *sun*. Even the strongest ray of light is invisible until it falls upon an object. But in becoming visible in the narrow spectrum of sight we possess, it is necessarily fractured from its fullness and rendered in a sense both *true* and false. So until God enters the world of our perceiving, God is invisible; but when we perceive, our finitude and dispositions can fool us into thinking we have some idea of what God is like, when we are almost completely ignorant of God’s glorious nature, even in our most extravagant intimations; and yet with even that, we may be filled to overflowing. In Sikhism, God is often described as Truth or Reality, as in *Sat Naam*, Truth is the name. Nicolaus Cusanus (Cusa) wrote of the “coincidence of opposites” in his 1440 *De Docta Ignorantia*, and in his 1462 *De non aliud* he names God as Nothing-Else or Not-Other, *Non Aliud*, in effect uniting the transcendent with the immanent.

45. *Husam* — *A Rumi Quartet*

'I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known.'

With beauty's children only can we live

OUR God created all of raw desire —
 or some slight primal shake as time began
 quick quarks into a measured cosmic choir
 to reach affinity, without a plan.
 This accidental love among the stars,
 within the atoms, grows from molecules
 to strands of DNA, then repertoires
 of genius, culture, peace and war, and fools;
 and governments, and arts, and law, and schools;
 and acts spontaneous and those with rules.
 When flesh inhales, becoming spirit,
 then longing fully to be known and know,
 an unexpected thrust may steer it,
 and vanish it in mystic vertigo.
 Such beauty in the body called your soul
 proves Evolution fancies hints to Whole.

The first EPIGRAPH is from *Rumi*, p113 → «The Sun». After Saladin died, *Husam* became Rumi's companion and Friend. The hadith Rumi quotes is discussed in my § Introduction ¶ 4, and in the note to the first sonnet. **E2**: from a poem by Moses Ibn Ezra (1060?-1138), quoted in David Biale's 1992 *Eros and the Jews*, p88. "Without toil [God] *shakes* all things by the thought of his mind." —Xenophanes. The pun *measure* is a unit of time in music. *Quarks* comprise such as neutrons and protons, which themselves are constituents of *atoms*. *DNA*, deoxyribonucleic acid, is the giant double-helix *molecule* which encodes the directions for all living things (excepting some viruses) to grow and to pass on hereditary information. *Inhales* is in world-play with *spirit*: → «Poetic Failure». Rumi seems to have anticipated Darwin (1809-1882) and Père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), the Jesuit paleontologist who saw *Evolution* as a spiritual process in a sense moving from *hints to Whole*. *Beauty/body/soul*: "Beauty is momentary in the mind — / The fitful tracing of a portal; / but in the flesh it is immortal." —Wallace Stevens, "Peter Quince at the Clavier," section iv. "Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. And the Lord said, Arise: anoint him" —I Samuel 16:12. *Vanish*: "The solution to the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem." —Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.521. *Hints to Whole*: viz José Ortega y Gasset's "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia" and one "wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole." —Albert Einstein quoted in Daniel J Boorstin's 1998 *The Seekers*, p250. This is a 16-line sonnet, such as those in George Meredith's 1862 *Modern Love*.

46. *You are Rumi*

So he speaks, and everyone around Begins to cry with him,
laughing crazily, Moaning in the spreading union
Of lover and beloved. This is the true religion. All others
Are thrown-away bandages beside it.

IF I were Shams now knocking Konya's door,
young Rumi, you would open who you are
to me, and dance an answer on the floor
of theory, and you'd throw my soul ajar.
This pilgrimage of sixty years to you
carries my question like an old reed flute
through fields, by streams, exploring every new
and haunting shrine, the echo freed, death mute.
You *must* be Rumi: You're a door to all
the world. You call from every minaret;
the music dances every corner, wall,
extent, and tomb. I'm drenched with holy sweat.
Doors, rooms, garden blooms say *Romp and play*.
Those worn out bandages are thrown away.

The EPIGRAPH is from *Rumi*, p10 → «The Sun», also for *Shams*. Religion, a term in the Rumi quotation, is characterized by Georges Bataille as “the search for lost intimacy” in his *Theory of Religion*, 1989/1992, translated by Robert Hurley, p57. A 16th Century Persian manuscript miniature, “The Meeting of the Theologians” by Abd Allah Musawwir at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, portrays students and teachers affectionately in a madrasa, at the **door** of which is a beggar, and another approaching. Perhaps the beggar desires more than bread. **Door**: “When I walked in through the door / Thought it was me I was looking for.” —The Who's 1971 “The Song is Over.” **Konya**, in what was Anatolia, now modern Turkey, is the city where Rumi lived and his shrine now is a pilgrimage site. “Maybe the mind is like a video game controller, moving the body around the world, taking it on joy rides. Or maybe the body manipulates the mind with hunger, sleepiness and anxiety, something like a river steering a canoe. Is the mind like electromagnetic waves, flickering in and out of our light-bulb bodies? Or is the mind a car on the road? A ghost in the machine?” **Soul ajar**: “Maybe no metaphor will ever quite fit because there is no distinction between mind and body: There is just experience, or some kind of physical process, a gestalt.” —Oliver Whang, “Can Intelligence Be Separated From the Body?”, New York Times, April 11, 2023. A **minaret** is a tower attached or near a mosque from which the call to prayer recited at designated times each day. “The body is the minaret.” —Rumi, p148 → «Fallen Tower». **Theory**: “It really is a nice theory. The only defect I think it has is probably common to all philosophical theories. It's wrong.” —Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*, 1980, p 64. **Play**: → «Thanks for Noticing». This sonnet introduces the paired next two.

47. *No, Maybe I'm Rumi*

Like the ground turning green in a spring wind,
 like birdsong beginning inside the egg,
 like this universe coming into existence,
 the lover wakes and whirls in a dancing joy,
 then kneels down in praise.

THE one who leaves is you: I stay and write.
 Perhaps I got it wrong, for times will twist
 all trips and incarnations, and fight
 millennia till we again exist.

This visitation is Eternity
 when I am this town's Rumi and you are
 my Shams from Idaho, my *bel esprit*,
 with bike (vroom, vroom) and books and your guitar.

Transcending questions form our farewell dance.
 I'm drunk, but not from sauce. The love I drink
 spins and sloshes at your side. Time's wide expanse
 wakes, whirls, trips round your vision's rim and brink.

Like Rumi, my once-careful life is splayed.
 Till you arrived I never really prayed.

The EPIGRAPH is from Rumi, p275 → «The Sun», also for *Shams*. **Times will twist**: The octave and sestet illustrate the technique of hysteron proteron, the latter said before the former event; here the goodbye before the recall of the arrival. But in Eternity, who cares about the order of things? After Rumi and Shams became friends, it seems Rumi's sons and students urged Shams to quit the relationship, so Shams departed. **Bel esprit**: a cultured, clever person. **Transcending**: Utterly changing, not just what one sees, but the way one sees it; the gestalt of the world is transformed, as when one falls in love, encounters art or disaster, or made new within ritual or sport, or when a sudden insight shocks and reveals a fundamental truth about oneself or how the world works, requiring a reorientation to everything. **Drunk**: Sufi poetry sometimes employs the language of intoxication to describe the mystical experience of divine love. A more psychological or literary way of understanding the phenomenon might be found in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1817 *Biographia Literaria*, xvi: the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Compare with Hebrews (1961 NEB) 11:1: Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see" → «Gardening + The Cosmic Christ + Postmodern Faith + Acetylene Torch + Maya's Workbench». **Vision**: "A very great vision is needed, and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky." —attributed to Crazy Horse (1840?-1877) in Jesuit Walter J Burghardt's 2001 *To Be Just Is to Love: Homilies for a Church Renewing*, p214. This sonnet, a palinode, retracts the previous sonnet's title claim, and is paired with the next one which resolves the question of identity.

48. *Welcome Back*

Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
They're in each other all along.

To lose yourself as if you did not exist, . . .
be emptied out of self and almost obliterated,
belongs to heavenly, not to human love.

What boasteth he who findeth Thee that for himself he sought?

What a long strange trip it's been.

LIKE Shams, you're back. Your own Damascus trip
is done. Damn! Tanned and fit, you stand outside
my vertigo, in vision's shock — O *strip*
me bare of all pretense, facade, and pride
that I have coped since kisses said Farewell.
I flourished, burnished what was lean and scant.
I holographed your soul, assured a spell
unraveled as your presence. So I chant
in strobe-stunned silent recognition: Friend,
my Friend arrived! Now *Enter* — though we've talked
of art and science, politics, the end
of living, as I slept and waked and walked.
Now raw to you, I shape your name and smile.
Come in, though you've been in me all this while.

The EPIGRAPH is from Rumi, p106 → «The Sun». "The beloved is in your veins though he or she may *seem* to have a form outside you." —Rumi, p235. When Shams returned from **Damascus**, their friendship resumed. Paul's conversion (Acts 9) begins on the road to Damascus. **E2**: from the 1128? *De diligendo Dei* by Bernard of Clairvaux. **E3**: from Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) 2000 *Iqbal: Collected Poetical Works*, p228, tr A J Arberry. **E4**: from the Grateful Dead's "Truckin'," lyrics by Robert Hunter. **Enter**: "A man who really and truly enters feels as though he had been here though all eternity." —Johannes Tauler (1300?-1361), quoted in Evelyn Underhill, 1911 *Mysticism*, p339. **Spell** means a period of time, and more specifically, can mean a time of enchantment or the words cast to create it. "To spell . . . first meant to speak or to utter." —James Gleick, 2011 *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*, p53. **Trip** has multiple meanings. In me: The "more a person in love perceives their self and their partner's self to be overlapping, the more activation we see in the angular gyrus." —Stephanie Cacioppo, *Wired for Love*, 2022, p115-116. This sonnet is paired with the preceding one. The stanza lengths are 5+4+3+2=14.

49. *What Counts*

ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.

HELL, Jalaludin upraised his loss
to love.

But pitchy demons push approach
toward treacherous fringe, tempting me to toss,
then catch this yearning *Yes!* Perdition's coach
extends his crazed-caught arms to clutch and crush
my chest, breath budged and beat and burned. His clench
is strange perfume, like sin's eternal rush,
a parable of paradise made stench.

Can I, like Rumi, find in broken bones
art's paradox of praise? Can hardened hate,
instead, embrace the melody of moans?
in dessicated shard, a green estate?
I'll slake hell's fire beneath its feed on blame,
and rise the sun in passion's purging flame.

The Greek EPIGRAPH is from Galatians 5:6: "The only thing that counts is faith manifesting in love." **E2:** from Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* (1658). **Yes:** "In religion all words are dirty words. Anybody who gets eloquent about Buddha, or God, or Christ, ought to have his mouth washed out with carbolio soap. Because his aspiration to perpetuate only the 'yes' in every pair of opposites can never, in the nature of things, be realized . . . Conflicts and frustrations — the theme of all history and almost all biography. 'I show you sorrow,' said the Buddha realistically. But he also showed the ending of sorrow — self-knowledge, total acceptance, the blessed experience of Not-Two." —Aldous Huxley, 1962 *Island*, p35, which seems to express a Buddhist "not-two" approach to evil that differs from Reinhold Niebuhr's "two terms" → «Theodicy 9/11». **Rumi:** → «The Sun». Consider also Hāfez/Hafiz (?1325–?1390): "Even after all this time / the sun never says to the earth, / *You owe me.* / Look what happens / with a love like that: / It lights up the sky," tr Daniel Ladinsky, *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*, 1999, p34. **Paradox:** As used in this book, a paradox is not a contradiction but rather an indication of the inadequacy of language to convey the truth or the whole of a situation and even beyond the limits of thought. Since faith often seeks to point to something beyond an immediate and limited focus, paradox is common in religious discourse, especially mysticism. Søren Kierkegaard writes, "the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think (*Philosophical Fragments*, p37) → especially «Interbeing» also → «Dimensions + The Cosmic Christ + Last Watch + Closing Instruction». **Blame:** ". . . Because I couldn't forgive myself." ". . . to prove that even the worst of crimes can be forgiven." —*Marnie*, 2017 opera by Muhly/Wright/(Graham).

50. *Seville: Burning*

The lover is a victim, sacrificed
to love, cast down at the Beloved's door:
the lover, slain, yet lives, his heart throbs
though in love's furnace he is all afire.

Se nel volto per gli occhi il cor si vede,
altro segno non ho più manifesto / della mie fiamma

I'D heard of such strange fire before we met,
not fire that's used for food or melting ore,
nor fire in camps protecting from beasts' threat,
nor nuclear firestorms used two times in war.

I don't mean fireplace flames in bitter cold,
or candles in the church, or birthday cakes,
or neon-fires where entertainment's sold,
or furious flames that rise from martyr's stakes.

The mystics say the light it casts is true
for God piles all the wood and keeps it dry;
these coals that burn my soul were blown by you,
and three degrees persuade me I must die.

Within the laden blaze of every breath,
the cinch of sighs replevies dash from death.

The EPIGRAPH is from Persian poet Fakhruddin Iraqi (1213-1289), influenced by the Muslim mystic Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) who spent much of his youth in Seville, a sister city to Kansas City, MO, which boasts a smaller version of Seville's Giralda Tower, a World Heritage Site, originally a minaret, constructed 1184-1198, attached to what was once one of the largest mosques in the world → «Fallen Tower». Arabi's *Interpretation of Desire* was considered baldly erotic. He taught that what we love in a person is really God, for there is no beauty apart from God. Knowledge of God comes not by reason or authority but by experience only. **Blaze . . . surety . . . love . . .**: "The three essential ingredients of Sufi philosophy are light, knowledge, love — and the means by which a strong direct consciousness of divine presence is experienced," according to Caesar E Farah. Extensive **third-degree** burns are life-threatening. John Tauler (1300-1361) identifies the third degree of love as fiery in his Easter Monday sermon, *Sermons and Conferences*, tr W Elliott, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1910, p256. **E2**: "If the heart shows in the face though the eyes, I have no more manifest sign of my flame," is the beginning a sonnet by Michaelangelo to his beloved Tommaso dei Cavalieri. **Breath**: → «Poetic Failure». **Dash from death**: "He that knows how to die to all things will have life in all things." —John of the Cross, "Spiritual Maxims," 1953 *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, tr E Allison Peers, Vol 3, p235.

51. *Madrid: Encampment*

If you're a lover, you will learn that only by undergoing death
will you win ease from burning.

Make me burn thy love to know.

My breath will find its altar in those lips

THIS worldly camp's a-fire; I rush to you
and burn, a sacred immolation, bliss.

A martyr's innate love of God can woo
God to bestow that Self within a kiss
and roar amid the body's tent and breath.
It bursts, it falls, it smokes as flames ascend;
and nothing to extinguish it but death,
an alcazar that burns for God to tend.

So consumption falls to ash, then flare
into a singularity of black,
escapeless, then creation's blaze, aware
that this is God's eternal bivouac.

The friction is the fuel that forms the blast,
then rest, then tension, dying love to last.

The EPIGRAPH from the *Bostan (The Orchard)* by the Persian poet Saadi (1200?-1292?). **E2**: from hymn 47 in *The Hymnal 1982* (Episcopal Church). **E3**: from Frank O'Hara's 1953 poem, "Lebanon." **A-fire**: for Heraclitus → «Wound Wick» and recall Hopkins, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire . . ." **God to tend**: Some say that since God is complete, God needs nothing and can thus his tending is simply attending, witnessing, in unconditional love, love that expects nothing in return. Often what we call love develops from some dependency, gift, satisfaction, or fulfillment from another. God's tending generosity is limitless. God's playful delight is to behold us, to know us as we are, beyond human moral criteria. Similarly, when we love without need, intention, agenda, compulsion, claim, judgment, or dependency, but simply love by *noticing*, by witnessing, by beholding, loving freely as God does, we become like God. Others might qualify this by citing the hadith that God created us to be known by us: § Introduction ¶ 4 → «Al-Fatiha + The Purpose of Sex»; compare Carter Hayward → «Wound Wick». Our part in loving is to **burn** away, purge, die from purpose other than to notice. Once part of the city wall in Madrid, the **Alcázar** was destroyed by fire in 1734. The **Singularity** is the Big Bang which began universe, which some compare to a black hole from which nothing can **escape** but which, in cycles, produces the cosmos. Also: Jean-Luc Nancy's *Être singulier pluriel*. **Breath**: → «Poetic Failure». **Death** is sometimes a metaphor for the post-orgasmic experience of repose. **To last** is a paronomasia.

52. *Toledo: Summit*

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been 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.

I NEVER once intended such a fall —
 I so tossed with you! a chasm with no floor.
 I tumble, bump, and scrape against the wall,
 descending in free flight, I roll, then soar.

How can this be? You drop with me, and rise,
 both pulled and freed by gravity or God,
 such forces as new science can surmise,
 from quark to cell to politics and odd,
 rare combinations, loosed from confined space
 as we surrender to adventure's swells
 propelled by galaxies and genes in chase,
 those tilting swirls like halos where Higgs dwells.

I fall in you and you in me, my friend.
 And in each other we in God ascend.

Under Muslim rule, *Toledo*, atop a mountain in central Spain, surrounded by a turn in the Tago River with a breathtaking view on three sides, experienced *La Convivencia*, the co-existence with Jews and Christians. The EPIGRAPH is the last sentence in Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 1859. **How can this be?**: *Hic est cunctis communis amor repetuntque boni fine teneri, quia non aliter durare queant nisi conuerso rursus amore refluant causae quae dedit esse*. The sublime love we share persists because it flows back and forth from its origin. — Boethius (477?–524), *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book 4, Metrum 6. **Galaxies**: “At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home. By your will they were created and have their being. From the primal elements you brought forth the human race” —The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, Eucharistic Prayer C, p370. **Quarks** are subatomic particles that compose larger particles such as protons and neutrons. The **Higgs** field gives mass to particles and itself manifests as the Higgs particle, “the God particle.” **Summits** are mythological markers for extraordinary experiences or attainments; examples include the giving of the Decalogue in Judaism, the Transfiguration of Jesus in Christianity, and enacting enlightenment by climbing to the top of the Buddhist temple at Borobudur; **ascension** is also a frequent motif in myths of transcendence; the second part of the Night Journey (Mi'raj) of Muhammad (pbuh) is his ascension into heaven. **God**: → § Introduction ¶5, →«Husam»

53. *Córdoba: Trace*

Three things cannot be long hidden:
the sun, the moon, and the truth.

I CLOCK you by a column watching. Arched,
the fractured sun grabs dust and flings. You stand
against the grated window whence have marched
(so sure but slowly on this floor) the spanned
rows' thousand years of rays and ancient prayer,
still ripples in us, echoes now and here,
to come a mustered moment, should we dare,
as glow creeps toward the night through every tier.

We walk outside in later moon's sage light.
You say you're glad you're here with me, whose age
is just a flicker in this mosque's mute might;
and you, in this Moors' moon, are truth's young gage.

With arabesques and caliphs we now trace
what Christians sweat to crack and crush this place.

The EPIGRAPH is a paraphrase of the (Pali) Anguttara Nikaya 3.129, which reports that the Buddha said, "Monks, there are these three things which shine forth for all to see, which are not hidden. What three? The disc of the *moon* shines for all to see; it is not hidden. The disc of the sun does likewise. The Dhamma-Vinaya of a Tathagata shines for all to see; it is not hidden." A contrasting Buddhist theme is found in Japanese Zen: accepting the beauty in transience and imperfection is *wabi-sabi*. A thousand years ago *Córdoba* was once the greatest city in the West. While Christian Europe still slumbered from the Dark Ages, this city, opulent with gardens and libraries, transmitted and developed learning from the ancient world. Its Mezquita, the mosque, begun in 786, with 850 columns, none of identical height, supports the famous rows of double horseshoe, red-and-white-stripped arches, like a Escher fantasy. *Dare*: Amia Srinivasan speaks of "a desire set free from the binds of injustice" and of "ineffable quasi-mystical thoughts, like confronting the other in their wholeness and their radical alterity and infinity." —<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/podcasts/transcript-ezra-klein-interviews-amia-srinivasan.html>. *Still ripples*: not *rippling*. *Flicker*: Transience is a common religious theme, as the Chinese Buddhist Diamond Sutra's ending ("So you should view this fleeting world—a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, a flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream." tr Red Pine) and Jewish/Christian Ecclesiastes 1:2 ("Vanity of vanities" or "As vaporous, insubstantial, and ephemeral as dew on grass") → «Carpe Diem». After the *Christians* took the city under Carlos V (1500-1558) a cathedral was built in the middle of the mosque, but you can wander for an hour in the mosque before coming upon the cathedral. Guidebooks say the cathedral disappointed Carlos: "You have destroyed something unique to make something commonplace." In medieval lore, a *gage* may be a glove thrown down by a knight to signal a challenge to combat, derived from its archaic meaning as a challenge. Among the meanings of *gauge* is an instrument for measuring or judging or testing, as trying or determining an extent, capacity or scope.

54. *Barcelona: Scrawl*

Renunciation is not enough. You must act.
 Yet action mustn't dominate you. In the heart of action,
 you must remain free from all attachment.

They told me to take a street-car named Desire, . . .
 and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!

Desire actually started across the street . . .
 to hear what Love might have to say.

You agonize and call me Krishna; walk
 three times Las Ramblas and decide to yield
 to rouge. Or pride in not. Your choice, such talk,
 such sin, such vision of the battlefield!

Then humble when you held me late that night
 in my pure yearning bed I now recall,
 when in us trust and sleep could reunite,
 that rounded rest, now feint in this traced scrawl:

Not Gaudí's spires, this web erects your touch
 above the ground, though *of* the ground, the field
 of faith. I quivered in your sky-filled touch
 and wondered how it happened you were healed.

O Fields of Being, O Grounds of Praise,
 O Arrows of Desire, make dance each phrase.

The EPIGRAPH is from Peter Brook's production of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, of which the *Bhagavad Gita* is the famous scripture in which *Krishna* as god advises Arjuna entering the **field of battle**. **E2**: from the Tennessee Williams 1947 play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Act 1. **E3**: from James Baldwin's 1983? "Guilt, Desire, and Love." **Gaudí** designed Sagrada Família basilica, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in *Barcelona*. Construction began in 1882; he died in 1926 with less than a quarter done; completion is expected after the century of his death. Under construction, the church spires were terrifying to climb. Theologian Paul Tillich called God the **ground** of being; see his 1951 *Systematic Theology*, p238, v1, PII-II, B.3a. A rough physical analogy would be the Higgs **field** which gives mass to fermions. **Las Ramblas** is a district in Barcelona famous for many temptations. **Rouge** cosmetics, in the context of Las Ramblas, suggests prostitution. **Feint/faint**: feint means sham; faint means faded, timorous, unfounded, or a swoon. **Sin**: In Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, Minnie declares "una suprema verità d'amore: fratelli, non v'è al mondo peccatore cui non s'apra una via di redenzione!" **Quiver** is a pun. **Arrows of Desire**: from the Preface to William Blake's *Milton*, often called "Jerusalem," sung as a hymn.

55. *Granada: Scale*

על־משִׁבּוֹתָם יִרְנְנוּ בְּכָבוֹד חֲסִידִים יִעֲלֶנּוּ

. . . And to admire / The satisfaction of all true desire.

Tantôt la coup ou la bouche et tantôt le vase.

YOU dance flamenco in my ass; *olé!*
 You pause and pose, then furious in your love
 you fuck me fast like castanets in play;
 you consummate me, reigning from above.
 Both, man with man, so fully male we know
 just pride in yielding to divine desire;
 we spin and spend, in naked vertigo,
 this yearning as we burn with Spanish fire.

O my Alhambra! endless tended rooms
 where God provisions intricate delight,
 danced passion cast, reflected in these blooms,
 scribed jewels by day, made sacred flesh by night.

O rhythm's root that turns me soaring wide:
 You are the secret scale kings seek to stride.

The first EPIGRAPH is Psalm 149:5 The pious will exult in glory; they will sing praises on their beds. **E2:** from English poet and clergyman, Anglican saint Thomas Traherne (1638?-1674). **E3:** from Verlaine, "Sometimes in the mouth's cup, sometimes the vase," in the translation of "Ces Passions" by J Murat and W Gunn (and endorsed by Ned Rorem), 1979 *A Lover's Cock and Other Gay Poems*, p55. **Granada** is the city in Spain in which the **Alhambra**, one of the sprawling architectural and landscaping wonders of the world, was built. **Olé** is an Andalusian pronunciation corruption of Allah, the Arabic word for God. The paired last words of the first line constitute an interlingual paronomasia. **Fuck:** → «Holy Words». "The two who are loyal to the Eros of dialogue, who love one another, receive the common event from the other's side as well, that is, they receive it from the two sides, and thus for the first time understand in a bodily way what an event is." —Martin Buber, 1947/1965 *Between Man and Man*, p29, tr Ronald Gregor Smith. Play: **Scale** has many meanings, a few of which are a device for weighing (as measuring the worth of precious metals), a progression or gradation, a miniature model or representation, a musical range, and an ascent (such as climbing a wall). **Flamenco** is a style of strongly rhythmic music and dance, often with clapping, foot-stamping, shouts of Allay! (another pronunciation of Olé) and, nowadays, with **castanets**, that developed in Andalusia and is often associated with the Romani people (Gypsies). Carlos Saura's 1995 movie, "Flamenco," captures the Spanish mix of fervor and form, abandonment and restraint. **Play:** "I think we wish too hard / for sense when what we want / is wonder, swinging on a toy." —David Baker, "The Rainbow."

56. *Ascension*

‘Tis love, not years or limbs, that can
make the martyr or the man.“

Don’t ever think I fell for you, or fell over you.
I didn’t fall in love, I rose in it.

MADRID is where I hugged you last, when chance,
like art, whirled us like leptons in a race
that Christmas Eve into a jota dance
that grazed the Child’s domain and tunnelled grace.
El Greco paced your scaling school and friends
as you whirled round your singing and exam,
(and trained me how Fuencarral extends,
disclosed to me the Metro’s diagram).
With Easter passing, you’ve raced home once more.
You greet, ascending on a moment’s rug,
and play yourself the worthy troubadour.
With lays of ancient days, we draw a mug.
Spain’s alembic drew calendars askew
distilling years and lifts for our spell’s brew.

Among the paintings by *El Greco* (1541–1614) at the Prado in Madrid are “Adoración de los pastores” (“The Adoration of the Shepherds”) and “La Huida a Egipto” (“The Flight into Egypt”) from the Christmas narrative, and “La Resurrección de Cristo” (“The Resurrection of Christ”) from the *Easter* story, as well as paintings of several saints. *Christmas* celebrates the birth of Jesus the Christ; Easter his resurrection after crucifixion. The *Ascension* is the story of Christ being taken up bodily into heaven sometime after his resurrection; El Greco’s painting, “*La Trinidad*” (“The Holy Trinity”) looks to me as if it reinterprets the Ascension to portray divine love. The EPIGRAPH is from Richard Crashaw’s 1652 poem, “A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Saint Teresa” (1515-1582). **E2**: from Toni Morrison’s 1992 *Jazz*. *Chance*: “Magic is the total delight in chance.”—Chögyam Trungpa quoted in *Ordinary Magic*, 1992, ed John Welwood, p106. *Leptons* are elementary charged particles (like the electron) in quantum theory; quantum *tunnelling* happens when a particle passes through a barrier which would be impossible according to classical mechanics. A *jota* is a traditional Spanish dance and musical form. *Fuencarral*, once an ancient town in Spain, is a neighborhood in northern Madrid, to which it was annexed in 1950. It is also the name of a Metro subway station. *Troubadours* were creators and performers of lyric poetry often about chivalry and courtly love during the High Middle Ages; some claim the term developed in Andalusian Spain. Paronomasias include *pace*, *trained*, *ascending*, *passing* (time, success in school course work), *play* (act, make music on an instrument), *draw*, *drew* (art, drink, pull, attract, and *lay* (placed, revealed, a sexual event, a lyric for singing).

57. *Rio Darro Flowing*

And he showed me a river of the water of life,
clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God

The river within us, the sea is all about us.

If equal affection cannot be, Let the more loving one be me.

WITH moon we walk the Albaycin this night
and talk of light and love and living Moors
who flourish in their deaths and show their might
as here, outside, the lunar fullness roars.

Our vows and pledges mean one mind for life
though we both find that other arms await;
yet that Alhambra kiss, within us rife,
was the Eternal telling: "Time's our mate."

(All tenses are real time; the past is now.

The far is local, harvest in the plow.

Fulfillment comes in scission, so I bow.

Adjustment brings perfection of the vow.)

Now with saluted sun we walk Brush Creek
and orrery sprockets heading in fit pace,
you blaze me with this kiss lest time might leak.
As silence splits, time's flowing shifts to space.

I love you sheer for loving him so well —

I'll love you both, from paradise or hell.

Rio Darro, the Darro River, flows through Granada, Spain, and supplied the water to the **Alhambra**, one of the architectural and landscaping wonders of the world. North of the Darro is the **Albaycin** (Albaicin, Albayzin), a world heritage district from which the Alhambra can be seen across the river. The first EPIGRAPH is from Revelation 22:1-2. **E2**: from T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*, *The Dry Salvages*, 1. **E3**: W H Auden, "The More Loving One." **Saluted sun**: Surya Namaskar, a yoga practice of 12 linked asanas (postures) in honor of the Hindu sun god Surya. **Brush Creek** is a stream that flows through the historic Country Club Plaza district of Kansas City, MO. **Him**: *Hab' mir's gelobt, Ihn lieb zu haben in der richtigen Weis'. Dass ich selbst Sein Lieb' zu einer andern noch lieb hab!* — "I vowed to love him in the right way, even to love his love for another." —The Marschallin at the end of *Der Rosenkavalier*. One 18-line "heroic sonnet" form consists an extra quatrain, here as four riming lines.

58. *The Plan*

Whoever can evade the Self transcends
The world, and as a lover he ascends.

Dein ist mein Herz und soll es ewig bleiben.

THOUGH you are far and in another's arms,
love's fire will never flicker, pale, or fade.
The sun may dim and disregard all charms
and earnest prayers, but I cannot be swayed.
The sky itself with all its stars made black
would stop the bend and dance and wave of space,
God's brightest heaven turned to blindest lack,
before love's blaze would vanish or debase.

You are my temenos or alcazar,
an infinite and wonder-filled bazaar,
an alchemy surpassing cinnabar;
you're Kamadeva or his avatar.

These forty years the flame you lit flares still
as darkness yields to love, and always will.

The EPIGRAPH is from the 1984 Afham Darbandi-Dick Davis translation of *The Conference of Birds* by Farid ud-din Attar (1145?–1221?). **E2:** Yours is my heart and so shall it remain forever, is from the poem "Ungeduld" by Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), and whose son, Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) advanced the study of world religions), used by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) in his song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*. **Sun:** *Doch in dir ist schon begonnen, was die Sonnen übersteht*. But already in you is what survives the sun. — Rainer Maria Rilke's "Buddha in der Glorie" last two lines. **Stars made black:** Some cosmologies anticipate that stars will eventually become black holes. **The sky . . . space** plays with Einstein's General Relativity predicting black holes, light bending, the curvature of space-time by gravitational fields, and time dilation. **Temenos:** a sanctuary. **Alcazar:** Moorish castle. Cinnabar: toxic mercury sulfide, prized in alchemy for its transformative powers. **Wonder:** And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus, Yet 'tis not madness. —Sebastian in Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 4.3. **Kamadeva** is a Hindu god of love in the Vedas. In Hinduism, an **avatar** is a manifestation of a deity in flesh. **Forty:** four is the largest number most people can perceive without counting; ten is a base that multiplies that sense of size; forty is used by Abrahamic writers to mean a finite many, as in forty days and nights of the Noahide Flood, forty years of Israelites wandering in the desert, forty days of Jesus's desert fast desert before his temptation, forty days designated as Lent, forty-day fast in the cave of Muhammad (pbuh), and the reckoning that Muhammad was forty years old when the revelations from God through Jibril (Gabriel) began. An earlier version of Q3: /This habit I have formed of loving you, / of saying Yes to that On light you are, / inflects the Power from which the cosmos grew, / as you've become for me an avatar./ The rimes in this revision: *ababccdeeeeff*.

59. *Γυμνός Πίστις [Naked Faith]*

Some that have deeper digged love's mine than I
say where his centic happiness doth lie

Apollo isn't always throwing darts, you know —
he has a lyre too and he likes to throw lyre parties.

I LOVE your friend, so I love you as well
though we have yet to meet. To mine the world
by knowing others' eyes, to strip the shell
around us, show our furtive souls uncurled
upon the mystic mat is exercise
and ritual, the centric ancient lore
and modern pump, to yield and recognize
we now are peeling what we were, and wore.

Is this proposal of life's license bold
or bashful? Do we search the sacred gym
in Delphi's γνωθι σαυτον or behold
in other's hearts our own, and hear health's hymn?

Apollo is our friend who leads our liturgy
to doff and don the play of mystery.

The EPIGRAPH is the beginning of by John Donne's 1633 poem, "Love's Alchemy." **E2:** from Dan Chiasson's 2005 *Natural History*, ". . . Concerning Fortune," p11. **Centric** means at the heart or center; in anatomy it means starting from a nerve center; **Apollo's** precinct in **Delphi** was **omphalos**, the navel (regarded as the center) of the world. **Pump** is the informal term bodybuilders apply to hyperemia resulting from vigorous muscle exercise and the "tight" feeling achieved from the extra blood flow. The Delphic advice, **gnōthi seautón**, is often translated as "Know thyself." "We can know more than we can tell," and "tacit knowing achieves comprehension by indwelling," writes Michael Polyani in *The Tacit Dimension*, 1966/2009, p4, p55. **Apollo**, often represented nude, is a god in ancient Greek mythology noted for his oracular, athletic, poetic, musical, and medicinal abilities; he was guardian for young men. **Play:** → «Thanks for Noticing». **Liturgy:** "The soul must learn to abandon, at least in prayer, the restlessness of purposeful activity; it must learn to waste time for the sake of God, and to be prepared for the sacred game . . . without always . . . asking 'why?' and 'wherefore?'. It must learn not to be continually yearning to do something, to attack something, to accomplish something useful, but to play the divinely ordained game of the liturgy in liberty and beauty and holy joy before God." —Romano Guardini, 1935 *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p181-184. Paronomasias include **mine, eyes** → «Nineteen», **yield, strip, peeling, license**, and **play. Mystery:** the Delphic oracular utterances about the future were often unclear or multivalent; **mystery** cults involved secret initiation rites.

60. *A Blessing*

. . . If you love anyone, it is Him you love; if you turn
your head in any direction, it is toward Him you turn.

Zwei Dinge erfüllen das Gemüt mit immer neuer und
zunehmender Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht . . . Der bestirnte
Himmel über mir und das moralische Gesetz in mir.

YOU I have known in the biblical way:
nudge quickly, lunge and with plunging desire,
conjoiing spirits while our bodies pray,
mastering safety within Shiva's fire.

My hollow arms confound my full-tide heart,
joy for your partner whom I've yet to greet,
pride in your personhood, your loving art,
and in our friendship, inherent, complete.

The spigot's rhythm drips as time spills on
and fills and empties pools of wet desires,
cleansing, polluting, constrewing, then gone,
acidic, dissolving; curing, these pyres.

Rise, then, my friend: show the skies to your love,
God's world to know from beneath and above.

The EPIGRAPH is from *La'anat (Divine Flashes)* by Fakhruddin Iraqi (1213-1289), in the Jonathan Star-Shahram Shiva book, *Two Sons Rising* (1991), p138. He was influenced by Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardi, and Rumi. E2: Kant's famous "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe . . . the starry sky above me and the moral law within me" in the conclusion of *The Critique of Practical Reason*. **Known in the biblical way** is a euphemism for sexual knowledge. **Shiva** is a Hindu deity; as Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance, he is surrounded by a ring of fire indicating cosmic cycles of creation and destruction. **Our friendship, inherent**: "Starling brothers and sisters were persons who had a very special bond with one another because they both loved a third person" which "connected them sexually and spiritually" with "reverence" and "trust inherent in the shared relationships." — Peter B Anderson and Mal Morgan, "Spirituality and Sexuality: The Healthy Connection" in *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol 33 No 2, Summer 1994, p119. The expression is attested from 1736 and arises from the bird species which can be polygamous. **Constrewing** is a neologism. **God's world**: "Only he who himself turns to the other human being and opens himself to him receives the world in him. Only the being whose otherness, accepted by my being, lives and faces me in the whole compression of existence, brings the radiance of eternity to me. Only when two say to one another with all that they are, 'It is *Thou*,' is the indwelling of the Present Being between them." —Martin Buber, 1947/1965 *Between Man and Man*, p30, tr Ronald Gregor Smith. This sonnet contains numerous dactyls.

61. *Jacob's Ladder*

Viditque in somnis scalam stantem super terram
 et cacumen illius tangens caelum
 angelos quoque Dei ascendentes et descendentes per eam.

Ecce vir luctabatur cum eo usque mane.

SENT angel of the Lord, you wrestle me,
 and touch that deep scar place where my love hides.
 I pray *O stay*, though I deliver thee
 a thousand times each morn, for love abides.
 You find my damage; sprained and sore, I wrest
 this blessing from thee. My success is trust.
 Contest my lust, my crushing ardor. Test
 and let me faint in thee with every thrust.
 We mount high rapture's ladder. As we scale,
 each rung draws valor's vaster view; first urged,
 then paired, now parted, allied, we prevail
 and recommend how wrangling wild we merged.
 This joy girds me an angel to contend,
 for through our pain and pleasure we ascend.

This sonnet conflates two incidents in the story of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob (renamed Israel) with texts from the Vulgate. The first EPIGRAPH is from Genesis 28:12: "And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top of it reaching heaven: also God's angels were ascending and descending on it." **E2:** Genesis 32:24: "Then a man wrestled with him until daybreak." Consider Bonaventure's, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*: "In our relation to our position in creation, the universe is itself a ladder by which we can **ascend** to God." The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art holds the 1944 Frederick Taubes painting, "Jacob Wrestling with the Angel." Despite the vertical imagery, I prefer the Buddhist (ecological) way of imagining the world (co-dependent origination → «Interbeing») to Platonism or emanationism, which leads, it seems to me, too easily to justifying authoritarianism. **Scar . . . each morn . . . recommend:** "That's not a scar you feel . . . [it's a] recommendation . . . I remember my father waking me for early prayers." —"Letter of Recommendation" in *Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 1986. **Lust:** "When sexuality is defined narrowly as lust we diminish our capacity to relate to creation as sexual people. Lust can also be idolatry, when people play god . . . Like greed, lust is self-serving yet ultimately destructive." —Patricia Beattie Jung and Ralph F. Smith, 1992 *Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge*, p141 → «Even Zeus». **Pain and pleasure:** L'étrange chose, mes amis, que ce que les hommes appellent plaisir, et comme il a de merveilleux rapports avec la douleur que l'on prétend contraire! —From Plato's *Phaedo*, 60, tr Victor Cousin, used in Erik Satie's *Socrate* (1919). "Don't be surprised by pain. Be surprised by joy . . ." —Henri J M Nouwen, *The Path of Power*, 1995, p43.

62. *Grapplers*

Non luctor de nomine temporis huius.

η βιωτικη τη παλαιστικη ομοιοτερα ηπερ τη ορχηστικη

You will not be sincere except through struggle.

The nightscape and the thunder are signs of God's glory,
yet the world is in some measure ephemeral, for could not
God sweep it away in the twinkling of an eye?

I SAID you're gorged with grace. Though true, like me
when I was twenty-one, you're also dumb
and bumbling, launched in ledgeless jeopardy,
no safety. Yet played in night's stadium
of thundered souls, we feast in grappling art,
love's spread. Your awkward grace repairs and rips,
like relaxation punctured with a fart
which rests the scare of near apocalypse.

The art you are remastering you had
when you were born. As you reclaim it now,
I get to watch this pitched Olympiad,
commuting every "you" to holy "thou."

From combat partner to the crowd I go
where my shroud flesh flaunts every move you show.

The first EPIGRAPH is from the *Fasti*, 6:69: of Ovid ((43 BCE-17?): "I do not wrestle over what to call this season." E2: from the *Meditations* VII, 61 (Greek original) of Marcus Aurelius (121-180), himself a wrestler in his youth: "The art of living is more like the wrestler's art than the dancer's" E3: from Niffari (?-965) in *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, #67; see *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 1996 tr Michael A Sells, p296. E4: from Ninian Smart, 1958 *Reasons and Faith*, p34. **Spread**: meal, sports betting, finance, display, diffusion. **Feast**: "The festive reveals the meaning of workaday existence in harmony . . . with art and science, as well as with religion and magic Play . . . entails at the same time the greatest compulsion and the greatest freedom. . . . Play is free from purpose. . . . For the scientist or scholar plays when he surrenders himself to a self-chosen aspect of the world and pays no heed to ideas of purpose which might limit the free range of his exploration. . . . The man at play shapes the whole world to a world of his own and becomes thereby its creator and god. Play is power, and in that it is like magic." —C Kerényi, *The Religions of the Greeks and Romans*, 1962, p64. →«Thanks for Noticing».

63. *Conversion*

When I make myself known to you
 beware of my torment in your limbs —
 have hope for a doubling of my favor in honor of you.

None will part us, none undo
 The knot that makes one flesh of two.

the spectacle is . . . the mirage of self in the mirror of things.

WHICH life was it in which we had that fight?
 So equal was our match that bets were made
 we'd kill each other in the swaggering night —
 both sweeping, patching, pounding as we prayed.
 They wagered winner and the length it'd last,
 till from one spot we stretched at least the field;
 with our own groans we tilled the crowd that massed.
 For death they watched, or one of us to yield.
 This life, in grip and age unpaired, we greet,
 though I still spy your biceps, now benign,
 and gambling's gone, compulsion to compete
 expired, your soul converted to a shrine.
 I thus admire what once I feared and fought,
 acquiring now the art that I then sought.

The EPIGRAPH is from *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, #67, The Standing in the Presence Chamber and the Letter, by lesser-known Sufi Muhammad ibn Abd al-Jabbar ibn al-Hasan an-Niffari. Niffari, probably an Iraqi, died in 965 in Egypt, 1996, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, tr Michael A Sells p296. E2: from A E Housman's "XXVIII. The Welsh Marches" ("High the vanes") in *A Shropshire Lad*. E3: Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, tr Denis Savage, 1970, p379. **For death they watched:** "Perhaps no people in history have been so much haunted by the grim presence of death as the Mexicans . . ." —Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the eve of the Spanish Conquest* 1955/1964 tr Patrick O'Brien, p119. **Biceps:** Alas, Kenneth R Dutton seems largely correct to conclude his 1995 *The Perfectable Body: The Western Ideal of Male Physical Development* by noting that "Unlike the centuries of widespread religious faith, when the developed body could symbolically point to a transcendent reality, our own age has retained the paradigmatic language of physical perfectability but without any intimation of a higher reference . . ." p375. The Chinese collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, includes a pair of fierce-looking earthenware wrestlers or acrobats from the Wei Dynasty.

64. *The Line in a Nearly Parallel Universe*

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

There is a line / You must not cross
The bottom of the sea is cruel.

When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
advantage on the kingdom of the shore

THERE is a silent line we cannot cross
but though we cannot swim the side-stepped sea
we still can get the penis wet, that joss
stick whose freight's unloaded at the spirit's quay.
Ho! even great explorers will find buoys
and breakers to respect, for safety counts
as much as treasure from afar, and poise
becomes the point and place adventure mounts.
Still, shores erode. The weather with the storms
and blisters from the sun and human moves
in shops and habitations scupper norms,
maps, and expectations, as history proves.
Forever rimes may fade and wash away.
I'll love you still, or if these lines do stay.

The first EPIGRAPH us from Rumi, p36 → «The Sun». **E2**: from the first section of "Voyages" by Hart Crane (1899–1932). **E3**: from Shakespeare's Sonnet 64. **Sea** (mar): *Fuor del mar ho un mare in seno. Che dei primo è più funesto, E Nettuno ancora in questo Mai non cessare di minacciare*. Saved from the sea, I have a raging sea more fearsome than before within my bosom, and Neptune does not cease his threats even in this. —Mozart's *Idomeneo*, II.3 (12b). A **quay** (pronounced key) is a landing place on water like a wharf. A **joss stick** is a stick of incense without a bamboo core, sometimes used in Asia as an offering or in prayers for blessings. **Ho!** as an interjection originates in Middle English and used to call attention, as the sailors' "Land ho!" or the pioneers' "Westward ho!" or simply to exclaim delight. A **buoy** (pronounced boo-ee or boi) is an anchored float to guide avoiding navigational dangers. A **breaker** is a heavy ocean wave that fragments in passing over a reef or into a shallow. A ship's **scupper** involves a hole to drain water from the deck; used here as a verb. **Love** "is the abridgment of all theology." —Francis de Sales (1567-1622), *Treatise on the Love of God*, 8.1, p281, tr H B Mackey, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1884. **These lines**: lines of separation and division; also the lines of this sonnet, which plays against the *monumentum trope* → «Ad Astra».

65. *Poetic Failure*

At non effugies meos iambos.

THE sole true problem that presents to sleep
with you is that my splendid verse
about your smell, dark hide, the way you keep
me close, pet-pull me near, in night immerse

These phrases pile up, crunch; then fade, and vanish
in every movement of each moment's charm;
new pleasures break old wordings and soon banish,
a library ruined when you shift your arm.

Instead inscribed in my head is where
and how we cuddle, mudras made from your mute touch.
Each breath you take I cherish as my prayer,
each twitch a ritual ordaining much.

All metaphors real presence overtakes:
no poems remain as morning light awakes.

The EPIGRAPH, "You won't escape my verses," Catullus fragment 3, used here with double irony. In Biblical usage, *sleep* may mean resting in death and *awake* may mean revived from the dead. *Sole* is a pun. *Issue* is sometimes used to mean "problem" or "dispute"; but its primary meaning is putting forth, as in providing supplies or publication; it can also mean the produce of sexual union or an artistic effort. *Mudras* are sacred gestures. *Breath*: Breathing is often associated with the sacred. "Are you looking for me? . . . You will not find me in stupas, not in Indian shrine rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals. . . . You will find me in the tiniest house of time. Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God? He is the breath inside breath." —Kabir (1440-1518, whose writings appear in the Sikh holy book, the *Adi Granth*) in Stephen Mitchell, 1989, *The Enlightened Heart*, p72, tr Robert Bly. *Spirit*, in English and other tongues, is etymologically related to breathing, as in inspiration. *Prayer*: Poetry "aims — never mind either communication or expression — at the reformation of the poet, as prayer does." —John Berryman. In an Anglican interpretation, *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* means that from prayer (worship) our understanding emerges, and thus how to live. "*Ritual* . . . is the place where meaning occurs. Saying 'I love you' to an intimate other is indeed a ritual, but it contributes more than we imagine to maintaining the meaning of the intimate relationship, just as the ritual of reciting the Lord's Prayer reiterates the meaning of our worship of God. These ritual moments don't tell us anything about specifics, but they remind us of the whole in which all specifics make sense. In an information culture, where only what is new and what is useful is interesting, ritual is incomprehensible." —Robert Bellah, 2006 *The Robert Bellah Reader*, p493-4. *Real presence* refers to the doctrine that Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist. "What is clear and concise can't deal with reality, for to be real is to be surrounded by mystery." —Attributed to James Joyce in John Cage, 1983, *X: Writings '79-'82*, p54.

66. *Open Heart*

Amor, con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci!

I laugh like a flower, not just mouth laughter.
 From non-being I burst forth with gaiety and mirth.
 But love taught me another way of laughter.
 The neophyte laughs according to profit and gain.
 Like a shell, I laugh when broken.

I WANT the torment: burning at the stake,
 thirsting in the desert, by thumbs strung,
 stung by brown bees, bit by venomous snake,
 extractor pulling out my only tongue. —
 I dramatize, inflate, and stretch the theme;
 yet chasing love is *Dasein* like the wild
 or war, though chance can dodge and thus redeem.
 These perils prison me for I'm beguiled.
 — As on the beating sea the sun does shine,
 as mountains lift our eyes to zenith's gate,
 as sacred steps trace to and from a shrine,
 so enlightenment follows fade, and wait.
 So fortune hides in me, all fresh, all swirled,
 my soul, now split, is open to the world.

The first EPIGRAPH, from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* 85: "Love! with such forces now you conquer me!" **E2**: from Rumi →«The Sun», but I can't trace the source or translator from my old commonplace book. **Torment**: "... Divine wisdom is not only night and darkness for the soul, but is likewise affliction and torment." —John of the Cross in "Dark Night of the Soul," Bk 1 Ch 2, in 1953 *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, tr E Allison Peers, Vol 1, p19. **Bees, Prison**: The "Maya hurled entire hornets' nests into the enemy . . . the Maya wanted prisoners . . ." —Victor W von Hagen, 1960, *World of the Maya*, p128. **Dasein**, a term often associated with Martin Heidegger, means something like "engaged presence," the nature of which is finitude, full of **Chance**, and a panoply of moods like fear and care. **Heaven's gate**: Shakespeare, Sonnet 29.12. **Enlightenment**: "I don't mean lovers, that sudden enlightenment as you're clasped or kindled within" —Michael Walters, "Paradys." **Sea, fortune**: *Les zephirs se donnent aux flots, / Les flots se donnent à la lune, / Les navires aux matelots, / Les matelots à la fortune*. The breezes give themselves to the waves, the waves give themselves to the moon, the ships to the sailors, and sailors to Fortune. —from Théophile de Viau's "À M. le marquis de Boquingant" in *Œuvres complètes de Théophile* (Jannet, 1856). **Soul**: "Experience used to be called the Soul." —R D Laing, 1967, *The Politics of Experience*, p18.

67. *Drunken Sailor*

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
 My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
 The more I have, for both are infinite.

[Each] reality attained and left behind gives us access to the discovery and pursuit of an ideal of higher spiritual content. Those who spread their sails in the right way to the winds of the earth will always find themselves born by a current towards the open seas.

I DO not have to wait till we're abroad
 to write how I incline high tide for you.
 Diurnal yearnings I imbibe and laud
 like bubbles rising from the freshest brew.
 I drink — but thirst again. Your tune, your touch,
 the way you twist enchantment from lean air,
 a fermentation of plain waters — such
 refreshment as you range me everywhere.
 An ancient recipe from many lands
 is singing in your heart. It brims and pours.
 Chronometer and compass steer commands
 for oceans in the soul that lap all shores.
 Enthralled by you, and yet by you set free,
 each day we sip and sail the searching sea.

Drunken: → «No, Maybe I'm Rumi». The first EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, 2, 2. **E2:** from *The Divine Milieu* (1960), p72, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). **Diurnal** means daily; it is also a liturgical term for a book containing the offices (services) of the daily hours of prayer. A **chronometer** is a clock with a precision mechanism compensating for a ship's roll, temperature, and such, to determine longitude; a magnetic **compass** is a device for discovering the cardinal directions by detecting the planet's poles; thus time and place. Modern use of **enthral** usually means to charm or fascinate; earlier use meant literally to enslave. **Fermentation:** In John 2:1-11, Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. The sonnet's title recalls and answers Rimbaud's 1871 <Le bateau ivre>, "The Drunken Boat," lines of which include, *Et dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le Poème / De la Mer, infusé d'astres et lactescent, / Dévorant les azurs verts; . . . / Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que nos lyres, / Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour!* — And onward I bathed in the poem of the sea, infused with stars and milky (nourishment); . . . stronger than strong drink, larger than our lyres, fermenting the blushing bitterness of love!

68. *Meridian*

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust.

Purchased by the high seas,
he's placed himself in the hands of rival winds.

is this the great world, which is whatever the case? . . .
. . . to fall in love with your inscrutable life?

THE King of Days will dance before my throne.
We both are regal but of different realms.
The heart I rule, and he ordains the bone,
this ship of being ordered from two helms.
His stately dance turns frantic and I spin
to see him grappling with the wheel of time.
It starts and stops, a compass to begin
again go tacking to and fro to prime.
Exhausted now, he leaves this tar and flees.
(In hiding kings must sometimes secret go.)
When he returns, with health or with disease,
his dance may honor me, or overthrow.
Is he at fault? No! him I love complete:
so fascinating are his fitful feet.

The EPIGRAPH, "Two souls, alas, dwell within my breast" is from Goethe's *Faust (Part I)* as Faust converses with Wagner as they walk outside the city gate on Easter Day. **E2**: from Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141), translated by Gabriel Levin. **E3**: "Amor Fati," *The Wilderness: Poems*, Sandra Lim, 2014 → «Whatever Changes»; I wonder how close this might be to a Christian living "life abundant" (John 10:10). The *dancing King of Days* refers to Mahakala, a Tibetan Buddhist form of the Hindu god Shiva → «Ahimsa» combining a sense of time with death. Here he is homologized with the wrathful Yama who holds the *wheel of time* or the "wheel of life," a mandala of samsara depicting the twelve co-originations and the six karmic regions in Tibetan Buddhist thought. Buddhist deities may be understood more as psychological tendencies or capacities rather than objective entities existing apart from the mind. The *helm* is the device by which a ship is steered. A *compass* is a navigational device for finding direction; like a wheel or mandala, the device is usually round; the word also means perimeter or scope; it is also an instrument for drawing circles. *Tacking* is the directing of a sailing vessel with reference to the wind. Among the many meanings of *prime* as a verb and a noun is the prime *meridian*, 0 degrees longitude, which, with its opposite, divides the world into two hemispheres; the prime running through Greenwich, England, by which a system of international time reckoning was established in 1884. *Trim* is another nautical term which can mean to position the sails. *Tar* is a familiar term for sailor.

69. *Fire Sermon: Rome*

A divine fire which devours man completely.

UPON this altar, arced and stoked, I place
myself, desire, conditioned love, and you.
Already incendiary, I trace
passion, torch, blaze, fervor, fume. — I pursue
the conflagration called the world, the fuel
of consciousness, arson's spark . . . to embers,
cold cinders, slag, scoria, dross, waste's pool,
Nirvana's grate, Vesta's will, dissemblers.

You glitter, a glory of creation
wooded, I grasp, like smoke or flame or flashes:
I catch fire, ignite my own cremation,
moksha kindled, matched in us in ashes.

Devour me, burn, O imolation's fire:
dissolve all laws — make love without desire.

The EPIGRAPH is from Ja'far al-Sâdiq (702–765), the sixth Imam in Shi'a Islam. **Vesta** was the virgin goddess who guarded the civic hearth of ancient Rome at the king's home. Some say her virgins guarded the emperor's will. Her festival was ended and the eternal flame, associated with the phallus, extinguished by the intolerant Christian emperor Theodosius I in 391 CE → «A Roman Solider». **Creation wooded**: "Creation is the pillow talk of the Trinity." — Robert Farrar Capon, 1982 *Between Noon and Three*, p126. **Fire**: "Even in that fire | Things fly apart." — "Settling: After Maurice" in *Starting a Swan Dive*, 1993, Patricia Cleary Miller. **Ignite**: "In the way of shamans and Buddhists. we are encouraged to face fully whatever form our suffering takes, to confirm it, and, finally, to let it ignite our compassion and wisdom." — Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness*, 1993, p19. **Moksha**, interpreted variously in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, is liberation from the conditioning imposed on us by others, ourselves, and our situations. As recorded in the Pali canon, the Fire Sermon was delivered by the Buddha who preached that liberation from the afflictive passions, aversions, and delusions can be reached through the practice of non-attachment. "The Fire Sermon" is the heading of the third section of T S Eliot's 1922 *The Waste Land*; his notes compares its importance to the Christian canon's "Sermon on the Mount." In his 1920 *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot also writes, "The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse toward the pursuit of beauty." **Slag** is the glass-like residue from the reduction of metal from its ore or similar material from a volcano. **Scoria** is a metallurgical term for slag, dross or other waste from smelting or similar processes. **Nirvana** is a condition of sublimity, sometimes described as the disappearance of awareness of the distinction between self and other, or subject or object. The Sanskrit word's root meaning is the "blown out," in Buddhism, the extinguishing of the fires of desire, aversion, and delusion. Some Buddhists believe nirvana may be obtained in a future life, others see it as a momentary experience which can be cultivated.

70. *Attraction: Quiriguá*

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you

Letting the light through the gaps

I LEAN into my star-struck longing; yes,
 in our huge love we've parsecs come. Now we
 must learn safe sectors in sky's gaps and press
 the firmament into each atom, see
 at ease within our secret galaxy
 and teach these astral realms to rouse and rest,
 to dance as stars' perpetual perigee,
 revolving round each other, bonded, blessed.

To be with you I cede all cosmic land,
 and ask that you surrender all to me;
 born with the universe, we must expand
 into the class beyond proximity.

Suppose no stars, no God, no knower learning.
 Yet here we are, made fresh from yearning.

Quiriguá is among my favorite Mayan sites displaying astronomical competence. The EPIGRAPH, "Thence we came forth to rebehold the stars," is from Dante's *Divine Comedy, Inferno*. **E2**: from the beginning of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself." **E3**: from Stephanie Burt's "Advice from Rock Creek Park" from her 2017 book with that title. The *parsec* is an astronomical distance, over 9 trillion miles or 3.26 light-years, the measure arising from a *parallax* of one arc *second*, useful because of the revolution of the earth around the sun. (Draw a line from the sun into space. Draw a line to the earth at right angles to the first. Then draw the hypotenuse toward the first line at an angle of 1 second of arc. Where it meets the first line marks 1 parsec from the sun.) *Galaxy*: Quem vos, ut a Graiis accepistis, orbem lacteum nuncupatis. —Cicero's "Somnium Scipionis," 8/16. The *perigee* is the point of closest approach of an object in an ellipse to its focus, as the earth to the sun or twin stars to a common center of gravity. *Dance*: "A good relationship is like a dance . . . The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern . . ." —Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1955 *Gift from the Sea*, p104. *Dance*: *Perichoresis*, rotate, dance around, is a way of describing the Christian Trinity as an intimate relationship, perhaps originating with Gregory of Nazianzus and revived in our time by Jurgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, Elizabeth A Johnson, Molly T Marshall, and Richard Rohr. *Revolving round each other*: I "can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." —Martin Luther King Jr, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," his last sermon, paragraph 11, preached March 31, 1968, at the Washington National Cathedral (Episcopal). This sonnet uses five end-rimes, with four vowel-sounds.

71. *Hence*

Ful wys is he that can him-selven knowe.

But what kind of society will make him see me . . . [?]

Acta est fabula.

The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.

YOUNG handsome champion knight, I'm your king:
and you use me to validate, confirm
and prize your skills and random gifts; bring
you canopy from chaos, tick the berm
of journey to you, nurture you, enfold,
dispatch you, and receive you back, applaud;
behold as you meander; still behold
till you can see yourself, as from abroad.
But I don't want to be your informed king;
and you need more to find your inward lord.
Your friend I simply want to be, and sing
your deeds, not read you edicts of reward.
Familiar, forth this fable comes to end;
your king's command: Away! now you I send.

The couplet in Sonnet 125, the penultimate in the Fair Youth series, begins, "**Hence**, thou suborn'd informer!" The first EPIGRAPH is from The Monk's Tale in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*; in modern English: "Very wise is he who can know himself." **E2**: from Ralph Ellison, 1952 *Invisible Man*, ch 22. **E3**: attributed to Caesar, means "Thus the story ends," although it can also mean "What happened was (just) a story." **E4**: from John Dryden's 1689 *The Hind and the Panther*, 1.390. The flattery combined with instruction of this sonnet may be explained by lines 343-344 from Horace, ?19 BCE *Ars Poetica*: Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo — "One has won every point who has mixed the useful with the sweet, delighting and instructing the reader." **King**: "I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me. The element shows to him as it doth to me. All his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man." —Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.1.105. **Friend**: In Book 8 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes three forms of friendship: friendships of pleasure, of utility, and of virtue, of which the last is most clearly valued and honored without ulterior motive. **Random, tick, enfold, back, meander, informed, read, forth**, etc: see Conway's "Game of Life," a simulation related to the *Entscheidungsproblem* → «Existentialism». This sonnet and the next, «The Story», a palinode, make a pair.

72. *The Story*

I could tell you what it takes / To feel the highest high.
 You'd laugh and say "Nothing's that simple!"
 But you've been down this path before
 While I was waiting at the door.
 This place is sacred as a temple.

Who'll be my role model
 Now that my role model is gone, gone?

IF you insist I be your loving king,
 and in this realm remain, play out the play,
 then my commands and my envisioning
 you'll keenly know and as ephebe, obey.

You'll trust my power to wield it for your health
 as well as dream myself, and yield your flesh
 as token of your soul and all its wealth;
 then I'll return to you yourself made fresh.

But if you want a flowing friend, no rule
 applies: you reign yourself as I do me;
 with scope and sway as hero or as fool,
 we each may mount from might to mastery.

Whichever myth or model you elect,
 it's lettered in love's dumbest dialect.

The EPIGRAPH is from the 1993 version of *The Who's Tommy* based on The Who's 1969 rock opera *Tommy*, about a boy blind, deaf, and dumb whose impairments lead him to a kind of Enlightenment. Tommy sings to himself, "Listening to you, I get the music; . . . from you, I get the story." E2: from Paul Simon's "You Can Call Me Al." **Story** may be a term preferred over **myth** or **model**, used in a technical sense in the study of religious phenomenology of a sacred narrative → «Campfire». **Story** may also be similar to "life script" in Transactional Analysis jargon. **Play**: → «Thanks for Noticing». **Ephebe**: in ancient Greece, a young man in training. **Myth**: "Outsiders would suppose that when an aborigine engages in a given act he thinks of himself as *imitating* the **hero** who originated it, but that would be too weak. In early mentality the line between this-world and the Other-world is thin: the aborigine *identifies* with the initiating hero to the point of *becoming* that hero while he is in the **Dreaming**. And in so doing, he takes on the hero's immortality, for as was just said, time has not purchase on the Dreaming. The goal of aboriginal life is to live as fully as possible in the Dreaming, for that (as the slang expression has it) is 'really living.' All else is inconsequential." —Huston Smith, 2001 *Why Religion Matters*, p215. This sonnet is paired with the preceding one, «Hence».

73. *The Golden Bough*

Ad augusta per angusta.

Following you, I climb the mountain

He is the Way. / Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness.
You will see rare beasts and have unique adventures.

THIS mountain lets you sleep still as the sun
arrays its gleams where, in last night's sealed mark,
we could not tell the safe from danger. Done
with solitude, we camp to scout this park,
this Mound Primordial, with its Sacred Tree,
the *axis mundi*, sought within us, found
without, in mythic, strange geography
where we are priests and kings on easy ground.

Old Sol seeks shadowed places, finding now
eternal youth in hidden hills — and dark.

The dozing winds sound in the *mana* bough.

Our regal unfought keeping crowns no cark.

Your rhythm wakes; we kiss in breathing, load,
break fast and feast, priests' freedom on the road.

The Latin EPIGRAPH means "To high places through narrow roads." **E2**: from "Go to the Mirror Boy" in The Who's *Tommy* (original version, 1969). **E3**: from the Chorus in *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio* by W H Auden. In some myths, the world emerged first as a hill; for example, in the Pyramid Texts the god Atum characterized as he "rose up, as the benben," the primordial mound, symbolized by the pyramid, also homologized with the penis. *The Golden Bough*, the 1890 classic by Sir James Frazer, examines the eternally repeated story of the "King of the Woods," the priest of Diana in the inhospitable grove at Nemi, where a stranger violates the sacred tree, kills the king, succeeds him, and whose *cark*, an archaic term meaning "burden of anxiety," is to guard against the next stranger, as in Burton's famous 1886 translation of *The Arabian Nights*: "his cark and care were cleared away and he recovered trust in Allah . . ." In many myths, the *mound* or mountain functions as the center of the world. Another term for the center of things around which all turns is the *axis mundi*, often presented as a *tree* → «Barren Golgotha». In "Deciduous Branch," 1995, Stanley Kunitz writes, "I brood / On a Christian thing: unless the leaves / Perish, the tree is not renewed." At such places various realms powerfully intersect. *Myth*: → «Campfire». *Sol* was the name of the ancient Roman sun god, is used to name our star system of planets and other bodies the Solar System, and appears in the term solstice. → «A Roman Soldier». From Pacific primal peoples, anthropologists use *mana* to mean extraordinary spiritual power inhering in objects and persons. This sonnet uses six end-rimes.

74. *Certificate*

This majestic roof fretted with golden fire

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

When I had no roof I made
Audacity my roof.

For the man I love, loves me!

The tie that binds us is an unbreakable rope.
How much time did your creation take, O angel?
So what! All I want is to sing your praises.

I DIDN'T shout it from the roof, but there
we were: up tarring high the turbine vent
with safety rope on treacherous slope, chests bare,
sun's glare, nails and hammer, shaky legs bent
and aching on the slipping shingles, tired
in wind and talking only this burnt work;
the perilous task takes concentration, wired
to occupation, firm, averting jerk.

The briefest pause I said it: "I love you."
Without surprise, you pitched into my gaze
and spoke: "I love you, Vern. I love you, too."
So casual, factual, near words' peak, you blaze.

The risky thrill of safety in your zeal
secures and certifies this roof is real.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, 2, 2, referring to the sky itself as Hamlet contrasts two ways of seeing the world. **E2**: from the conclusion of "Song of Myself," section 52, in Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1891-2 edition. Paul Taylor used it as a motto for his dance about Whitman, "Beloved Renegade." **E3**: from US poet laureate Robert Pinsky's first two lines of his poem, "Samurai Song" in his 2011 *Selected Poems*. **E4**: from Sarah Teasdale in her poem, "Over the Roofs" published in 1914, the year of her marriage. **E5**: from Abu Nuwas (756-815), translated by Vincent Monteil. **Words**: "Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear, / Can also thus domesticate a fear" —Richard Wilbur, "A Barred Owl" in *Mayflies: New Poems and Translations*, 2000.

75. *New York*

Nisus et Euryalus primi,/ Euryalus forma insignis
viridique iuventa,/ Nisus amore pio pueri.

Look down, you gods,
And on this couple drop a blessed crown!

“Love him, said Jacques, with vehemence, “love him
and let him love you. Do you think anything else
under heaven really matters?”

So the seen couple’s togetherness shall bear
Truth to the beauty each in the other sought.

NOW close. So turn the subway (touch!) ride very
public, private-like. You tally arm
around him, hung. He flairs; you both are merry
passengers tracked and torqued to toll your charm.
I’d seen your matched greed, waiting for the train,
your tabs and furtive brush in interlude
between your bodies whole engorged in pain,
starvation’s pleasure in arriving food.
Beyond erotic, you enlist sweet spells:
I glimpse them as your fluids chase and hide
within each other’s swollen streams and wells;
I spy them in ablutions as we ride.
Bless you both: cadets, channels for God’s fount.
May your eyes’ thirsts free vessels without count.

The first EPIGRAPH is from *The Aeneid*, 5:294-6, “First appears Nisus and Euryalus: Euryalus conspicuously handsome and flourishing youth, Nisus distinguished by pious love for him.” Byron paraphrased their story in his “The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus” in his 1807 *Hours of Idleness*. **E2**: from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, 5, 1. **E3**: from James Baldwin’s 1956/2001 *Giovanni’s Room*, p62. **E4**: from Fernando Pessoa, 1918, 35 *Sonnets*, XIX. An **ablution** is a religious ritual cleansing, usually with water. **Eyes**: “Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is — / Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men’s faces.” —Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” with paronomasias I, aye, eye. → «Nineteen». **Free**: “For the yoke of their burden . . . you have broken . . .” —Isaiah 9:4.

76. *Angel*

Every man hath a good and a bad angel
attending him in particular all his life long.

Nec ineffabiles cessabunt jubili,
Quos decantabimus et nos et angeli.

from the hinges / of the spirit world

Q UITE literally from consciousness I fell,
as this abrasion on my face declares.
In inner shadows, if by craft or spell,
I dropped, descended, weighed with ancient scares.
Assessing what I could command in limb
and eye and speech — and friend — when I revived,
I leveled as more casual than grim
though never to such measure had I dived.
While all regarded me with care, you spoke
affirming firming words, attending me
as from that plunge I rose and then awoke
to your chaste comfort and camaraderie.
As Raphael guarding, your dance appeared,
and cured your unpure earthly charge, and cheered.

The EPIGRAPH is from Robert Burton's 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1.2.1,2, in a sentence 14 lines long. See also Shakespeare's Sonnet 144 and Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (1861). **E2**: from the hymn of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), O quanta qualia: "Nor will end the indescribable cheering song which we and the angels shall sing." **E3**: from Billy Collins' 1991 "Questions About Angels." **Measure**: here the musical and poetic term implies distance or extent, or testing or ascertaining; the English word derives from a common Indo-European root which developed into the Sanskrit term *maya*, illusion, according to Heinrich Zimmer in his 1962 *Myths and Symbols of Indian Art and Civilization*, p24-26. **Chaste**: "Chasteness is always the biggest surprise. We are so inured to the conventions of torrid lovemaking that we forget how many light years love can travel on physical understatement." —Robert Farrar Capon, 1982 *Between Noon and Three*, p20. **Raphael** is an angel associated with healing; in apocryphal writing, he heals Tobit's blindness and frees Sarah from demonic control, and recounted by Rabelais (1495-1553) in *Pantagruel*, 3.16: ". . . and it may be, that man was an angel, that is to say, a messenger sent from God. as Raphael was to Tobit. In his *Advancement of Learning*, 1.6.3, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) ranks angels of love above all other kinds, and in 2.22.15, he says that humans may aspire to imitate God's goodness and love, though not in power, the transgression of the fallen angels.

77. *Invitation*

Nam et secundas res splendidiore facit amicitia
et adversas partiens communicansque leviores.

We that are true lovers run into strange capers

Come up and see me some time.

I MISS you, distant man, my buddy —
those months we frolicked, studied, touched, and cried;
we drank and talked rough thoughts clear from muddy.
Our campsite was each other's heart and hide.

Our road split once, then twice; we broke our stride.
To treat the bruise, you sent a salve, then came
yourself to hold my hand as we, inside
aporia, uncovered love from blame.

Your path meanders through the fog and sun
and heavy heaving, though your cart is spare.
And I stay fairly put; the waste I've won
wants your reserved return beyond repair,
or wild, unloosened, luscious love will do;
whatever, even distant or askew.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Cicero's *Laelius De Amicitia*, 6, 22: "For friendship makes prosperity radiant and lightens adversity by sharing it." E2: Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2, 4. E3: Mae West's line in *Diamond Lil*. **Clear from muddy**: "Creativity occurs when individuals engage in a kind of interchange with one another which is distinguished from every other interpersonal and social process by two features: [1] This kind of interchange creates appreciative understanding of the unique individuality of the other; [2] each individual who attains this appreciative understanding integrates into his own individuality what he thus acquires from others. What he thus acquires from others is not only knowledge; it is also all the values characterizing the individuality of the other so far as these are understood appreciatively and so far as they can be modified to develop the individuality of him who has attained this appreciative understanding of the other person. One who attains appreciative understanding of the errors and wrong valuing of the other has gained as much wisdom, strength, and resourcefulness for dealing with the exigencies of life as when he learns the truth and right valuing activating the lives of others. Right valuing are those which do not obstruct creative transformation." — Henry Nelson Wieman, 1958, *Man's Ultimate Commitment*, p4. **Campsite**: "Everything flowed toward one great riddle: the operation of nature and how man had apprehended it." — Simon Schama, 1995, *Landscape and Memory*, p246. "The medievals regarded . . . beings possessed of a soul overflow[ing] their bodily limits and reach[ing] out into ('intend' or 'tend into') the world." — John D Caputo, 2001, *On Religion*, p45.

78. *Advent*

Haec enim omnia signa carnis, quae a terra sumta est,
quam in se recapitulatus est, suum plasma salvans.

YOU chose the bench with me to worship Him
this Advent Sunday, readying our souls
for His new birth; we venture on time's rim,
our thews made free by ancient swaddled scrolls.
You grasped my hand and valid held it strong;
then to the rail we went and supped with Christ,
the sacred feast that makes all sorrow song
when to His table we are thus enticed.
In skin he vests: God comes to us on earth,
as He was born a mortal like us two.
A stable was His place of sated birth;
a tree makes art, this tract of troth, the pew.
What is beyond mere plat and plot is thus —
the Mass begets his humble flesh in us.

The Irenaeus (130?-202) EPIGRAPH is from "Adversus Haereses" (Against the Heresies), 3:22:2: "For all these are tokens of the flesh which have been derived from the earth, which he had epitomized in Himself, disposing salvation to his own handiwork." **Advent Sunday** is the first Sunday of the Christian liturgical season of preparation for Christmas, the nativity of Jesus. **Bench** is another word for **pew**, usually made of wood, as was the cross, the **tree** on which Jesus was sacrificed. Communion may be received at a **rail** after bread and wine become the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus the Christ through their consecration on the holy **table**. "At the end of the Twelfth Century a Latin theologian, Berengarius of Tours, was condemned for his teaching on the Eucharist. He maintained that because the presence of Christ in the Eucharist elements is 'mystical' or 'symbolic,' it is not *real*. The Lateran Council . . . condemned him and . . . simply reversed the formula. It proclaimed that since Christ's presence in the Eucharist is *real*, it is not 'mystical.' . . . Western theology thus declared that . . . [the] 'mystical' or 'symbolic' is not real, whereas . . . [the] 'real' is not symbolic. This was . . . the collapse of the fundamental Christian *mysterion*, the antinomical 'holding together' of the reality of the symbol and of the symbolism of reality, . . . a collapse of . . . Christian . . . ontological *sacramentality*." —Alexander Schmemmann, 1963/1973 *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, p128-129. Alas, then, for those like Wittgenstein who, during the war, "saw consecrated bread being carried in chromium steel. This struck him as ludicrous." —Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief (n.d., LCCN 66-19347), p53. **Vests**: A priest, sometimes regarded as an image of Christ, wears vestments. **Thews** means muscle or sinew, hence bodily strength. **Art**: "No one is more tiresome than the person who can . . . never . . . believe anything . . . unless it appears to be real. One must be willing to allow that symbolic things also mirror realities . . ." —Aaron Copeland, 1939/2011 *What to Listen for in Music*, p179.

79. *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*

οἱ δὲ ἠγνόουν τὸ ῥῆμα
At illi ignorabant verbum

He comes to us as One unknown

. . . gleaming in the Unseen. I gazed at it continually,
until the time came when I had wholly become that light.

THE chapel light is one bare candle, walled,
and darkness sponges any warmth in sight
except a sheen that from the void is hauled
into my heart and makes all shadows right.
Hangs Christ beyond the Eucharistic rail,
but all I see is icon gold ablaze,
the flame is amplified like rain in hail,
or when eternity is found in days.
Not Jesus; only shimmer can I see.
The painting pigment hides who I would serve,
as Peter, John, and others knew no Tree
until His love and theirs would them preserve.
Now brighter than the sheen I join the shine:
the shadow, mask, and veil of the divine.

The first EPIGRAPH, in Greek and Latin, is from Mark 9:32: But they did not understand what he said. **E2:** Albert Schweitzer, 1906 *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*. 1910/11 *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, tr W. Montgomery, p401. Schweitzer concludes, "He comes to us as One unknown He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is." Marcus Borg distinguishes the pre-Easter from the Post-Easter Jesus. **E3:** Abu'l-Hosain al-Nuri, quoted in Huston Smith's 2001 *Why Religion Matters*, p266. **Sheen, alaze, shimmer, shine:** "Before Jesus leads His disciples into suffering, humiliation, disgrace, and disdain, He summons them and shows Himself to them as the Lord in God's glory." —Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Back to the Cross" in *Meditations on the Cross*, ed Manfred Weber, tr Douglas W Stott, 1998, p3; see Matt 17:1-9. The **void** is a Buddhist term for undifferentiated reality, which, when perceived fully, generates compassion; **nothing** → «Seasoning». **Tree:** → «Barren Golgotha». **Veil:** → «Just Try To Kiss Me». **Shadow:** "Flare up like a flame and make big shadows I can move in." —Rilke (Barrows-Macy), *Book of Hours*, p88. Former KC Star art director Tom Dolphens "wrote" the icon.

80. *The Cosmic Christ*

A Meditation on Velázquez's *Christ after the Flagellation*
contemplated by the Christian Soul

WHO is this Christ? You, scourged, now look at me
and send a thill of light to guide my prayer
while You are twined and I think I am free,
attired in spotless white though You are bare?
An angel points the truth and guards the space,
an inner sweep where meaning's torque is tried,
and agony is mitered with spare grace;
the present, like a paradox, is tied.
The world entire is Christ, distressed, alone,
a way of painting all we see and know,
the damned, the saved enjoined with laugh and moan,
a metaphor chamfering loved and foe.
So I'll be hurt to heal, be bound to free,
change ache to kiss and wrench eternity.

With the blood-stained whips of the Flagellation on the floor near Christ as he awkwardly sits on the floor, his wrists are pulled by ropes tied to a column. A ray from his head points to a kneeling child portraying the Christian Soul at whom he gazes. A Guardian Angel bids the child to regard the Savior's suffering. Now in the National Gallery in London, the painting inspiring this ekphrastic sonnet was completed before 1630. **Thill, torque, miter, chamfer, wrench** are words from mechanical or carpentry contexts. A **thill** is one of the pair of shafts on either side of a draft animal pulling a cart. **Torque** is that which enables rotational force. A **miter** is an oblique cut in wood to join against another surface similarly cut; it is also the ancient Jewish headdress of the high priest and the hat of a Christian bishop. To **chamfer** is to cut at an angle, usually 45 degrees. To **wrench** is to twist forcibly or wrest something. **Who . . . ?**: The sonnet proposes an answer to this question →notes for «Postmodern Faith + No, Maybe I'm Rumi **drunk**». Our culture often seems fixed on fantasy. Folks enjoy and are moved by cartoons and fantasy films. Many buy costumes for comic book conventions. People adopt fantasy dress and "get into" their mythic characters. Why are "non-religious" folks, moved by, even comfortable enacting scenes from, *Batman*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and such, scoff at the stories of Christianity and other faiths, when many religious figures are excellent exemplars of how to live? Shelley can apostrophize "O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being," a therapist can place a client's long dead-and-buried father on a chair and ask the client to talk to talk about their relationship, a lover in orgasm can exclaim *O God!*, but if, for example, a Christian calls on Jesus, the creative power of imagination to approach Ultimate Reality is regarded as mere superstition. Can we each be, as suggested by James Joyce's 1916 *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ch5, a "priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life"? Has the Enlightenment divorced imagination from faith?

81. *Easter Vigil Baptism*

No todos podemos ser frailes y muchos son los caminos
por donde lleva Dios a los suyos al cielo.

And turn delight into a sacrifice.

CAREER fulfilled, but still I thirsted more:
a liturgy in life, a sacrifice
of brimming thanks for frolic and for chore,
a story vast of beauty quenching vice.
In none of days until this holy night
did water douse my bowed baptismal head.
As candles watched the font with eager light,
we found ourselves in One now raised from dead.
Then I, oblation bearer to the feast
with others to the altar in the stride
with vows fresh-washed, I found the chancel, East,
which, to the suffering world, with grace replied:
The Easter Lord has given all this night
the love to scrub each day of devil's might.

The EPIGRAPH is from *Don Quixote*, 8, by Cervantes (1547-1616): "All of us cannot be friars, and many are the ways God leads his children to heaven." **E2**: from George Herbert (1593-1633), "The Church Porch." **Easter** is the spring Christian celebration of the risen Christ after his crucifixion and death, and the **Vigil**, a period of devotional and liturgical wakefulness and watching, is held in the hours before the Sunday of the Easter observance, often the night before. **Baptism**, especially appropriate at **Easter Vigil**, is a Christian sacrament of initiation using the element of water; here, from a **font**. Wittgenstein → «Advent» read Augustine, but maybe not *Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum — the word falls on the element and makes the sacrament*, which hints at performatory language; see this book's § Introduction ¶ 19. **Liturgy . . . beauty**: Brian McLaren writes of Anglicans: "Even if they disagree on what the liturgy means or requires doctrinally, they are charmed by its mysterious beauty and beautiful mystery" in *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 2004, p236. A baptismal **candle** is used in the ceremony. Here an **oblation** is a solemn offering of bread and wine to God in the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist; The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p313, provides that oblations at a baptismal Eucharist "may be presented by the newly baptized . . ."; see Shakespeare's Sonnet 125. The Eucharist, "Thanksgiving," is the divine **sacrifice** celebrated at the altar. See Romans 12:1: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice . . ." → «Thunderbolt». The **chancel** is the place in many churches where the altar is found and traditionally is at the **East** of the building to recall the rising sun as a symbol of the risen Christ. The **devil** is a way of talking about the power of evil in the world and in oneself. In traditional theology, **grace** is the unmerited gift of God's mercy; it can also be understood atheistically as the characteristic of the universe which, through chance, provides us with spiritual health.

82. *Easter Morning*

καὶ ταχὺ πορευθεῖσαι εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι Ἠγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἰδοὺ προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε: ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν... καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν.

I — CALLED atheist by those who love hate
 (although they claim that they alone are heirs
 to Resurrection, say I desecrate
 their own faith when I make embracing prayers) —
 see Easter glory! I'm a witness! Watch
 the promise raveling in spring's wet ground!
 in wind! in sun's bright sky! and juice's crotch!
 These tales eternal, soil and soul, astound!
 Disciples scattered, some afraid to show,
 now gathered, warmed from mourning, love from woe,
 the power of sin and death itself reversed,
 redeeming history's night of its worst.
 Through time a wonder, God or not, has stood
 when even evil will ordain the good.

The EPIGRAPHS are from Matthew 28:7 and 17: "He has been raised from the dead and is going on before you into Galilee; there you will see him. . . . When they saw him, they fell prostrate before him . . ." **Atheist**, like **God**, is a multivalent term. Here it means the denial of a Supreme Being. For many mystics **God** can mean simply Reality, as suggested by the Sanskrit term *sat* (truth, reality), the Arabic *al-Haqq* (the Muslim mystic Hallaj was killed for blasphemy when he applied the term to himself, perhaps experiencing a realization of the interconnectedness which constitutes the ultimate, unsayable Truth), the Hebrew *Yahweh* (*I am that I am* or *I will be what I will be*, understood by some to be a personification of all that was, is, and will be), the *Infinite* of Cusanus (1401-1464), akin to the *Interbeing* of Thich Nhat Hanh and the *Dharmakaya* (truth-body, reality) of other Buddhists out of which the Buddha appears, and even the *Ground of Being* of Paul Tillich. Such views are much closer to Process theology (Whitehead, Hartshorne, even Teilhard) than God as a Super-Douper Entity. **Easter** morning accounts in the four Gospels vary. Easter is the spring Christian celebration of the risen Christ after his crucifixion and death → «Intimate Commitment». John Shelby Spong writes that Matthew (and Paul) view the resurrection as "an act of lifting Jesus from death into the meaning of the living God, not as an act of resuscitating Jesus" in his 2002 *A New Christianity for a New World*, p103. The word Easter appears to derive from Old English *eastre* and related to east and the German pagan goddess Ostern; estrus from the Latin *oestrus* may be a similar formation. **Tales**: "My point . . . is not that those ancient people told literal stories and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally." —John Dominic Crossan and Richard G Watts, *Who Is Jesus?*, 1996, p79. In the third quatrain, the usual rime pattern is replaced by couplets.

83. *Pentecost*

There is, some say, in God a deep but dazzling darkness
 Wisdom in the ground / Has no apocalypse or pentecost.
 . . . To be redeemed from fire by fire.

OUR brooding fire is black and burns, consumes
 the ordinary bush unto a void,
 a breach in space and pace of compressed dooms
 in which all fields of hope are snatched, destroyed.
 But blades of green like flames from earth spread wide
 or tongues that tell some wonder gather crowds
 who hear of Him who healed up love, who died
 and rose like seed constrained in earthen shrouds.
 From bush, then Burgeon! Bloom! like Easter Day
 white merriment made red, most full and fresh;
 the Word in fermions and bosons play:
ecclesia! — united in One Flesh.
 From ash of naught and sorrow's dread and tomb,
 that self-same fire now frees the upper room.

The EPIGRAPH IS from "The Night: John 3.2" by Henry Vaughan (1621–1695), which concludes: . . . *as men here / Say it is late and dusky, because they / See not all clear. / O for that night! where I in Him / Might live invisible and dim!* **E2:** from "I Dreamed That I Was Old" from *The Poems of Stanley Kunitz, 1928-1978*. **E3:** from T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Little Gidding, IV. The story of the burning *bush* is found in Exodus 3. For *void, nothing* → «Seasoning». *White. . . red:* white is the liturgical color for Easter, red for Pentecost. *Easter* is the Christian celebration of the risen Christ after his death by crucifixion. *Pentecost* marks the birth of the Church, the *ecclesia*. In my opinion, these words by William James, in an 1878 critique of Herbert Spencer, suggest its internal mission: "The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community." "Tongues as of fire" are reported in Acts 2, when those *gathered* of many languages heard Peter claim that Jesus was resurrected. "Unless the tongue catch fire / The God will not be named," widely titled "Pentecost" and misattributed to William Blake, appears in Theodore Roszak's 1972 *Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Post Industrial Society*, p276. *Word:* See Oxford theologian Graham Ward's 2000/2001 *Cities of God*, p115: Bodily tissue "is not text, but there is tissue only because there is text." In subatomic physics, *fermions* and *bosons* are two general classes of elementary particles. After the Ascension → «Ascension», before the Jewish festival of Shavuot, "Weeks," also called Pentecost, celebrating the giving of the Torah, the apostles; women; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and His brothers went to Jerusalem where they prayed together in an *upper room*, according to Acts 1:12-13.

84. *Postmodern Faith: What is Truth?*

MY God, is this a dagger that I see?
 Am I observing actors in a play?
 Is this a dream or film of tragedy?
 or just computer games where I'm to slay
 with it? Perhaps I'm high on LSD
 or wearing VR glasses that display
 an archetype if not a snickersnee.
 Is this *getik*, *menok*, or Judgment Day?
 Oh no, no dagger but Christ's cross, that tree
 which bares illusions in one Truth, one *Yea!*
 It tears and it repairs reality
 and wakes us to attend and watch and pray.
 I know the Gospel is a pious tale,
 but who grabs facts when worship cannot fail?

Pilate put the question to Jesus; John 18:38. Perhaps anticipated by the ancient Jain teaching of *anekantavada*, the doctrine of multiple viewpoints, Jean-François Lyotard described **Post-modernism** as "incredulity toward meta-narratives" such as theological systems or myths regarded as literal reality. In the 1957 *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose*, p163, Wallace Stevens wrote, "The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction, and that you believe it willingly." W H Auden wrote, "It is as meaningless to ask whether one believes or disbelieves in Aphrodite or Ares as to ask whether one believes in a character in a novel; one can only say that one finds them true or untrue to life. To believe in Aphrodite and Ares merely means that one believes that the poetic myths about them do justice to the forces of sex and aggression as human beings experience them in nature and in their own lives." The client following a therapist's suggestion to "place your father in this chair and tell him how you feel" may appear little different from one who prays. Religion is more about commitment than certainty. Perhaps Vico (1710) anticipated Postmodernism with his *Verum factum* principle: truth is not observed; it is constructed. The first line derives from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 2, 1, "Is this a dagger which I see before me?" An exquisite example of the problem of distinguishing **dream** from reality is portrayed in the *Illustration to the Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff* by Qiao Zhongchang (Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127) at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. **LSD** is a psychedelic or entheogenic drug. **VR** is Virtual Reality. Key terms from pre-Islamic Iranian thought reinterpreted the epistemology of Suhrawardi (1155-1191), "Sheikh al-Ishraq," the Master of Illumination, are **getik** (the ordinary world) and **menok** (a heavenly realm, perhaps akin to Plato's realm of forms, or archetypes as in the New Testament's Hebrews). **Judgment Day** → «Love Locket». The Christian **Gospel** includes the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, a figure paralleled in other religious traditions. A **snickersnee** is a large knife that can be used for fighting. **Tree**: → «Barren Golgotha». **Facts**: "We are poor passing facts" —Robert Lowell, "Epilogue," *Day by Day*, 1977. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1817 *Biographia Literaria*, XVI: wrote of the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." This sonnet uses only three end-rimes.

85. *Theodicy 9/11*

Liberal religion is symbolizing a totality of facts under the term God which orthodoxy, with a truer moral instinct, could comprehend under no less than two terms, God and the devil.

Why is it like this if there is supposed to be a God?

○ JOB! How terrified of “God” am I!
 You had the guts to plead your righteous case
 though all God did was whirlwind-speak, thereby
 blinding logic, showing power takes its place.
 Are the gorgeous summer days and whirling cage
 we call “tornado” from one untouched Source?
 By failing to restrain the World Trade rage,
 is God a terrorist of untold force?
 Injustice has its sway, disparity
 rules those whom we should respect, cruelty seethes
 while we’re asleep. O Singularity!
 are you fixed or in process, one who breathes?
 Teach how, with even every faith blasphemed,
 the terror of this tale can be redeemed.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Reinhold Niebuhr, 1926 April 22 *Christian Century*. **E2**: from Denis Johnson, New York, 2002 June 17. *Theodicy* is the theological study of the problem of evil in a world created by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God. One example of evil is the **World Trade Center** and other terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, now referred to as **9/11**. **Job** is the main character in the eponymous biblical book which deals with undeserved suffering. In his play, *J.B.*, Archibald MacLeish puts the problem this way: “If God is God he is not good. If God is good, he is not God.” In the Biblical story, God responds to the desire to understand, to see justice, by speaking out of a **whirlwind**, an effective rhetorical device which fails to address Job’s complaint. An excellent, short exploration of theodicy is Al Truesdale, 1997 *If God is God, Then Why?: Letters from Oklahoma City*; the Christian author in this slim book rejects all explanations but does offer a response to the problem. The **Singularity** is the Big Bang which began universe. **Untouched** is a reference to Aristotle’s description of God as the unmoved mover, an idea important to later theologians such as Thomas Aquinas. **God**: “My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth.” —Gandhi: 4th paragraph in “Farewell,” *An Autobiography*, 1927-1929/1940. **Untold** has a double meaning: not to relate and not to enumerate (as in the teller at the bank). **Disparity**: “So distribution should undo excess, and each man have enough.” King Lear, 4.1.80-81. **Breath**: → «Poetic Failure». This sonnet is paired with the next.

86. *Interbeing*

Any universe simple enough to be understood is too simple
to produce a mind capable of understanding it.

The world is one, namely many.

ALION and a butterfly are one
when Paradox will pounce and fly in song
as with love's pleasant arrow we are stung
and what is right is showing what is wrong.
We cannot see the sun except through screen
or else our eyes will blister, burn, and blind;
the film or veil is what reveals the scene
as circumstance displays what's in the mind.
The world's components make no sense, nor fit;
injustice and dire lack too often rule.
Yet from this mess the fire to serve is lit,
the sacred singular discerned from dual.
When vision clears, each nod and node reveals
how in each jot the universe congeals.

The title comes from Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-). Hua-yen Buddhism embraces *paradox* to convey a vision of integrated, interpenetrating, interdependent totality, *pratitya-samutpada*, from which Zen arises. Nagarjuna (150?-250?) taught that "things derive their being and nature by mutual dependence and are nothing in themselves." In *De Docta Ignorantia*, 1440, Cusa cites Anaxagoras (?500-?428 BCE): Each thing is in each thing. **E2**: Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945) almost sounds like William James (1842-1910). Gödel's incompleteness theorems are mathematical parallels to the *paradox* of the EPIGRAPH from John D Barrow, 1990, *The World Within the World*. This perspective is illumined in Douglas Hofstadter's 1979 *Gödel, Escher, Bach*. Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), in his *Confessions*, presents a spiritual parallel to the paradox of interbeing: "And finding that in all things there was evil and good, as well in the elements as in the creatures, and that it went as well in this world with the wicked as with the virtuous, honest and godly; also that the barbarous people had the best countries in their possession, and that they had more prosperity in their ways than the virtuous, honest and godly had; I was thereupon very melancholy, perplexed and exceedingly troubled Yet when in this affliction and trouble I elevated my spirit . . . , as with a great storm or onset, wrapping up my whole heart and mind . . . whereby I might understand his will and be rid of my sadness. And then the Spirit did break through." Perhaps above all Muslim mystics, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) taught a subtle version of *wahdat al-wujūd*, unity of being or perhaps the ground of being out of which all things are manifest. The hand and the nose are distinct features of a united body, but the hand is not the nose. **Veil**: → «Just Try To Kiss Me». This sonnet is paired with the preceding one. For a 4-verse text for Sursum Corda (10.10.10.10.), add: Injustice makes the Cross routinely real; all rent, its hidden beauty bursts to heal.

87. *Swamp*

O, how this spring of love resembleth
 The uncertain glory of an April day
 Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
 And by and by a cloud takes all away!

Forgiveness is the only way to reverse
 the irreversible flow of history.

I'VE found a flaw, two flaws; no, make that three,
 Three ropes that pulled me from the tempting swamp
 of loving you, blind incipency
 of stings and bites and claws, where monsters stomp.

Infatuation's mental figures grab
 and tease and hide and lie, like glowing gas,
 when all is dark, draws vivid what is drab,
 makes tortures bliss, twists subtle cross from crass.

O, free me from the faults, and from the arm
 you did not laud, the sighs you did not read . . .
 the third defect I can't recall . . . some charm,
 perhaps, whose rapture was never guaranteed.

My bads, which chain me to putrescent you,
 are goods to praise. Please rave, not misconstrue.

The EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1,3. Shakespeare's sonnets sometimes vary the sun-cloud metaphor, as in 18, 24, 28, 33, 34, 35, and 73. **E2:** attributed to Hannah Arendt in J Barrie Shepherd, 1995 *Aspects of Love: An Exploration of 1 Corinthians 13*, p76. **Cross:** If we consider the sovereign balm of our souls, the blood of Christ Jesus, there is enough for all the world. —John Donne, [Sermon 3:] On the Nativity, 1625 Dec 25; p53 in Alford's 1839 edition of *Works*. **My bads:** In his 1995 *Sexuality and Catholicism*, p351, Thomas C Fox summarizes the guidance of US moral theologians commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America: "Does sexual behavior realize values conducive to growth and integration? Is it self-liberating? Other-enriching? Honest? Faithful? Socially responsible? Life-serving? Joyous? Finally, are all these values enlightened and permeated by the core principle of Christian conduct, the gospel of love?" Fox cites the 1977 *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought: A Study*, by Anthony Kosnik et al, p95. **Freedom . . . sighs:** In Handel's 1711 *Rinaldo*, Almirena's sighs for freedom match the mood of this sonnet, if not the circumstances: *Lascia ch'io pianga mia cruda sorte, e che sospiri la libertà . Il duolo infranga queste ritorte de' miei martiri sol per pietà*. Let me cry over my cruel fate, and sigh for freedom. Let my sorrow break the chains of my torment, out of pity. . . .

88. *Love Locket*

Omnia vincit amor; et nos cedamus amori.

Idem homo et saluatur ex parte et condemnatur ex parte

THIS loud and too large love I have for you
 I now reduce to this small, silent space,
 and set it in a locket, safe from view,
 and wear it to confine you to a place.
 You overran my life and skinned my soul;
 my strong physique became a bag of woe;
 your gravity made me a damn black hole;
 you made my moil a comic video.
 When Rapture judges with the trumpet's blare,
 and when Maitreya stirs within my breast,
 when Emperors will bow to South, aware,
 or when Messiah comes and gives us rest,
 this locket forged on anvil from pure ire
 will melt from love within, and God's desire.

The EPIGRAPH, "Love conquers all; and we must surrender to love," is from Book X of the Eclogues by Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE). **E2:** from *Commentary on Psalm 118*, 20, 58 by Ambrose of Milan (340?-397): the same person is at the same time both saved and condemned.
Large . . . silent space: *Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*. The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me. —Pascal, *Pensées*, 3.206, which contemplate cosmic scope, eternity, and salvation. A **black hole** is often described as a space-time region so dense that gravity keeps everything, including light, from escaping, although recent theories suggest that information can be recovered. **Moil:** drudgery, trouble. Some fundamentalist Christian eschatology posits a **Rapture** in which the "dead in Christ" and those "who are alive and remain" are "caught up in the clouds" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) to be eternally united with Christ in his kingdom. In ancient Confucian thought, society would be set right by imitating the reverence of the **emperor** honoring the gods by bowing to the South where they reside. In some Buddhist eschatology, the bodhisattva **Maitreya** is regarded as the future Buddha. At the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, is a nearly life-size Maitreya Gandharan phyllite sculpture (3d Century). In some Jewish eschatology, a **Messiah** will establish the rule of Israel to bring peace to the world. **Judges:** Judgment Day → «Postmodern Faith» is the time when the soul's deeds are measured for reward or punishment in some religions, including Judaism (Rosh Hashanah yearly, or at the end of time), Christianity (the Last Judgment), and Islam (the Day of Reckoning). The third quatrain can be compared and contrasted with Shakespeare's Sonnet 55 which concludes, "So, till the judgment that yourself arise, / you live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes." **Desire:** → Collect for Purity, p49. "It is I who teach you to desire. It is I who am the reward of all true desiring. All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." —Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), *Revelations of Divine Love*, 14th.

89. *Idiom*

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day
and make me travel forth without my cloak . . . ?

'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone

TORNADOS raking branching axons, I
am trash and feces mingled, unsorted,
the tree of my being uprooted, dry
note from the planche-cindered sky, aborted
from its leafy dreams, lush, earth-bound passage,
xylem psalms and phloem fugues to blab praise
unconstrained, original; what adage,
saw, or proverb can anchor faith's fond phrase?
Mourn, wail, stink, gnash teeth: misborn love is grief;
off-balance; desolation; the Big Rip
astronomers predict, the cosmic thief
who smashes atoms' meanings in one trip.

What voice burlesques as if this sphere were you?

What idiom can trash descants once new?

The EPIGRAPH is the beginning of Shakespeare's Sonnet 24. **E2**: line 213 from John Donne's 1611 "An Anatomy of the World"; T S Eliot found thought and feeling united in Donne before the later "dissociation of sensibility." **Axons** are nerve fibers. **Tree . . . dry**: see Isaiah 56:3, "Let no eunuch complain, 'I am just a dry tree.'" **The Big Rip** is the theory about the ultimate fate of the cosmos in which the universe will be torn apart by its expansion due to dark energy. **Xylem** and **phloem** are the two main types of tissues that transport water and nutrients in vascular plants like trees. With both praise and anguish, **Psalms** or the Psalter, incorporated in The Book of Common Prayer, are texts associated with music, chanted or sung, compared to hymns. "So discord oft in music makes the sweet lay."—from Edmund Spenser's 1590 *The Faerie Queene*, 3.2. In a 2-part musical **fugue**, a theme is introduced by one voice and repeated later in a different pitch by another while the first continues. **Fond**: credulous (archaic). **In one trip** refers to a hypothetical case in which atoms or constituent parts are broken in one single pass around a circular particle accelerator, as the Tevatron operated by the University of Chicago which made the initial announcement in 2012 about the Higgs boson ("God particle"), confirmed two days later by the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland. As I understand it, particles are accelerated many times toward the speed of light through such equipment before the desired "smash" occurs. **Tree**: → «Barren Golgotha». **Descants** are melodies or counterpoints to simple tunes; the verb means to sing or comment at length. **Voice**: *Ah non son io che parlo, è il barbaro dolore che mi divide il core, che delirar mi fa*. Ah, not me talking; it's this furious pain ripping my heart to shreds, making me crazy.—Gluck's (and others') *Ezio*, Act 3.

90. *The Game Concludes*

Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed nolo modo.

I THINK of them as boys, but they are men.
 Sure, they have hair around their cocks and some
 have wives who watch the soccer game, and then
 they play their sexual gymnasium.
 Tomorrow they'll return and kick the ball,
 camaraderie and faith to kick that fear
 they cannot name beyond the grassy wall,
 which over, oxidized by sport, I peer.
 At last excitement longs in having now
 await embrace as he becomes a scout.
 He glances me as public will allow.
 Polite restraint now turns to caution's rout.
 We hide from conflict. Lovers do, and pant.
 Then later I return and rage and rant.

The EPIGRAPH, "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet," is the famous early prayer of Augustine (354-430) in his *Confessions*. He mentions when his father saw him, 16, at the baths "growing toward manhood." He later loved a fellow as "one soul in two bodies," who he "contaminated" with the "dirt of lust," and whose death caused profoundest grief. He took a concubine by whom he had a son, then abandoned her to please his Christian mother and became a Christian. Perhaps the most influential of Christian theologians, he considered an unbidden erection sinful because it was not controlled by reason. (But see Hannah Arendt, 1929/1996 *Love and Saint Augustine*.) Yet his was not the extreme view of sexuality; among the Church fathers, Ambrose, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, and John Chrysostom were disgusted with sex and urged abstinence, and Origen castrated himself. For contrast, consider Rumi, p152 → «The Sun» who wrote, "The throbbing vein will take you further than any thinking." Matthew Fox (see his 1983 *Original Blessing*) and others show that Augustine's doctrine of original sin, and its association with sex, is an infection contradicted by the Hebrew tradition out of which Christianity developed. As Fox correctly points out, doctrines like original sin are foreign to most religions. **Think**: "How can you think and hit at the same time?" —baseball great Yogi Berra (1925–2015). "[O]ne does one's thinking before one knows what one is to think about. . . . Thinking, then, is not conscious." — Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, 1976, p39. **Game**: "It's a game. People who cheat just don't know how to play. They treat a game as if it were serious. [Metologue Partner:] But it is serious." —Gregory Batson, 1972 *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*, p14. But also, since **game** is multivalent: "They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I shall break the rules and they will punish me. I must play their game, of not seeing I see the game." —R D Laing, 1970 *Knots*, p1. **Conflict**: "The theme of life is conflict and pain." — Charlie Chaplin quoted by George Prigatano quoted by Huw Green, "How Miserable Are We Supposed to Be?" New York Times, May 5, 2023, print edition May 7, pSR12. **Longs** is a zeugma.

91. *Fallen Tower*

Assentatio, vitiorum adjutrix, procul amoveatur.

Like the old Ruins of a broken Tower.

A FIRST-class fancy prize you think I've earned?
 Your frequent flattery is now absurd.
 Reality and judgment you have spurned.
 The text of trust is torn by your turned word.
 Lost lad, so much of you is unaware.
 A voyeur of my verve, you snatch and trap,
 absorb and warp my shine. You do not share
 your own fluorescence — maybe just a scrap.
 You've pushed the ancient tower of my love
 and toppled it to dust in law's dull waste.
 In time's and habit's land you step and shove,
 you shuffle, shift, and pass, so much misplaced.
 May this frank chat your future well protect
 while I must guard what once was made erect.

The EPIGRAPH is from Cicero: (In friendship) let flattery, the wingman of the vices, be far removed. **E2:** from Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie-Queen*, 1:2:20,2. **Tower:** "The bell-rope that gathers God at dawn / Dispatches me as though I dropped down the knell / Of a spent day — to wander the cathedral lawn / From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell." —The Broken Tower Hart Crane. The central tower in the four square blocks of the Nebraska State Capitol was affectionately known as the "Penis of the Plains" and the "Phallus Palace," at least when I lived a few blocks away in undergraduate school. The 207-foot tower for the carillon at Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago, a block from where I lived in graduate school, rises from the cathedral-like structure. The architect for both the Capitol and the Chapel was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, known for his neo-Gothic style. Like a free-standing pillar, a tower can be homologized with the penis of the body, "a house with a pillar and nine doors," described in the 12th or 13th Century hatha yoga text, *Goraksha Shataka*, 14. Towers often represent masculinity and strength: "For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe" (Psalm 61:3); "The name of the Yahweh is a strong tower" (Proverbs 18:10); "Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors" (Song of Solomon 4:4). The Tower of Babel was a challenge to God and therefore Yahweh destroyed it (Genesis 11). Towers can be seen to unite the human and the divine as in the Mesopotamian ziggurat, or to call the human to the divine, as in the church bell tower and the minaret → «You are Rumi + Adhan + Seville: Burning + Night Voyage». **Time:** "In youth we fancy we are wise, But time hath shown, Alas, too often and too late, We have not known The hearts of others or our own." —Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, libretto by W H Auden and Chester Kallman.

92. *Just a Boy*

Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexin,
delicias domini, nec quid speraret habebat.

In the new life, when the old gods and the first loves are dead,
Truth is strange, and it is everywhere to be read,
and poetry is its handmaiden.

Even your sensibilities /
And your depraved innocence
Are only special premiums /
Rewards of a shameful commerce.

NOT *vir*; *puer* you are, my scholar friend,
Your books, your footnotes, gifts, and hugs are lure.

Aeneid you may read, not comprehend.

With clever ways you first appear mature.

I see your endless flatter false. You fake.

Apocopated psychopaths can smile:

in your own act's sincerity you take
your measure, and yourself with me beguile.

With Circe's skill, you captured me one year,

but you are bound in counterfeit and trade

until you listen to yourself and hear

unconscious slips that will not be obeyed.

Yet my rimed gripe is reason through your crime;

learn: your stirred self might turn to love in time.

The Latin word for man is *vir*; *puer* is boy. The first EPIGRAPH is the first two lines of Virgil's second Eclogue: "Corydon, the shepherd, was aflame with love for handsome Alexis, his master's beloved. He was hopeless." In Virgil's *Aeneid* the sorceress *Circe* commands an island carefully avoided by Aeneas and his crew who hear the roars, grunts, and howls of the men she has transformed into beasts. In Book IX, the love of Nisus and his young friend Euryalus is celebrated. **E2:** from Maria Rosa Menocal, 1991 *Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth*, p50. **E3:** from Peter Abelard (079-1142), translated by Kenneth Rexroth. **Take your measure:** "The failures of beginners result almost always from greed. In those who are making progress, the failures come also from too high an opinion of themselves. In those nearing perfection, they come solely from judging their neighbor." —John Climacus (579?-649), *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, step 25. The couplet plays on the common phrase, "without *rime* or *reason*." See Shakespeare's Sonnet 126 which begins "O thou, my lovely boy"

93. *Thin Veil*

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances;
 And one man in his time plays many parts

We are such stuff As dreams are made on,
 and our little life Is rounded with a sleep.

Qual portento mi richiama la mia mente a rischiarar?

IT is so thin, this veil between the dream
 and what, deceived, we call our waking state;
 unconscious, we paint flats, we fabricate
 (from fear and wish) an organizing scheme,
 a pattern to make sense, a common theme
 to comfort and explain what some call fate
 in politics, career, and how we mate —
 though Will, the free mind's mantra, reigns supreme.

So I constructed Simulacrum-You
 within my lone streamed soul; but now I scream
 — Crap! who or what will I next dare create? —
 and worry how to right what is askew,
 how this fouled friendship's story to redeem
 subreption done by both our dreams, and wait.

TWO EPIGRAPHS are from Shakespeare, first Jaques in *As You Like It*, 2, 7, then Prospero in *The Tempest*, 4.1. **E3**: from Handel's 1735 *Alcina*, who bewitches those who come to her island. When freed from illusion by a ring, Ruggiero sings, "What magic can have returned the light of reason to my mind?" in 2.1, tr Harriet Mason. **Veil**: → «Just Try To Kiss Me». A veil hides something "either too sacred or too intimate" to explain "though one cannot help admitting its presence." —Schuon in Seyyed H Nasr's 2005 *The Essential Frithjof Schuon*, p322. Compare "veil" with what astrophysicists call an "event horizon." A **flat** is a (usually) rectangular wooden frame covered with canvas painted to portray a backdrop scene as part of a stage setting. A **mantra** is a sacred phrase for chanting to raise or center one's awareness; in a secular context, it is sometimes simply a commonly repeated word or phrase, and sometimes implies shallowness of thought. **Fabricate** has two common meanings: making and lying. **Evil**: "Ultimately evil is done not so much by evil people, but by good people who do not know themselves and who do not probe deeply." —Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971). This sonnet uses a Petrarchan rime scheme with only three end-rimes.

94. *Epiclesis*

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
doest hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour

Sanctify them [bread and wine] by your Holy Spirit
Sanctify us also

Reach out your hand if your cup be empty
If your cup is full may it be again

WHEN by sickle's slice you say *No* to me
this hour, my expectations sheered and shorn,
I'll not descend to nail-wrought agony
or feel my flesh by glass is from me torn.
The yearning unbred God must feel is mine,
for even God can't make a soul decide
to make libation, lift life's cup of wine,
imbibe his love, instead of from him hide.
My love will hover like a halo, bright,
about your head for those whose inward eyes
can drink what you refuse, and your own light
will guide me in my night, and cleanse my cries.
But if one *Yes* would constitute your state:
then here's the chalice and the sacred plate.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's Sonnet 126. E2: from The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p363. E3: from Robert C Hunter's Grateful Dead song, "Ripple." Arminian theology — **even God can't make a soul decide** — eschews the doctrine of predestination. In monotheistic faiths, God (the Father in Christianity) is **unbred** because He is the uncreated Creator. The **cup** or **chalice** with **wine** and the **sacred plate** (paten) for **bre(a)d** are used in many forms of the Christian Eucharist (Communion) which celebrates the Son of God in bread and wine as His body and blood. The celebrant invokes the Holy Spirit to consecrate these elements; this prayer is the **epiclesis**. For some, the focus is not on what happens to the bread and wine but rather on the believers: "the epiclesis is not about the transformation of the elements, but of the communicants," writes Molly T Marshall in her 2003 *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit*, p89. Voltaire, on the other hand, quipped, "Papists ate God but not bread, the Lutherans ate both bread and God. Soon after there came the Calvinists who ate bread and did not eat God." Some say Christ is known not in the bread but in the **breaking** of the bread (sharing); see the Emmaus story, Luke 24:13-35. **Nails** are the thin horny plates on fingers and toes ("biting my nails"); nails also are thin, often rounded, pointed metal pieces used for securing or hanging things (such as the body of Jesus on the cross).

95. *Acetylene Torch*

Heu heu nostrae pestis amicitiae.

Fuggite, amanti, Amor, fuggite 'l foco
l'incendio è aspro e la piaga è mortale

So bright, you gouge my sight; I trip, trapped, dazed,
Or moth-like to blind death, singed first, then burned —
sex! Stupid pseudo-martyr, I blazed
from your acetylene torch, unconcerned.

Now ghostly as I flap in time's scorched sleeve,
I cherish you as much, but have no flesh
with which to hug: my shadow hands can grieve
but not embrace. Am I stale? Are you fresh?

Look: in the mirror I am fact; you're fake,
most to yourself. You're blinded tight by fear
of who you are. Your image there's opaque;
from underneath your gloss, can truth appear?

The ghastly, grim, and gruesome gasp of light
has switched a flaming world to stumbling night.

The EPIGRAPH is from Catullus 77: "Alas, alas, plague of our friendship!" E2: "Flee, lovers, from Love, flee from his fire; its flame is cruel and its wound is deadly," is from *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (1475-1564), #27, tr James M Saslow, 1991, p104. **Moth**: "i was talking to a moth / the other evening / . . . he answered / we . . . crave beauty / and excitement / fire is beautiful / and we know that if we get / too close it will kill us / but what does that matter / it is better to be happy / for a moment / and be burned up with beauty . . ." —Don Marquis, "the lesson of the moth." **Sex**: Compare with this from "Wild is the Wind" by Carl Phillips in his 2018 book by that title: "I love sex with you too it doesn't mean I wanna stop my life for it." **Stupid pseudo-martyr**: Psychologist Dorothy Tennov, 1979 *Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love* employs the term "limerence" for a romantic interest so strong it becomes an obsessive preoccupation, leading to ecstasy, perplexity, despair, or other extreme emotions, depending on how reciprocation is perceived. Similarities with the mystics' love of God have not been much explored. **Truth**: "Truth cannot be out there — cannot exist independently of the human mind — because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own unaided by the describing activities of humans cannot." —Richard Rorty (1931-2007), 1989 *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p5. In *Why Religion Matters*, p205, Huston Smith (1919-2016) writes that "the world is ambiguous. It does not come tagged 'This is my Father's world' or 'Life is a tale told by an idiot.' It comes to us as a giant Rorschach inkblot." The "machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry." —William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p3. → «Postmodern Faith + The Cosmic Christ + No, Maybe I'm Rumi».

96. *Warning*

Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride.

There is no way of looking at the forest except
by the light of our own reason, and this light determines
the particular kind of forest there seen.

Sous un fourré, là-bas, là-bas, des sources vives
Font un bruit d'assassins postés se concertant.

I JUST don't want to mess you up. My wants
have rimed like sex, a seedling to a tree,
and tree to forest where the danger hunts.

Do not get tangled in the brush. Stay free
if you are free. But if you're lost, I'll guide
you out the maggot maze you've made, and warn,
ENTER NOT THIS FOREST, MUCH LESS ABIDE.
Such signs like DEATH I'll post, to safety sworn.

More dangerous than the forest is its maze,
the mesh of history's map you cannot see,
with wasted trails and traps, wandering in delays —
though by our dreams deluded we could be.

I'd cut this forest down to keep you out,
but you should watch what in its place might sprout.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare, Sonnet 104.3-4, with a surprising and chilling conclusion, as mine may be. **E2**: from Joseph Chilton Pearce, 1971/1973 *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, p141. **E3**: from *Dans Les Bois*, "In the Woods," a poem by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896): Under a thicket, there, there! a live spring sounds like assassins are massed together. **Tree**: → «Barren Golgotha». In the Sumerian-Babylonia Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh and Enkidu are warned not to enter the Cedar **Forest** where Humbaba the Terrible threatens any human who approaches. Eliade's novel, *The Forbidden Forrest*, suggests the "terror of **his-tory**" and love's transcendence. **Death**: "The pity is the damage that's done/ Leaves so little for amends." —Paul Simon, 2023, "Trail of Volcanoes" on *Seven Psalms*. The **maze**, a labyrinth, made by Daedalus for King Minos of Crete at Knossos, contained the ferocious half-man, half-bull Minotaur. The labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral is walked as a religious exercise. ————— **Rimed**: Is this book a **forest**? Herein 52 sonnets are Shakespearean; sonnets 93 and 149 are Petrarchan; 102 and 111 run 15 lines; 45 runs 16 lines; and 57, a form of "heroic sonnet," runs 18 lines; sonnet 125 has an alexandrine; Rime variations occur at least in sonnets 9, 21, 58, 70, 73, 82, 93, and 153.

97. *Not One Drop*

Take your friend just as he is,
for if you refuse to drink the water of the oasis pool
with its little bit of straw, you risk dying of thirst.

Nest, water, life.

He scatters his hail like bread crumbs; / who can stand
against his cold? / He sends forth his word and melts them;
he blows with his wind and the waters flow.

Des Menschen Seele Gleicht dem Wasser.

EACH rapture has its rhythm, to and fro.
Let none control. Not fiat: flow; no dike:
clear water tumbling free in fall, or slow
in muddy rivulets along the pike.
And standing pools moved only by the wind
or quake or sun's slack thirst; evaporation
in marshes thickened, mud; then by rain thinned;
or in the spot that's soused by lust's libation.
For this unstately desert once was love,
luxuriance veered to desiccation
by searing silence, an anhydrous shove
uncharted, no GPS location.
I thirst for you, yet I would rather die
than beg one drop you need from your supply.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Bachar Ibn Baurdi (714-784), beaten to death and thrown in the Tigris. **E2**: from Robert Heinlein, 1967/1987 science fiction classic, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, p195; ritually drinking water together creates "water-brothers." **E3**: the metrical version of Psalm 147:18-19 in The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p805. **E4**: The soul of humankind is like water: the first two lines of Goethe's "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern," set by Schubert for men's voices. **Water**: "The best is like water. Water benefits the ten thousand things without competing with them; it dwells in humble places; thus it is like the Tao; no striving, no blaming." —Tao Te Ching, 8. **Marshes**: ". . . in marshes here and there no doubt / A sterile dragon lingered to a natural death" —W H Auden, "A New Age," a Petrarchan sonnet. **Desiccation**: "My moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer." —Psalm 32:4, BCP. **Yet**: Consider Meat Loaf's "I Would Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)." And M Scott Peck's 1983 *People of the Lie*, p268: "the first task of love is self-purification."

98. *Existentialism*

I reach out, wanting you to tear me open.

In der Mathematik gibt es kein Ignorabimus.

I HEARD about a man who with his breath
and little patience tried to ripen what
requires term, but mergered birth with death,
when on a crude cocoon he blew, forgot
how delicate an unforced butterfly
must be. To come forth urged, the creature tried
emerging but got stuck. Cull, pluck, filch, pry,
the digits went. The clumsy beauty died.

Our friendship has its fluxions, and its bloom
is not a hothouse product. Yet this plant
needs care and tending, though its rare perfume
with no instructions comes. I witless rant:

Do I water now or wait for soil to dry?
Or will this existential question die?

Existentialism can be described as a 20th Century philosophy positing existence before essence; that is, we, without clear guidance, without knowing the results of our intentions, discover who we are through the actions we take in a confusing, absurd world, creating meaning ourselves, rather than finding it already created for us. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), often regarded as the first major Existentialist philosopher, wrote in his journal for 1835 August 1, "What I really need is to get clear about what I must do, not what I must know, except insofar as knowledge must precede every act. What matters is to find a purpose, to see what it really is that God wills that I shall do; the crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die.*" (Italics in the original, p34 in the Indiana University 1978 edition vol 5 of Kierkegaard's works.) The first EPIGRAPH is from Rumi, p12 → «The Sun». **E2**: "In mathematics there is no [saying] 'We will not know,'" —David Hilbert's 1930 "Naturerkennen und Logik," cited in Gunther Stark, 2008 *Eine Spezies Wird Besichtigt*, p446. Hilbert was wrong about the *Entscheidungsproblem*, the Decision Problem; there are problems which cannot be decided, shown by Alonzo Church and Alan Turing in 1936 building on Kurt Gödel's 1931 proofs. Corporate voices have been known to say **mergered** instead of merged. Each quatrain contains a mathematical term, **term** (In algebra, a term is either a single number or a variable, or numbers and variables multiplied together), **digits** (fingers, the arithmetic symbols 0-9), **product** (result of multiplication); and **fluxions**, Newton's term for a derivative in calculus, and **instructions**, procedures, algorithms, computer code → «Hence». **Ripen**: Shakespeare writes ripeness, readiness, and rot. "The readiness is all." —Hamlet, *Hamlet*, 5.2. "Ripeness is all." —Edgar in *Lear*, 5.2; We "ripe and ripe, And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot; And thereby hangs a tale." —Touchstone, quoted by Jaques, *As You Like It*, 2.7. See his Sonnets 1, 34, 81, 86, 102.

99. *Fact or Fancy*

And graspe aboute I may, but in this place,
Save a pilowe, I finde nought tenbrace.

Ay me, I fell, and yet do question make
What I should do again for such a sake.

Love often doesn't arrive at the right time
or in the right person. It makes us do ridiculous
and stupid things. But without it, life is just a
series of unremarkable events, one after the other.

IF I find out you've used me all the while,
I'll cry and grieve, all cleft, but own my fault
I'll not deny, to take for love your smile
in place, in time, in heft. I slay, assault
myself, not reading signs' misprision, you
excused because your past still pains. Of course
mine twists and ruins a fresh convergence, too,
and residue adds piles to worn remorse.

But are you large enough for you to see
that I, this fool, will love to love's extreme?
For my sake measures through infinity
to master even *maya*, the full-scale meme.

If fact or fancy: scatter me in space;
and let your scheme be shown as my disgrace.

The EPIGRAPH is from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, V.223. **E2**: from "A Lover's Complaint" (321-322), printed with Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609. **E3**: from Meghan Austin's "Modern Love" essay, "A Forbidden Relationship, From the Other Side of the World," *The New York Times*, 2015 April 2. **Cry**: "My ecstasies changed to an ugly cry." —line 4, Siegfried Sassoon's "The Poet As Hero." **Disgrace**: see Shakespeare's *Sonnets* 33, 34, and 89. **Maya** is a Sanskrit term used in Hinduism and Buddhism; *maya* is described in many ways, including the illusory world created by our desires and projections upon what is really real; we are deceived as if by a magician, but we do not know we are deceived. A **meme** is a theme, image, idea, style, or behavior imitated, reproduced, and sometimes modified by personal transmission through cultural means, analogous to genetic selection and mutation. Related to the literary term *mimesis* (imitation), "meme" is thought to have originated by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*. Now itself a meme, "meme" is widely employed in social and political analysis and other fields. Alas, Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and others ignorantly define religion as belief in the supernatural.

100. *Content*

Look what is best, that best I wish in thee:
This wish I have; then ten times happy me!

WERE Ibn Arabi and Dante mad?
so crazy mad they loved like God what they
could find full unfulfilled, raw love unclad
by lust, won fast by losing, found astray.
I'm luckier with lips: I grasp joy's flesh,
hear Triune voices in and with us two,
smell Eden's earthly scent on you, bud-fresh,
and swollen like time ripe, when all is new.
Still, I will never have what I want most
beyond your care: not days or weeks, but years.
I'll wake alone; my vacant limbs will boast
those moons and stars in which your soul appears.
Yet I will ravished be to know you live
with whom you choose, and relish all you give.

The EPIGRAPH is Shakespeare, Sonnet 37, couplet. Like many other Sufis, *Ibn Arabi* (1165-1240) was consumed with divine love. On the Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, he fell instantly in love with Nizam, a young woman who inspired much of his religious poetry (*Tarjumán al-ashwáq* — *The Interpreter of Desires*); at the Kaaba he met and was over-whelmed with passion for a beautiful youth who somehow had etched in his body the entirety of the cosmos (*Futuhát al-Makkíyya* — *Meccan Revelations*). In a later parallel, *Dante* Alighieri (1265-1321) was also inspired by a woman who represented divine love in *Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*). *Triune voices* refers to the three "persons" (*hypostases*) of the Holy Trinity in normative Christianity: Father, Son (Jesus, the Christ), and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not mathematical nonsense such as 3=1, but rather a mystical formula or direction to deepen one's awareness of the mystery of existence, of being and becoming, of *perichoresis*, dancing around, co-inherence, a hint maybe of the Buddhist *pratitya-samutpada*. Almost any attempt to explain the ineffable results in delightful heresy, as folks try to explain the relationships within the "three in one." For example, the Trinity can be likened to three states of H₂O: ice, water, and steam. If God is a theological designation for the infinite totality of Reality, then three functions can be considered: Creation, Redemption, and Transformation; these can be presented in the Christian myth or, for atheists, as god in three continuing and interdependent processes, similar, if not parallel, to the Hindu Trimurti of creator Brahma, sustainer Vishnu, and destroyer Shiva, all active in any event. God as Reality can also be designated as Infinite-Unknowable, Relationship, Process → «Easter Morning + Seasoning». (Among many, Diana L Eck's 1993 *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, p69-73, compares the Trinity with the Hindu Trimurti.) In Hebrew scripture, *Eden* was the original paradise. *Moons and stars*: "The moon has set | and the Pleiades. It is | Midnight. Time passes. | I sleep alone." —Sappho of Lesbos, tr Kenneth Rexroth, 1962.

101. *Jesus Would Have Loved This Man*

I take for my love some prostitute —
I pick out some low person for my dearest friend

When a message from the LORD came to Hosea,
the LORD told him, “Go marry a prostitute”

YOU hustle me on Main and hushed I say,
“I don’t buy love.” You want to talk with me.
We sit as you tell stories. So I stay
relaxed with danger, crack, insanity,
your tries to get my cash. — Yet I admire
your work, a kind of research which reveals
how others like their sex; your love for hire
displays their secret being, maybe heals.
— But I don’t buy. You ask me to your place
to spend the night. I chant, “No sex.” We fix
your window, stuck. We cuddle, close, and trace
our tales. — You wake. Say you, who pleased tricks,
some fifty women, men a thousand three:
“I cannot sleep if your skin touches me.”

The EPIGRAPH is from the 1860 edition of Walt Whitman’s *Leave of Grass*; see also his “To a Common Prostitute.” **E2**: from the Biblical book of Hosea 1:2. “Wouldst thou love God alone? God alone cannot be beloved. He cannot be loved with a finite love, because He is infinite. . . . He must be beloved in all with an unlimited love, even in all His doings, in all His friends, in all His creatures. Everywhere in all things thou must meet His love. . . . His love unto thee is the law and measure of thine unto him: His love unto all others the law and obligation of thine unto all.” —Thomas Traherne, *Centuries*, 1.72.12 **Sex**: Before the Enlightenment, the only true sex was male; women were defective or “misbegotten” males (Aquinas), hierarchically lower than men in the Great Chain of Being. With the Modernist secular urge for classification, intersex persons were erased and male and female became the two true sexes. See Megan K DeFranza’s 2015 *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God*. **Their secret being**: “The ambiguity of the erotic vocabulary of tantric literature cannot be too strongly emphasized. . . . Nevertheless, *maithuna* [sexual union] is also practiced as a concrete ritual. By the fact that the act is no longer profane but a rite, that the partners are no longer human beings but ‘detached’ like gods, sexual union no longer participates in the cosmic [mortal] plane. The tantric texts frequently repeat the saying, ‘By the same act that cause some men to burn in hell for thousands of years, the yogin gains his eternal salvation.’” —Mircea Eliade, 1958/1969 *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, p263. **Trick**: a hustler’s customer. **A thousand three**: Whether the hustler was knowingly echoing “*mille e tre*” from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* was not clear.

102. *Now*

But it's no use going back to yesterday,
because I was a different person then.

Teach us to care and not to care

Thy Friendship oft has made my heart to ake
Do be my Enemy — for Friendship's sake.

THE day before, you stabbed me in the heart.
This time the hit is just a swift groin kick,
effective message that we two should part;
it hurts, but doesn't even make me sick.
Though I surrender all, you fight; you smite
yourself; you fall, you slide, you slip, then bow
and with projections past, purge all your might;
thus emptied, you're absolved of every vow.
This now, my casual friend, once close, I wait
as waters make their rounds in streams and sky
and tears; a fluid mending: friend, not mate,
what might have been, dissolved into a sigh.
Yet love leaps even from fall's injury,
so new are you, a springtime ready lea;
yet I'll not plow there now, O no, not me.

The EPIGRAPH is from Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson), 1865 *Alice in Wonderland*, ch 10, The Lobster Quadrille. Dodgson was an Anglican deacon, and a noted mathematician and logician. The seemingly silly comment about being a different person yesterday is a playful reference to the classical laws of logical thought, and may arise from Dodgson's familiarity with the medieval theological controversy between nominalism and realism, as the Carroll citation suggests → «Profane Words». The observation that we change who we are everyday, even every moment, is not confined to Buddhist thought, though it is integral to that tradition; in the West, philosophers like Hume and psychologists like William James have made parallel observations. **E2**: from T S Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," and presents a paradox parallel to Alice being the same and yet different person one day to the next. **E3**: William Blake's Notebook, p37, "To H—" in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed David V Erdman, 1965, p498. **Bow**: John Dewey: "Hebrew prophets and Greek seers asserted that conduct is not truly conduct unless it springs from the heart, from personal desires and affections, or from personal insight and rational choice." *Theory of the Moral Life*, 1960, p8. **Fall** and **spring** are paronomasias, the seasonal meanings of which play against the **now** of the title and the last line. A **lea** is a meadow or arable land. Shakespeare's Sonnet 99 has 15 lines, as this does.

103. *Anomaly*

Sicine subrepsti mi, atque intestina perurens

Lovers lose their way in love and become entangled.

Nay, I have done; you get no more of me.

But we remain, touching a wound
That opens to our richest horror.

I'VE never fallen from love's ledge before
(though with God's bridge of will I love you still,
a picador at edge, once at my core);
no longer does your prose or presence thrill.
The scope that once I opened to your pride
is twisted like the sky above a street
with buildings toppling wild on either side
when crushing crowds of strangers clash on sleet.
I like not loving you, to love you more
without the punch and pummel passion pulls,
no longer tangled with wound's calls, the roar
of ruin or win to run Pamplona bulls.
Anomaly, I wish you well; invade
me not. I take me to La Perla's shade.

The EPIGRAPH is from Catullus 77: "Is this the way by stealth, you invade to burn my guts?" **E2**: from Ibn Arabi (1165-1240, 560-638 AH), *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, *The Interpreter of Desires*, 1.4, tr 1911 Reynold A Nicholson, p48. The *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq* is one of Arabi's most wonderful books, with the original ghazals (love poems of specific structure) republished with commentary explaining the spiritual meaning of the erotic language. Arabi may be one of the most controversial figures in Islam, with some considering him the greatest of all spiritual leaders after Muhammad (pbuh) and others calling him a heretic or apostate. **E3**: from Sonnet 61 by Michael Drayton (1563-1631). **E4**: Karl Shapiro, 1942, "Auto Wreck," much anthologized. **Fall**: "Falling in love, we almost inevitably fall into illusion." —Sam Keen, 1994 *Hymns to an Unknown God*, p178. "To fall in love is to create a religion that has a fallible god." —Jorge Luis Borges. In Zoroastrian scripture, the Chinvat **Bridge** narrows for the unworthy. **Pride**: the term has been appropriated in African-American and other social movements. Perhaps originating in the 14th Century in northeastern Spain, the annual Running of the **Pamplona bulls** (Spanish, *encierro*, "confinement") was popularized by Ernest Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* and *Death in the Afternoon*. The ritual involves the release into the street of bulls who chase the human participants, some of whom are injured and some years some are killed. The balconies of the Hotel **La Perla** are eagerly sought to view the Running of the Bulls.

104. *Repair En Route*

When a man can occupy himself with counting syllables,
either he has not yet attempted any spiritual climb,
or he is over the hump.

A perfect poem owes its perfection to sounding the voice
of the heart and the melodies of the conscience

D'un poeta non disprezzate il detto

POETRY'S perfect once you gain control;
I can set almost anything in verse.
I know each rime and foot that measures soul,
expansive canons and expressions terse.
In life you won't surrender to my lust,
but with each gadget I make love to you;
and while my yearning soon will inform dust,
these lines will stay and prove that I am true.
But all my skill won't fix my wretched car
or get the parts it needs when it breaks down,
or transport me to you when I am far
in miles and meditation from your town.
I'd give this perfect power I have away
for one deep kiss from you I could obey.

En Route is a borrowing from the French that means along the way. The EPIGRAPH is from W H Auden, 1964 Foreword to the English version of Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings*. **E2**: from Fethullah Gülen (1941-), 2010 *Speech and Power of Expression: On Language, Esthetics, and Belief*. **E3**: from Giordano Umberto's verismo opera, *Andrea Chénier* (libretto: Luigi Illica), Act 1: ("Un di all'azzurro spazio") Do not scorn the musings of a poet. . . . Non conoscete amor. Amor, divino dono, non lo schernir. Del mondo anima e vita è l'Amor! A **foot** is a unit within a line of poetry; it is also called a **measure**. A **canon** is a standard for judgment, a standard collection of texts, and the part of the Mass which includes the Consecration of the bread and wine. **Expressions terse**: Poetry is hard because "the density of meaning in the language stops you; it makes you read in loops." —Elisa Gabbert, *The New York Times*, Books, 2020 March 03. **Gadget**: Auden calls a poem a "verbal contraption"; see this book's § Introduction ¶ 19. **Skill**: "The skill taught by God to the silkworm is a learning beyond the reach of the elephant" —Rumi/Star, p176 → «The Sun». **Poetry**: "The common prejudice that love is as common as 'romance' may be due to the fact that we all learned about it first through poetry. But the poets fool us; they are the only ones to whom love is not only a crucial, but an indispensable experience, which entitles them to mistake it for a universal one." —Hannah Arendt, 1958/1998 *The Human Condition*, 2d edition, p242 n81.

105. *The Kiss*

Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you

But sloth, and fear of men, and shame
 Impose their limit on my bliss:
 Else had I laid my lips to his,
 And called him by love's dearest name.

YOU kiss me, and yourself surprise. You ask,
Was that all right? O sure! I plunge, fall through
 myself, your gesture prized (my God!), but mask
 and feign reaction, dunk the touch from you.
 Discreet, you stretched yourself to kiss a male,
 defying culture's stare for most 'straight' men.
 And underneath my careful, quiet, pale
 response, you reached the deepest water when
 your lips so light, so sudden, fired to flush
 my face. — Too brief, a distant lighthouse, sign,
 a sip, not sea. — Please flood my flesh! make plush
 with trust! — I spy, not seize, across the line.

Confused, I cherish and complain your kiss;
 bruised boundaries show me my cowardice.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Walt Whitman's "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand," in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*; E2: from "In the Key of Blue," 1893, by John Addington Symonds. Also recall Rumi → «The Sun»: "I said: I don't drink wine! He said, Don't do it, OK, sure's a pity. I said: I am afraid if I drink, shame will fall over me, and I may reach my hand into your curls, and then you'll move away from me!" **Water/fired**: "Though water prevails over fire in might, / yet it boils by fire when in a cauldron" —Rumi/Star, p194 → «The Sun». **Kiss**: "Last, when we have obtained that [the grace of kissing foot and hand], with many prayers and tears, then perhaps, with fear and trembling, we dare to lift our faces to the mouth that is so divinely beautiful, not only to behold it, but even to kiss it. . . . When we are united with him in a holy kiss we are made one with him in spirit through his kindness." —Sermon 7 of the *Sermones super Cantica Conticorum* of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). [The Cistercian Bernard was a leading promoter of the Second Crusade, notably at Vézelay on Easter, advocated genocide of the Wends, and was unforgivably nasty to the brilliant Peter Abelard (1079?–1142), protected by Benedictine Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny.] What does a kiss mean? Do we forbid a child to kiss or be kissed until the child is able to articulate its meaning? Why do some forbid a child from partaking of the Eucharist until they "know what it means"? Who ever can say what this Mystery means? The Eucharist has many meanings, even over a lifetime only partly disclosed. Anyone who presumes to comprehend and explain the Mystery might be a dupe of the Enlightenment or a blasphemer.

106. *Even Zeus*

No, I am that I am, and they that level
 At my abuses reckon up their own:
 I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel

σωθητε απο της γενεας της σκολιας ταυτης

EVEN Zeus, manhood's model, who seduced
 those boundless women, morphing as a bull
 or cloud or shower of gold, whose bold bolt loosed
 upon myth's marks, paternity made full,
 whose oak-leaf crown and eagle-mounted staff
 well rules affairs — except his own pursuits,
 concupiscence, whose queued and lust-torn laugh
 of condescending conquest made gods brutes —
 yea, even Zeus was whelmed. Young Ganymede
 he snatched, his great wings beating, for his side
 eternally, in love's delight and feed.

Though breeding won't result, he's deified.

Now nectar's shared from Zeus's golden bowl.
 Whose show will goad and mime such 'manly' role?

The EPIGRAPH is Shakespeare, Sonnet 121.9-11. **E2**: Acts 2:40: Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. The phrase "*great wings beating*" is from "Leda and the Swan," by W B Yeats (1865-1939) about a rape; as with most such stories, **Zeus**, the king of the gods in Greek mythology, left the woman of his satisfied passion. **Ganymede** was an extraordinarily handsome Trojan whom Zeus abducted; the story was a model for the Greek practice of erotic relationships between older and younger males, and sometimes confusion between the sexes, and a literary fashion in the Renaissance deriving from the classics; for example, compare Shakespeare, Sonnet 20 with Ovid's story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in *Metamorphoses* 4. He even appears in rapper Kurtis Blow's 1980 "Way Out West." Examples from Islam are the friendships between Mahmud and Ayaz, and between Rumi and Shams. **Manly role**: See Robert N Minor's 2001 *Sacred Straight*. Theodore Roosevelt warned that "The greatest danger that a long period of profound peace offers to a nation is that of [creating] effeminate tendencies in young men" → «Libation + Relaxed + Sacred Play + Status». Paul Tillich in his 1957 *Systematic Theology*, p52, vol 2, Part III, I, C.4, describes **concupiscence** as "the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self" and, p54, says such "distorted libido" desires "one's own pleasure though the other being, but it does not want the other being." Thus concupiscence can be considered the opposite of *kenosis*, emptying oneself of one's own will. **Myth**: → «Campfire». In his 2002 *A New Christianity for a New World*, p6, John Shelby Spong writes that "sexuality itself, including all sexual orientations, is morally neutral and as such can be lived out either positively or negatively."

107. *Status*

I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
 Yet in this captious and intenable sieve
 I still pour in the waters of my love
 And lack not to lose still: thus, Indian-like,
 Religious in mine error, I adore
 The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
 But knows of him no more.

IF this were ancient Greece, I'd capture you;
 your family'd be pleased and proud and cheered
 to see us weave together and outdo
 past flattered pairs, no matter how revered.
 And, Ganymede, in warp and weft, we'd come
 to know each other's threads, inch and fathom,
 stretched, compressed, minimum to maximum,
 complete, at ease, and always venturesome.
 But customs of abduction will not reach
 the law; our carnal secrets in that copse
 and closet and that hidden nudist beach
 still veils the sley that no mandamus stops.
 The shuttle in the loom twines blooms of love,
 my yeilding mantle soaked from passion's shove.

The EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*, 1, 3. *Intenable* probably means not capable of containing. The sonnet's first line refers to the ancient Greek practice of older men pretending to abduct young men from the home of their parents. Parents whose unappealing youths were not chosen were shamed. In Xenophon's *Symposium* (perhaps earlier than Plato's), Socrates praises Kallias who everybody knows is in love with the young Autolykos, present with his proud father. The Sacred Band of Thebes (371-338 BCE) consisted of 150 pairs of male lovers, each with an older and a younger man. **Ganymede** was an extraordinarily handsome youth whom Zeus, king of the gods, selected. Here is Martial, Book 5, v55: *Die mihi, quem portas, volucrum regina? "Tonantem." / Nulla manu quare fulmina gestat? "Amat." / Quo calet igne deus? "Pueri." Cur mitis aperto respicis ore Jovem? "De Ganymede loquor."* — Tell me, who do you carry, queen of birds? "The Thunderer." Why does he carry no thunderbolts? "He loves." The god burns with what flame? "A lad." Why are you, mouth agape, looking up at Jove? "I am speaking of Ganymede." → «Libation + Even Zeus». **Veil**: → «Just Try To Kiss Me». **Sley**, a weaving tool. **Mandamus**: a judicial remedy. **Mantle**: "And Elijah passed over to him (Elisha) and threw his mantle on him." — 1 Kings 19:19. A mantle's transfer may be used to mark the transmission of a role or status; among other uses, a mantle is a vestment in Christian Orthodoxy.

108. *Libation*

Let me confess that we two must be twain . . .

Heilig Gefühl, Unendliche Schöne! . . . Hinauf! Hinauf strebt's.

I AM not Zeus, and surely that you know;
but I guess you are godlike Ganymede,
whose balanced beauty rouses vertigo.
From your Olympic duties are you freed?

Or Zeus perhaps is chasing women now
and you have leisure to explore this zone
and offer me your garment as I bow
and gaze at all of you from what has grown.

No love, not gods', is greater than I make,
for I have learned desire's rightful place;
from yearning's oubliette, now weaned, I wake,
eschewing fancy's riddled runes for grace.

Inviting me to grasp libation's cup,
you glory in libido — and what's up.

The EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare, Sonnet 36.1. **E2**: from Goethe's poem, "Ganymed": "Holy feeling, Unending beauty! . . . Up! up it urges." Schubert and Hugo Wolf set the poem to music. **Zeus** was the king of the gods in Greek **Olympian** mythology and famous for his sexual exploits with women. But Zeus abducted **Ganymede**, an extraordinarily handsome Trojan, to be his cup-bearer; the story was a model for the Greek practice of erotic relationships between older and younger males. Apollo loved Hyacinth but Zepher, in his jealousy, caused Hyacinth to be killed. Poseidon raped Tantalus and then fell in love with the son of Tantalus, Pelops. Hercules loved Jason, Hylas, Adonis, and especially Iolaus. Achilles loved Patroclus. In Greek mythology (and society), sexual behavior was noted but the conception of "orientation" as current in our culture was unknown; desire was aroused by the person rather than the gender, although at some times and places older men, married, were expected to have younger male sexual companions. According to ancient sources, Solon's companion, Peisistratus, was 30 years his junior. This perspective was found in many cultures and in some places persists today. Examples of male friendship in literature are many; Spenser's *Fairie Queen*, Book 4, Canto 10, Stanza 26, for example, lists six pairs, and Shakespeare's contemporary, Christopher Marlowe, in his *Hero and Leander* (157-192), presents Neptune aroused, thinking Leander is Ganymede; and in his *Edward the Second* (1,4), he names five. Gods in many religions are ambisexual. The monotheistic faiths are quite unusual because no stories are clearly retained in which God is sexual (though some scholars argue that "Yahweh" is related to earlier terms connoting male sexuality and others say the Tetragrammaton would have been read Hu/Hi, He/She) → «Even Zeus + Status». **Gods**: "before the gods I will sing your praise." — Psalm 138:1 (traces of polytheism remain in Hebrew scripture).

109. *Thunderbolt*

Man is a sacrificial being because he finds his life in love,
and love is sacrificial: it puts the value, the very meaning
of life in the other and gives life to the other, and in this
giving, in this sacrifice, finds the meaning and joy in life.

Soul and body have no bounds

AT last I know the thunderbolt of Zeus.
It pierces body high; below it burns,
a purifying fire aimed to seduce
my simplist turning soul for which flesh yearns.
The flash ignites the altar sacrifice,
so I to you, the god above, ascend
in sacred smoke, a signal to entice
you to consume me all, and condescend.
I roll this mythic reel, play metaphor
as we lie magnitized in my mute bed,
and melded by your arm 'round me. You snore
as I erect these lines in my latched head.
Your sweat and scent all residues transcend.
If not a god or angel, then my friend.

The EPIGRAPH is from Alexander Schmemmann, 1963/1973 *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, p35. **E2:** W H Auden, "Lullaby." **Soul . . . flesh:** Auden continues "To lovers as they lie . . . In their ordinary swoon, . . . the vision . . . Of supernatural sympathy, Universal love and hope . . ." **Zeus,** in ancient Greek mythology, is king of the gods and master of thunder and lightning, similar to Jupiter in Roman religion and Indra in Vedic Hinduism. A 17th Century Flemish Tapestry, "Zeus Strikes Phaethon with a Thunderbolt," hangs at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. In these religions, **sacrifice** was of central importance; indeed, sacrifice is found in every religion; its Latin root meaning is to make sacred. What is sacred is an end in itself; hence sacrifice is a form of play, not a means to some other purpose. Georges Bataille (1897-1962) writes that "in sacrifice the offering is rescued of all utility" in his *Theory of Religion*, 1989/1992, tr Robert Hurley, p49. The intimate beholding of another is possible only by abandoning, emptying, sacrificing the construct of the normal, routine self and one's agenda, in order to be open to the other in the present. As Bataille says in his 1957/1986 *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, tr Mary Dalwood, p17, "The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participants as they are in their normal lives." → «Noticing a Birthday + Barren Golgotha + Campfire + Seville: Burning + Easter Vigil Baptism + Kairos». **Fire:** "The sacred is exactly comparable to the flame that destroys the wood by consuming it." —Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, p53. **Myth:** → «Campfire». **Play:** → «Thanks for Noticing».

110. *An Ancient Couple*

And . . . there are no universal rules to hide behind. Because fortune favors the brave; the prepared mind robs fate of half its terrors. And because each judgment, each decision we make, if made well, is part of the broader, essential human quest: the endless struggle against randomness.

THOSE two, like others blessed in ancient time,
found love surpassing dull and cheap exchange,
erastês Hadrian, emperor, prime,
to *erômenos* Antinous, strange,
athletic, beauty's face and talent's mind
unreined, then wasted swimming the stained Nile.
The stoned grief of Hadrian would find
the youth a god, and cities named in style.

Their story we still tell; not history
but heart's divinity can stretch and last.
Cleared mists of years reveal their mystery
and match, for Now comes scanning from the Past.
And you and me, and friends and gods we lose,
may in this quirky world help us to choose.

The EPIGRAPH is the concluding paragraph of *Chances Are: Adventures in Probability* by Michael Kaplan and Ellen Kaplan (2006). *Hadrian* (76-138) was one of the great Roman Emperors, ruling from 117 to 138. His love of Hellenism showed in his pederastic practice with the handsome Greek youth, *Antinous*. The older male was the *erastês*, and his young beloved was the *erômenos*, the Greeks terms for such erotic relationships → «Nineteen». (In the Introduction, xiv, to his 1989 translation of Plato's *Symposium*, Princeton scholar Alexander Nehamas wrote that it is "a remarkable fact that the *Symposium*, the first explicit discussion of love in Western literature and philosophy, begins as a discussion of homosexual love.") After the death of Antinous, Hadrian made him a god and constructed many temples to him. Statues and busts of both are common, including in a gallery of ancient art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. *Statued*: "A white Greek god, / Confident, with curled / Hair above the groin / And his eyes upon the world." —Louis MacNeice, "Stylite," *Poetry*, May, 1940, p68. *Match*: "Only he who himself turns to the other human being and opens himself to him receives the world in him. Only the being whose otherness, accepted by my being, lives and faces me in the whole compression of existence, brings the radiance of eternity to me. Only when two say to one another with all that they are, "It is Thou", is the indwelling of the Present Being between them." —Martin Buber, 1947/1965 *Between Man and Man*, p30. *Choose*: → «Relaxed + Sacred Play». C S Lewis refuses to believe that the Shakespearean sonnets he praises are in the παιδικα, *paidika* tradition.

111. *Nafas Rahmani*

“Lady, the king will plow it for you,
 Dumuzi, the king will plow it for you.”
 “Plow my vulva, my sweetheart.”
 After he on the bed, in the holy loins
 has made the holy Inanna rejoice

WOMAN of my dervish dreams, we lie now
 in bed, our tubbing ended for the night,
 fresh, stretched like juiced creole as we allow
 such love as rises from wet candlelight,
 a coruscating spandral in time’s plight.

Your bosom and your waist, your thighs, all hair,
 your Nizam visage — all bring me *fana*:
 I am gone, lost in the whirl, beyond bare,
 though you bring me back, revival, *baqa*.

I know the morning means you’ll leave again
 and so I sigh like God, sired by God’s sigh,
 with yearning hidden to be known, a yen
 so deep departure seems like I will die.

Some things unsaid still fill the quiet touch;
 your visit in my wish this night is such.

The EPIGRAPH is from Sumerian texts of the goddess Inanna, associated with the astral Venus. According to an early Muslim tradition (hadith) God spoke to Muhammad (pbuh): “I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known. Hence I created the world so that I might be known.” Some Muslims, the Ismailis, believed that the Arabic root term for God, Allah, was “to sigh for.” Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), sometimes considered “The Greatest Sheikh” by Sufis, wrote that God’s sigh, *nafas rahmani*, was the creative power which brought all creation into being, with each person a unique manifestation of God. The theme of longing is also found in Rumi → «The Sun», who founded the Mawlawiyyah, the “whirling dervishes.” The spinning dances were meditations and led to an intimation of the annihilated self, *fana*, which enables the realization of God. Junayd (830-911) insisted that *fana* must be followed by *baqa*, revival of the self enhanced and fulfilled by the experience of God. *Dervish* originally meant poor, beggar, or mendicant, hence a Sufi, a Muslim mystic. *Spandral* is an architectural term; in biology and psychology, a presumably useless side-effect produced over time by evolution. *Nizam* was the woman Arabi met on the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. His longing for her as a manifestation of God, and her role in his writing, can be compared to Dante’s Beatrice, although Arabi’s poems about her have been considered far more erotic than Dante’s Christian work. This is a 15-line sonnet.

112. *The Hajj*

Faith is not the clinging to a shrine
but an endless pilgrimage of the heart.

The great field holds the wind, and sways.

WOMAN of my dervish dreams: like Hallaj
who blasphemed Haqq and suffered death for God,
or Ibn Arabi who traced the Hajj,
I come to you. My ready spirit-rod
bursts feasts embodied forth in your embrace,
touch uninhibited, black whirling hair
though never, when I move it, losing place,
now dancing in the sea spray tears we wear.

This love's a field where all may happen, yard
of yearning's centered spinning, specimen
extending distance down breath's boulevard
expanding into action from a yen.

The playground pilgrimage is the whiff we seek:
the shrine's excuse is love's physique.

The EPIGRAPH is from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. **E2:** from "Ordinary Time" in Jay Parini's *New and Collected Poems: 1975-2015*. **Hallaj** (858-922) was the first great Sufi mystic, and the *whirling dervishes* → «Nafas Rahmani» grew out of the "God-intoxication" about which he wrote and which lived — and died, as he was martyred for his heresy of identifying himself with *al-Haqq*, the Truth, one of the classic Muslim names for God. He demanded of his life ultimate integrity, perhaps reclaiming his inherent perfect nature. He became the model of the mystic lover in Sufism. **God:** Sanskrit *sat सत्*, also means Truth, (perhaps "sooth" is related), Reality, and such in Hinduism and Sikhism. The best English description of God I know is Reality. **Ibn Arabi** (1165-1240) was a later Sufi genius who, like Hallaj, was consumed with divine love. Both of them went on the *Hajj*, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, and Arabi met a woman on such a sacred trip about whom he wrote in verse. His great vision was of a Unity of Being. Tillich called God the **Ground** of Being. **Field** is a term in physics, where what is important is the environment which governs, and in a sense creates, the object, the Higgs boson for example. "Fields are what reality is made of; particles are what we see." —Sean Carroll lecturing on "The Particle at the End of the Universe" at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, 2012. Ecology, social science, and psychology also employ like integrative ways of thinking. Similarly, the journey manifests the true destination as in Kabir: "Take a pitcher full of water and set it down on the water: Now it has water inside and water outside. We mustn't give it a name, lest silly people start talking again about the body and the soul." —Stephen Mitchell, ed 1989 *The Enlightened Heart*, p76. A parallel here is the **field** of love appearing in the body. "**Blasphemy** even may be wisdom in the Creator's sight" —Rumi/Star, p191 → «The Sun». **Play**[ground] → «Thanks for Noticing».

113. *Sacred Play*

You will take him in your arms, embrace and caress him
 the way a man caresses his wife.
 He will be your double, your second self,
 a man who is loyal, who will stand at your side
 through the greatest dangers. Soon you will meet him,
 the companion of your heart. . . .

TWO heterosexuals in my bed
 make love, that's you and me, though I am gay
 or bi, some think, but, certain, I have said
No boxes can contain love's sacred play.
 Our souls are centered in our flesh: gender
 shows, like strength and tenderness, age and race;
 but friendship's pleasure means surrender
 past categories when free breaths embrace.
 Your righteous cock arises, and your balls
 are swinging, kneeling to my pious eyes.
 I grasp and lick, caress, respect. My falls
 into your flesh you hallow and baptize.
 The tender contour of your howdy frees
 while wrapping us as sacred friends who please.

The EPIGRAPH is from Tablet I of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the English version by Stephan Mitchell. Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh, here interprets her son's dream. The story is recorded on clay tablets 4,000 years old, before Homer's account of Achilles and Patroclus and the Bible's story of David and Jonathan, and, among so many others, Orestes and Pylades in Euripides (and Lucian, Shakespeare, Racine, Handel, Goethe, and Gluck — *Unis dès la plus tendre enfance nous n'avions qu'un même désir* — United from the earliest childhood we had only one desire" — *Iphigénie en Tauride*). *Gilgamesh* is sometimes called the world's first novel, retold by subsequent civilizations. **Baptism** is a Christian sacrament of initiation. **Boxes**: the words of Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) can be used by those who argue, on the basis of world-wide practices in most cultures throughout history until the invention of "homosexuality" in 1869 and the development of gay subcultures, that one is "naturally aroused for copulation when we judge any body to be beautiful" for the "drive of the soul being without cognition, [it] makes no distinction between the sexes" The dispute is between those who focus on "identity" labels such as an inborn "orientation" rather than what most cultures throughout history have been concerned with (or ignored): behavior. →«Relaxed». **Play**: →«Thanks for Noticing». **Wrapping**: "For his coming consists, outside all time, in an Eternal Now . . . there is nothing else here but eternal rest, wrapped in the enjoyment of the immersion of love." —Jan van Ruysbroeck (1294?-1381), *De Ornatu Spiritu- alium Nuptiarum*, 3:4.

114. *Our First Time*

Of His signs is that He created mates for you of your own
kind that you may find peace of mind through them,
and He has put love and tenderness between you.

You are the fairest of men

WE kissed and lie surprised this happened; arms,
all, still except for tune-tied hearts. Pray, yield
to truth, and change changed love to love. No charms;
just music of each other, rich, revealed.

In pranayama with you, I don't waste
what lingers of your cum around my tongue,
amazed that something so repulsive graced
me like communion with Christ's body, hung.
What's changed is all; and all remains the same;
which scribed paradigm should I pitch for you?
If I leave one unsung, I'll sound too tame,
the other makes a lay from just a clue.

All measures free, these blasphemies transcend;
for we cross Word in Flesh, my risen Friend.

The EPIGRAPH is from the Qur'an, 30:21 (*Al Rum*, The Romans). **E2**: from Psalm 45, "My heart is stirring with a noble song; let me recite what I have fashioned for the king; my tongue shall be the pen of a skilled writer. You are the fairest of men; grace flows from your lips"
Grace is a theological term for a spiritual gift, an unmerited benefit, an especially important concept in some understandings of redemption. The god-man **Christ**, the central figure in Christianity, the eternal **Word**, was made flesh (ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, John 1:14) and was **hung** on the **cross** of Calvary, also denoted as the tree of Golgotha, for the salvation of the world. **Word in Flesh**: "Heterosexism undermines Christian life by supporting a dualism that is at odds with its incarnational faith." —Patricia Beattie Jung and Ralph F Smith, 1992 *Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge*, p140. The Church proclaims that Christ is **risen** from death. **Pranayama** is a spiritual breathing practice. **Communion** in liturgical churches is the feeding of the faithful upon the body and blood of Christ. Some readers may find the sonnet with puns such as **hung** full of **blasphemies**, irreverence, insults, disrespect, or even contempt for holy things or persons. **Scribed** sometimes means sacred writing. **Pitch** can mean promote or set in a specific musical key. A **lay** is a lyric for singing; sometimes it means sexual congress. **Measure** means many things — a unit of poetry and music, an instrument, an extent, a comparison, and an enactment or a procedure with an intent toward a specific result. **Cross** as a verb can mean going beyond a boundary; the cross is also a central symbol for the crucifixion and reurrection of Jesus and for Christianity itself.

115. *Aftershock: Ryoanji*

And his kissing is as full of sanctity as holy bread.

IF I weren't in a lock of keyless shock,
 you'd find my tears a paradise or bliss;
 You've stripped me and dissolved my body's block
 to *sunya*, dressing me with *qi*'s veiled kiss.
 You opened who you are and let me see;
 and in my jaws I took your trust and sucked!
 Ensorcelled I, you thrust yourself in me!
 Then one, we touched the firmament, and fucked.
 That first nirvana lasted twice an hour —
 a season's spin I surged though soft again;
 two stately terms usurped, and still your power
 decorticates me like the laugh of Zen.
 Now I have loved you, ga-ga, year by year,
 fulfillment's panic spanning my career.

The Ryoanji Zen rock garden is in Kyoto. The EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare, As You Like It, 3, 4. **Bliss**: "Sachchidananda. This becoming of the infinite Bliss-Existence-Consciousness in mind and life and body . . . is the transfiguration intended and the utility of individual existence." —Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), *The Life Divine*, 1949, p43. *Ist nicht die heimliche List dieser verschwiegenen Erde, wenn sie die Liebenden drängt, daß sich in ihrem Gefühl jedes und jedes entzückt?* Is not the hidden purpose of this cunning earth to urge lovers so both are enraptured? —Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 9:36-38. **Body**: "Body I am entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body." —Nietzsche, "On the Despisers of the Body" in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883, tr Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, 1954, p146. **Sunya** is Sanskrit for Void, Zero, a kind of transparency; Buddhism points to the potential in which all things continually arise, Emptiness as the source of all; our thoughts clothe (**dress**) the void with illusions we call reality. We suffer when confuse the relative for the absolute; the Buddhist chief example is clinging to the notion of soul or selfhood instead of noticing that we are products of an infinity of factors and influences. **Veiled** → «Just Try To Kiss Me». **Qi** (chi) is a Chinese term for energy flow or vital force. **Nirvana** is a condition of sublimity, sometimes described as a disappearance of awareness of the distinction between self and other, or subject or object. The Sanskrit word's root means "blown out"; in Buddhism, the extinguishing of the fires of desire, aversion, and delusion (also labeled the three poisons). Nirvana is sometimes misunderstood in comparisons with monotheistic views of **Paradise**. **Zen** is a form of Buddhism that emphasizes the realization of nirvana in this lifetime (rather than in a future reincarnation), when we are fully present in our ordinary experiences. Such realizations may arise from what seem like extraordinary experiences or from ordinary experiences fully beheld. Trappist monk and interfaith proponent Thomas Merton (1915-1968) wrote that Zen "pushes contradictions to their ultimate limit where one has to choose between madness and innocence." R H Blyth (1898-1964) said, "Zen is the unsymbolization of the world." **Fucked**: → «Holy Words».

116. *A Temple Ritual*

In actual fact, the place is never “chosen” by man;
it is merely discovered by him; in other words,
the sacred place in some way or another reveals itself

MARK while you disrobe, then mime. Both bare,
with no pretense, hands on each other’s chests,
we breathe, conspire holy time, as in prayer —
our bodies synced to scan and share stripped quests.
The propylaeum of your mouth I kiss,
and in each other’s sanctum place our tongues,
and mark or bless with touch each orifice,
and hold omphalos odors in our lungs.
The central pillar in the adytum
we raise, the font of fleshy fanes embrace:
“Your joys: my joys; your tears: my tears.” We hum
this *ubuntu* text as fingers our frames trace,
thus drenched, for you and I are darshan friends
in this Pure Land eternal, past all ends.

Temple: Psalm 27:4. The EPIGRAPH is from Mircea Eliade, 1958 *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, section 141, p369. “In love’s hallowed temple, this soft bed.” —John Donne, “Elegy XIX. To His Mistress Going to Bed,” 18. A *propylaeum* is the entrance to a temple; *sanctum*, a holy place, *omphalos*, the center of a temple, also navel-shaped stones in ancient Greek cults, such as at the Apollo Temple at Delphi where the shrine marked the center of the world; *adytum*, the most sacred place of a temple, where the public is forbidden to enter; *fane*, temple. **Timed:** Eliade notes the etymological kinship between *templum* and *tempus* in his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p75. **Central pillar:** “*le vit, mon idole*” — the cock, my god —Paul Verlaine, 1891, “Même Quand Tu Ne Banes Pas.” **Pure Land** is a term for the “Western Paradise” over which Amida Buddha presides, where nothing unpleasant happens. A 14th Century Japanese “Mandala of the Western Paradise of Amida Buddha” hanging scroll is in the collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. A Zen interpretation of the Pure Land is that the present is only Pure Land; if it seems otherwise, our perceptions are not clean. In his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p135, Eliade writes, “All ritual nudity implies an atemporal model, a paradisaic image.” When one is preoccupied with the *ends*, one cannot be present, which is pure. Sukhavati, “the happy land,” was created by Amitabha Buddha as a perfect environment in which a person can enter enlightenment. A *font* in a church holds holy water which is a multi-valent symbol used in baptism, ablutions, and other rituals. This sonnet is much less hesitant than Shakespeare, Sonnet 23 with the line, “the perfect ceremony of love’s rite.” **Kiss:** → «The Kiss» for Bernard of Clairvaux’s kisses of foot, hand, and mouth. **Ubuntu:** In some African languages this term can mean something like ‘I am because we (all) are.’ **Darshan:** auspicious sight, a reverential beholding and being beheld at once, often applied to a Hindu god or holy person.

117. *Kratophany*

I have said that the soul is not more than the body.
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul.

And for our sweet encounter, tear the robe!

DISROBE! And let me tour your perfect flesh.
Let me admire your soul's embodiments,
in motion, in repose, familiar, fresh,
and every visage, soundings, and all scents.
Between your legs there hangs a master key
like mine you cannot lose, whose boundaries
do swell and ply the realm of intimacy,
with heart unlocked in love's matched liturgies.
So penetrate me, skin to soul; and I
will clasp the same for you. We pair and merge
and part in this, God's play, and magnify
the galaxies arrayed in every surge.
The latch-chain of the stars is in our power;
all things made mint in love's eternal hour.

A *kratophany* is a manifestation of (divine) power. The EPIGRAPH is from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," 48, in *Leaves of Grass*. **E2**: from Roy Campbell's 1951 translation of the first stanza of "Song of the Soul in Intimate Communication and Union with the Love of God" by John of the Cross (1542-1591). A Sanskrit term used for **God's play** is *lila*. Hinduism offers many examples; here are five. (1) The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.iv.4 describes the creation of the cosmos from one Self (Viraj) who created a mate; they coupled, and as she hid as a cow, he became a bull, then she a mare, and so forth until the world was populated, down to the ant, and that Self was hidden in all that was created. We are thus playing hide-and-seek with ourselves, or rather with the Self. Compare this with George Herbert Mead's distinction between play and game in the development of the social self; see his 1934 *Mind, Self, and Society*, edited by Charles W Morris. (2) The god Krishna, especially as a child, is a prankster. (3) The explicit accounts of Krishna and Radha love-making, *lila*, fuel the flesh to reach the divine. (4) Even in the Gita, freedom from extrinsic reward (the essence of play) dominates Krishna's battlefield advice to Arjuna. (5) Shiva → «Ahimsa» dances creation and destruction, a thing of sublime beauty and terror, to no purpose. For us, "play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold." —Joseph Chilton Pearce, 1977/1992 *Magical Child: Rediscovering Nature's Plan for Our Children*, p160. **Key**: See "key" in the intimate and sensual Shakespeare, Sonnet 52. **Play**: → «Thanks for Noticing». **Eternal hour**: In his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p89, Eliade suggests that sexual unions "take place in duration, profane time" unless they are ritual unions "in an atemporal instant, in an eternal present," revealed by the gods *in illo tempore*.

118. *Collect*

The sexual origin of the lingam is . . . obvious Sex was always regarded as something holy The lingam was therefore a natural symbol of the sacred "source of life."

○ LORD of *ashe* powers who rises full
 and firm in godly cocks, in love aroused,
 who blesses flesh on flesh and each fresh pull,
 and push, whatever is caressed, caroused;
 who put me in this snatch and ceding place,
 my body, craving incarnation's chrism
 leaching from my loved one's pores, like grace
 and glory, answering all atheism;
 O Hear my horny prayer, if it's your way
 and his: tonight to deepen, even core
 our love: and linger, mingle hearts and play
 the Spirit's visitation, and adore.
 In Christ's blessed name, and Shiva's, and again,
 Chuang-Tzu's, and all who practice love: Amen.

The EPIGRAPH is from Benedictine monk Bede Griffiths' *Christ in India*, 1967, 1984, p20. A **collect** is a form of Christian prayer, often in five parts: (1) the identity of the God invoked, (2) characteristics or qualities of the god appropriate to the petition, (3) the petition, (4) the name (s) used to claim the petition, and the closing Amen which can mean "So be it." For the Yoruba, **ashe** is a spiritual power given by the high god Olodumare. To **snatch** has multiple meanings, including to seize suddenly, to steal, and the vulva. **Christ** is the God-Man Jesus in the Christian narrative; **Shiva** → «Ahimsa» is a Hindu god. In *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p169, Joseph Campbell relates this story: "A certain Hindu ascetic who lay down to rest beside the holy Ganges placed his feet upon a Shiva-symbol [lingam]. . . . A passing priest observed the man reposing thus and rebuked him. 'How can you dare to profane this symbol of God by resting your feet on it?' demanded the priest. The ascetic replied, 'Good sir, I am sorry; but will you kindly take my feet and place them where there is no such sacred lingam?' The priest seized the ankles of the ascetic and lifted them to the right, but when he set them down a phallus sprang from the ground and they rested as before. He moved them again; another phallus received them. 'Ah, I see!' said the priest, humbled; and he made obeisance to the reposing saint and went his way." Konseishin (with an annual festival displaying his form in Japan), Hephaestus, Eshu, Legba, and Dionysus are other dieties associated with the phallus. **Chuang-Tzu** (399-295 BCE) succeeded Lao-Tzu (571-531 BCE), the legendary founder of Taoism. Contrast this with the apocraphal Tobit 8. **Lord** (God the Father), **Christ** (God *incarnate*), and the Holy **Spirit** comprise the Christian Trinity; Brahma, **Shiva**, and Vishnu, all of whom have avatars (kinds of *incarnation*) comprise a Hindu Trimurti; the Buddhist Trikāya, three-**body**, consists of Dharmakāya (often associated with Vairocana), Sambhogakāya (with Amitabha), and Nirmānakāya (with Gautama, the historical Buddha).

119. *Profane Words*

When *I* use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean.

Sex contains all bodies, souls . . .

I believe especially in being warm-hearted in love,
in fucking with a warm heart.

WHY must I warrant words like “love” and “fuck”
when singing sacred truth about our tie
to sick society both split and stuck,
and obvious exegesis justify?
Profane are words like “war,” and such vile acts
as violence on profit’s tube and screen,
or holy words in anger spoken, facts
rejected, not accepted, ’Sblood demean.
If I rant “fuck” and feel no love, I rip
the grandeur of life’s way from God. Who cares?
But if the word’s enfused with health, to strip
pretensions we’re apart, objection blares.
“Let’s fuck” is like a call to prayer and praise;
beholding, prostrate, we adore this phrase.

The first EPIGRAPH is from (Charles Dodgson) Lewis Carroll’s 1871 *Through the Looking Glass*, ch 6 Humpty Dumpty, when Humpty Dumpty tells Alice that the question is whether the user or the word will be the master. E2: from Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1856 edition. E3: from D H Lawrence, 1928 *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, ch 14: “Yes, I do believe in something, I believe in being warmhearted. I believe especially in being warm-hearted in love, in fucking with a warm heart. I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and the women take it warm-heartedly, everything would come all right. It’s all this cold-hearted fucking that is death and idiocy.” **’Sblood** is an Elizabethan form of swearing, a contraction for “by His blood.” **Fuck**: The word has been a part of English at least since the 1400s. In its various forms, it can be one of the most offensive curses, an expression of surprise, merely an intensifier, or a word of intense endearment. A theologian could argue that forgetfulness of God’s grace turns sacred things into offensive expressions; **’Sblood** is an example. That “which sanctifies is always potentially polluting, the divine infusion may become lethal if the dose is not properly regulated by the rules of art and ritual.” —Dudley Young, 1991, *The Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War*, p250. The word was the basis for custom officials’ seizure of 520 copies of Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl,” now one of the most famous American poems of the 20th Century, and the trial in 1957 for obscenity because of lines like “who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy”
→ «Holy Words».

120. *Holy Words*

Omnia quod scribis castis epigrammata verbis
 inque tuis nulla est mentula carminibus,
 admiror, laudo; nihil est te sanctius uno:
 at mea luxuria pagina nulla vacat.

[By] virtue of the Creation and, still more, of the Incarnation,
nothing here below is *profane* for those who know how to see.

MY modern muse, you are the fairest friend
 who first scans smiles and lines and tells me they
 are fine; then comments, and may recommend —
 though subtly — “Here’s a slightly different way
 to face your life and cast the matter right”;
 collecting lines and rimes against my losing,
 and ask if I should publish *these* ones, tight
 with express sex, revealing my rife choosing.
 My call’s to succor decency, so I
 must keep the holy law to consecrate:
 my lusts and every line of love I try,
 each sacred chance, some fleshy, gay and straight.
 From shame and shade these sonnets seek to pluck
 all ancient holy lines like this: “Let’s fuck.”

The EPIGRAPH is from the *Epigrams* (III.69) of Martial (40-103?) — “Because all the epigrams you write use chaste words — no cock is to found in your poems, I admire and laud you: nothing at all is more virtuous than you. But no page of mine avoids dissipation.” E2: from *The Divine Milieu* (1960), p66, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). **Call:** ordination. **Consecrate:** Former Dominican priest, now Episcopalian, Matthew Fox (1940-) quotes Benedictine monk Bede Griffiths (1906-1993), “Sexuality is too powerful a force to deny or put aside on the one hand; but it is also too powerful a force to let run our lives on the other. So what shall we do? *We must consecrate it.*” Fox continues, “An act of consecration is not an act of *making sacred* but an act of *reminding* us of the sacredness of sexuality” (2000 *One River, Many Wells*, p310). **Fuck:** → «Profane Words». An example of repeated profane use of the word is Philip Larkin’s popular 1971/1974 “This Be the Verse,” now found in his 2001 *Collected Poems*, p180: “They fuck you up, your mum and dad. . . .” **Line:** This sonnet is, in part, tribute to Helen Vendler who, in her 1997 *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, reveals the “Couplet Tie”; in this sonnet, one word appears in each quatrain and the couplet. More generally (p217) she writes of a sonnet sequence as an “energetic force-field, in which not only individual sonnets, but individual quatrains and couplets, and even individual lines, float free, collide, combine with, or repel each other.”

121. *Leaking Out*

Beat, beat, beat – the fundamental pulse of all life,
 whether it be our blood or our breath, a pile driver,
 a galloping horse, or a leaky faucet.

I'M loud and raucous, like an upright cock.
 I can't conceal my thirst for you. I blab
 it out, declaim, discourse and squak, and rock
 with major tremors: How no moment's drab
 with you, but draped with shaking rhapsody,
 a song from center bracing all the world,
 the mystery of our reality.

Who can police my speeding flag unfurled?
 You're quiet like a road where no one goes
 save bees and beetles, flowers, wind, and quail,
 a luscious private drive which no one knows,
 as curbed and silent as a book in Braille.

Yet now betimes your plumb love breaks and speaks.
 I hear it clearly, though it barely leaks.

The EPIGRAPH begins the chapter on rhythm in Leonard Bernstein, 1966 *The Infinite Variety of Music*. A *rhapsody* is (a part of) an epic poem fit for recitation at one hearing, or a work of integrated but episodic music with contrasting moods suggesting improvisation; less technically, a rhapsody is an intensely powerful expression of feeling. **Thirst:** *Dice la tarde:* 'Tengo sed de sombra!' / *Dice la luna:* 'Yo, sed de luceros.' / *La fuente cristalina pide labios / y suspiros el viento.* — Says the afternoon: 'I thirst for shadow!' Says the moon: 'I thirst for stars.' The crystal fountain asks for lips and the wind sighs. —Federico García Lorca, "Cantos nuevos" in *Libro de poemas*. **Blab . . . speaks:** William Irwin Thompson argues that the Hopi cherish "the twin mysteries of sexuality and speech. Since the First People cannot speak, . . . they cannot reproduce. Both the seed and the word are forms of information; the seed is the word in water and the word is seed in the air." —*The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, p26. **World:** "The view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the Scientific Revolution was that of an enchanted world. Rocks, trees, rivers, and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive, and human beings felt at home in this environment. The cosmos, in short, was a place of belonging. A member of this cosmos was not an alienated observer of it but a direct participant in its drama. His personal destiny was bound up with its destiny, and this relationship gave meaning to his life. This type of consciousness . . . involves merger, or identification, with one's surroundings, and bespeaks a psychic wholeness that has long since passed from the scene." —Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*, p2. **Mystery:** *Uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum* — There cannot be only one path toward such a great Mystery. —Quintus Aurelius Symmachus (345?–402). **Plumb:** "O Love how you plumb / and play down the spine of me" —Hoa Nguyen's "After Sonnet 117" in *Violet Energy Ingots*, p21.

122. *Sacred Site 1: Cathedral Flame: Paris*

. . . sustanze e accidenti e lor costume,
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo
che ciò ch'í' dico è un semplice lume.

La forma universal di questo nodo
credo ch'í' vidi, perché più di largo,
dicendo questo, mi sento ch'í' godo.

Holy the cocks of the grandfathers of Kansas!

THESE enemas are all like cleaning house
for God. (I love Thee!) Now, ablution made,
cathedral washed: fill me with your feast, douse
my fire with your introit and flame: parade!
Through the gate designed for out, you enter,
transforming my corporeality
through spirit's tunnel to splendor's center,
proud in your own holy, blessed carnality.
There you romp, as David danced before the ark,
his genitals exposed and pleasing God;
scout, rouse, in this prostration's cardinal dark;
search, plant this passage with your holy rod.
I plead: explode; flaunt thy pomp in me, pluck
from heaven its procession in this fuck.

The EPIGRAPH is two stanzas from the middle of the last canto of Dante's *Commedia*: [What the universe holds, scattered in its maze,] "of substance and accident and effects, seemed fused into one simple flame. I think I thus saw the universal form that knits the world together, since in telling it, I feel a more abounding bliss." **E2**: from Allen Ginsberg's "Footnote to "How!" which **Holy**: begins: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!" **House**: 1 Corinthians 6:19. In some churches a **procession** is a parade of choir and clergy into a sanctuary as the liturgy begins. **Ablution** is a ritual cleansing. An **introit** may be sung as the celebrant of the Eucharist enters the sanctuary. **David's dancing** is told in 2 Samuel 6:14-16 and 20-22 and used as an example in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1935), Ch 5, by Romano Guardini, tr Ada Lane. **Prostration** is a position of adoration. A **cardinal** is a prince of the Roman Catholic Church; the word also means deep red and of prime importance. A **rod** is a symbol of ecclesiastical office, also a plant stem and a genealogical term. A **passage** is a portion of holy text, a temporal marker as in a rite of passage, and an architectural term. **Fuck**: → «Holy Words». This sonnet is paired with the next.

123. *Sacred Site 2: Chaitya Hall: Ellora*

Om mani-padme hum

ILLUSTRATION'S place I splurge and make in you,
 a space where every urge finds swift embrace
 within the winding gate you point me to
 as, ringed, we fumble in delight to lace
 our freedom in our fit, and then release,
 discover incarnation and its blessing,
 this new-found chaitya hall where I increase,
 my lingam strong in you, pushing, pressing,
 a furious relic, evolution's gift,
 in this traversed and surging stupa cave
 exalted, in the *yab-yum* lotus lift
 called *prajna paramita*, while I rave.

Even Borobudur you can surpass;
 And Sanchi has no gate to match your ass.

The EPIGRAPH is a famous Tibetan (chanted) mantra, with the vocables on either side given various meanings and the middle often translated "the jewel is in the lotus," sometimes understood as a sexual metaphor for Enlightenment. Lama Anagarika Govinda's entire 1960 book on the mantra, *The Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism*, is an example of the rich possibilities for interpreting these sacred syllables; p187: "If OM is the ascent towards universality, then HUM is the descent of universality into the depth of the human heart." **Lustration** is a ritual purification, as by water. **Fit** is a paronomasia. A **chaitya hall** is an Indian Buddhist sacred architectural form, originally wood, resembling a church nave with ribbed vaulting. Surviving examples include elaborate caves carved into rock cliffs at **Ellora**, India. At the far end is a **stupa**, a Buddhist memorial mound sometimes containing relics, itself derived from the chaitya. The stupa has evolved into an emblem of Enlightenment. The **lingam** is the sign of manhood, and especially the phallus of the fiery god Shiva → «Ahimsa». The **lotus** flower (**padma/padme**) is a multivalent symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism; its purity is untainted by the mire from which it grows, the difficulties we face in life, and thus often symbolizes Enlightenment. **Yab-yum** is the union of male and female forms which, according to a Tibetan source, means "that skillful action is impossible without compassion, that energy cannot be effective without intellect, and that bliss is impossible without emptiness." **Prajna paramita** means "perfection of wisdom" and is applied to a class of Buddhist scriptures. A tendency toward concentration influenced by the erotic spirituality, Buddhist Tantra reduced the expression of the meaning of these texts to mantras, sacred phrases for chanting. **Borobudur** is the site of an elaborate stupa with 22-miles of carvings as one ascends the terraces which in effect diagrams the spiritual universe, which justifies its comparison to a mandala as well. A famous stupa as an independent form appears in central India at **Sanchi**, where four huge stone gates are richly decorated. This sonnet is paired with the previous one. The three quatrains, one sentence, should be read as if in one breath.

124. *Destiny*

The young man looked at Jesus, loved him, and began
to beg to be with him. . . . He spent the night with him,
because Jesus taught him the mystery of God's domain.

. . . Let the primal fire be revealed in the body's games.

SUCK my cock, you young straight stud; suck it good;
and lick my balls to glisten in love's fire;
turn me to your purpose — O Brotherhood! —
and fuck me with a saint's precise desire.
Then I'll fuck you until you give me spill
again; I'll push you to the edge of bliss
and then beyond, your fervent butt will fill
us with satori, ringent with a kiss.
Then you will know what men as men can do,
and you and I will know what only God
can know about another's flesh, a clue
to soul's communion served from passion's prod.
My offer you accept. Now nude you stand.
You say this holiness is what Christ planned.

The EPIGRAPH is from *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, verses 8 and 12. Perhaps used in Alexandria in the early Second Century and found in 1958, it is included in *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, 1992. Studies like those reported in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 2009 Nov/Dec, Vol 35 No 6, suggest it is genuine. See also Mark 14:51-52 and 16:5. **E2**: from Martin Buber, 1947/1965 *Between Man and Man*, p28, tr Ronald Gregor Smith. **Fuck**: → «Holy Words». **Nude**: "The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion. . . . Exuberance is Beauty" —William Blake (1757-1827), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. "When you strip bare without being ashamed, . . . then you will see the Son of the Living One" —Gospel of Thomas, 37 (baptism?). **Satori** is a Japanese Buddhist term for Enlightenment, waking from the cultural trance preventing us from seeing reality as it is; "Satori is the perception of Reality itself . . ." —D T Suzuki, 1964 *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, p 93 → «Don't Ask + Even Zeus + Libation + Relaxed + Sacred Play + Status». In *Scivias*, 2.6.14, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) writes that the **soul**, "which is invisible, invisibly receives the sacrament which exists invisibly in that oblation, while the human body, which is visible, visibly receives the oblation that visibly embodies that sacrament." While **passion** can mean sexual desire, in Christianity it can mean the narrative of Christ's suffering. **Men as men**: "Why should they not alike in all parts touch?" —John Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis." **Holiness**: Many "churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular." —Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," paragraph 32.

125. *Banquet of Paradise*

Seek communion first from your lover's soul
before anything offered from a priest.

WITH zeal my port is open to be filled
(not in a pious shining Sunday shrine,
not even when the blood of God is spilled)
we're bunked; our bodies seized with the divine.

In darkness your delicious dick I taste
as you burst-blow all loneliness to flame,
consuming all desires that are not chaste.
(First, Luke's Annunciation; then God came.)

Now your engorged tsunami-powers release
numinous banquets on my hungered tongue,
and satisfactions (like the paten's peace,
theology uniting who is hung).

United, not like nut and bolt are wed, for we —
make love like breeze and blossom, earth and tree.

The EPIGRAPH is from German mystic Meister Eckhart (1260?-1327?). Lines 3 and 10 refer to the Eucharist. **Desires**: "It was as if desire were crushed grapes and love the elixir made from them with time and care." —Stephanie Cacioppo, *Wired for Love*, 2022, p90. Line 8 draws upon **Luke** 1:26-38, an account of the angel Gabriel telling Mary she will bear Jesus. The use of **satisfaction** in line 11 refers to one theory of redemption in Christian theology. **Chaste** can mean forgoing prohibited sexual activity, or more broadly, being pure in thought; partners in coitus can thus be chaste if they empty themselves to one another by being fully present with each other, without stray thoughts, in rapt meditation, as in certain tantric practices; see **concupiscence** → «Even Zeus». **Theology**: "We need to recapture a vision of the divine eros as intrinsic to God's energy, God's own passion for connection, and hence our own yearning for life-giving communion and our hunger for relationships of justice which make such fulfillment possible. . . . [The] experience of eros, is, indeed, the experience of God. . . . If the lover relationship is the most intimate of all human relationships, the most powerful and life-giving, might it not be a central metaphor speaking of some aspects of the God-world relationship?" —James B Nelson, 1992 *Body Theology*, p23-24. Line 12 refers to Christ, the union of the divine and human, **hung** on the cross; hung also refers to genital endowment, here the union of spirit and flesh, incarnation. **Wed**: "As a man embracing his beloved knows nothing without or within, so the Infinite embraced Supremely knows nothing without or within. Verily this is his form, in which all **desires** are fulfilled." —Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4,3,21. The **tree** in line 14 is multivalent; for example. see in Genesis 2:9 and Galations 3:13 a symbol of life and redemption as well as crucifixion. *Ombra mai fu di vegetabile, cara ed amabile, soave più*. No plant's shade was dearer, lovelier, or sweet. —from Handel's 1738 *Xerxes*. Nautical terms include **port**, **bunk**, and **seized** (bound together). Line 13 is an alexandrine variant, a line of 12 syllables, to match its vocal weight with the last line.

126. *Gemini*

When sexual union is for the sake of Heaven,
there is nothing as holy or pure.

I saw the Holy Spark, Holy of Holies, leaving the world,
enwrapped, lying on his right, his face smiling.

WE meet one night as friends in your broad bed
as unexpected you delay your guest's farewell.

“Please stay. At breakfast you'll be fed;
and resting meanwhile, this fierce forge we'll quell.”

How can I rest, your body like a coal
igniting a polite conflagration?

In the spreading flare I see your soul,
this bed removed from earth to starry station.

Castor, Pollux, yet unfix'd, exploring —
thus you ask, “What favor may I provide
to seal this night, our physiques restoring?”
My flush flesh routes: “Through orthodoxy ride.”

The mysteries of genitals proclaim
that driving flames is heresy, the same.

The two EPIGRAPHS are from the Jewish tradition. The first is from *Iggeret haKodesh* (*The Holy Epistle*), from later 13th Century Kabbalism, challenging those Greek philosophical influences (such as in Maimonides) which treated the material world, and particularly the body, as shameful. **E2**: from the *Zohar* (*Splendor*), a basic writing in Kabbala, a key source of Jewish mysticism, associated with its publisher, Moses de Leon, in the late 13th Century. According to some accounts, twins **Castor** and **Pollux** were fathered by Jupiter (Zeus) disguised as a swan mating with Leda. Castor was known for skill in taming and managing horses, and Hermes gave Pollux a Thessalian horse. Inseparable, they also became the patrons of sailors, and their names were used to identify the lambent flames that sometimes appear around ship masts in certain weather. Their mutual devotion led Jupiter to place them in the sky as the constellation now called **Gemini**. Rout and **route** are homonyms. **Genitals**: In his 2002 *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*, theologian Robert E Goss discusses Joseph Kramer's “heart-genital connection.” Formerly a Jesuit, Kramer founded the Body Electric School which teaches erotic massage can lead to “whole body orgasms” without ejaculation. “We are the eyes and ears, the genitals, too, and the hands and feet of Abraxas.” —“Rite of Ordering,” Congregation of Abraxas, 1979. While Gerald Heard's 1931 *Pain, Sex and Time* mentions the use of sexual practices as spiritual paths, he disparages them as inadequate to a maturing humanity, and pairs orgasm with pain, to be transcended; his personal struggles in that more oppressive time must have deprived him of the sense of sacred sexuality in many traditions.

127. *Morning Dream*

Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

Σῶμα δὲ κατηρίσω μοι.

YOU enter softly in my morning dream,
erection unconcealable. I blanch.
Embarrassed, you, whom most I do esteem,
explain, “It’s not for you.” As if to stanch
a further witness of your love you say,
“It means that all the world arouses me;
my *prana* energy is free to play;
the holy opens with the penis key.”

You’ve found my doctrine in your body now,
but not found me, or you would wake me, pull
my wet lips, silent, to your glistening prow
that we might prophesy and thus be full.

So then you notice that the key is mine
and claim the world becomes, or is, divine.

The EPIGRAPH concludes Shakespeare’s Sonnet 87. **E2:** Hebrews 10:5: But a body you have prepared for me. **Play:** “The life instinct, or sexual instinct, demands activity of a kind that . . . can only be called play.” —Norman O Brown, 1959, *Life Against Death*. “Playing means giving oneself temporary freedom from duty and necessity, voluntarily taking risks and being excited because one does not know the outcome; pretending is self-conscious delight in alternative possibilities . . .” —Theodore Zeldin, 1996, *An Intimate History of Humanity*, p82. Composer John Cage (1912-1992), once a theology student, put it succinctly: “The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all.” Perhaps deriving from N V Scarfe, 1962, and misattributed to Albert Einstein is a statement that rings true: “Play is the highest form of research.” Robert Bellah’s magisterial 2011 *Religion in Human Evolution* considers play essential for development of ritual, an early manifestation of the apprehension of the sacred → «Thanks for Noticing». **Embarrassed:** “[Sex] puts the self at stake in a way that even death-defying activities like mountain climbing do not.” —Peter Steinfels, *The New York Times*, 1998 August 22, in his “Beliefs” column, 4th paragraph. **Prana:** in Hinduism, and especially in yoga, life breath or (pervasive) vital force. **Body:** “The entire universe is your complete body.” —Ch’an-sha, ninth-century Chinese Zen monk, quoted in Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness*, 1993, p152. In Seyyed H Nasr, 2005, *The Essential Frithjof Schuon*, p297, this Bukhari hadith qudsi: My slave ceaseth not to draw night unto Me . . . until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing whereby he heareth and the sight whereby he seeth and the hand wherewith he smiteth and the foot whereon he walketh. **Prophecy:** “Prophecy is a warning about loss of sacred view, a loss of the reverence that affirms how all creation is related.” —Halifax, p114.

128. *Carnal Knowledge*

After father Enki had lifted it over the Euphrates, he stood up
proudly like a rampant bull, he lifts the penis, ejaculates

Let not my love be called idolatry

IKISSED and sucked and God came in my mouth,
creation's seed infused and flushed my soul —
the pole of God's earth being, north to south
exploding four dimensions, rock'n'roll.

Devotion brings my pump and power release,
this central sacrament of sexual form,
primordial slime that stretches toward world peace,
as incarnation or invasion's norm.

In dissertation You are pale, or hide.

In palsy sermon You are strained or faint.

In water, wind, in soil and fire You ride.

You show sometimes in liturgy and saint.

But the Epiphany Divine, my mate,
appears most near when we Ejaculate.

Carnal Knowledge: "I have always believed passionately . . . that sex was far more about truth than about power . . ." —Wendy Doniger, 2000 *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*, p10. Carnal knowledge is not knowing a fact; it is a relationship, knowing how to be with someone, not a matter of information. The first EPIGRAPH describes the sacred activity of the Sumerian god of semen and of life-giving waters. For a longer text, William Irwin Thompson, 1981 *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture*. **E2:** Shakespeare, Sonnet 105.1. **God:** Ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω. Let one who boasts boast in the Lord. —I Corinthians 1:31. The **four dimensions** are Einstein's unification of the three of space and one of time into space-time. "A **saint** is a theater where the qualities of God can be seen."—Rumi, p219 → «The Sun». **Water . . . fire:** the traditional four elements, earth, water, fire, and air → «Catching Fire, Throwing Power». **Epiphany:** "Sacred love-making brings people together in a way that enhances the singularity of each person and their ability to surrender individually *and to something beyond the relationship*. [Keen's italics] . . . A sexual meeting may become an epiphany . . ." —Sam Keen, 1994 *Hymns to an Unknown God*, p177. Among several meanings of epiphany is the manifestation of God. Some regard pleasure without ejaculation (as in karezza) to be a superior way to cosmic consciousness. The "true meaning of sanctification during sexual intercourse . . . derives precisely from feeling physical pleasure. This secret is wondrous, deep, and awesome." —Baruch of Kosov (?-1795), quoted in David Biale, 1992 *Eros and the Jews*, p125. **Sermon:** "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones" —Shakespeare, As You Like It, 2.1.

129. *Whatever Changes*

If a man has intercourse with . . . his equal,
that man will be foremost among his brothers and colleagues.

BEFORE I come, my head gets big, you note;
and I mark how, already hard, your link
so mighty, measured, moored within my throat,
you swell to burst beyond this grail's brisk brink.
The penis gnomons shows how we react
in daily ways and measure how we trust
in finding distance matched with close extract,
thus versed in what is love, and what is lust.
God's love is present; lust is planned or past,
for present love decides for outright time
to say *Whatever changes, this shall last*.
I swear fate's measured range in every rime.
We gave and got beholding from the start.
We'll always meet and pair and merge and part.

The EPIGRAPH is from Babylonian manual of prognostication, the *Šumma alu*. A common use of **gnomon** refers to the upright part of a sundial casting a shadow indicating the time; the term is also used in geometry and elsewhere; from the Greek it means one who knows or examines; *Gnostic* and *knowledge* have the same root. Each quatrain includes **measure**. **Love**: "Everyone who loves is a child of God . . . For God is love." —1 John 4:7-8. In his 1972 *Myths to Live By*, p156-157, Joseph Campbell writes, "the highest order of love, according to this Indian series . . . is passionate, illicit love. In marriage . . . one is still possessed of reason. . . marriage in the Orient is a family-made arrangement, having nothing to do with what in the West we now think of love. The seizure of passionate love can be, in such a context, only illicit . . ." While in the West passionate love in heterosexual marriage has become licit, the value of such love for same-sex couples is still contested. Schuon contrasts the West's Augustinian assessment of the sexual act as sin with other traditions that view its "intrinsic nature" as "a 'naturally supernatural' sacrament" where "sexual ecstasy coincides with spiritual ecstasy . . . of mystical union" in *The Essential Frithjof Schuon*, 2005, p408. **Present** is polysemous. **Lust**: "To whom young Stephen had these words. . . our lust is brief." —*Ulysses*, p389, in the 1961 Random House/Modern Library edition of the James Joyce classic. "And yonder before us lie / Deserts of vast eternity. / . . . And into ashes all my lust." —Andrew Marvell, 1681 "To His Coy Mistress." Contrast Shakespeare Sonnet 129. **Fate**: *Amor fati*, love of whatever happens, an idea in Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Nietzsche; perhaps also in the Ramadan dua Ya Mafzai: مِنْ نِي وَرَضُ لِي قَسَمْتُ بِمَا الْغَيْشِ . **Gave and got**: "Sex is as good a site [dimension of today's culture] to observe the slide away from generosity, through self-gratification, profit-maximizing, and selling and bartering, to nasty warring. . . . By having sex we can easily do almost anything other than truly give and receive — give and receive pleasure and give and receive each other as treasured lovers." —Miroslav Volf, 2005 *Free of Charge*, p15.

130. *Your Choice*

. . . Tamai (tasmat) na prapti tvad bodhisattvanam
 prajñāparamitā asritya (srutya) vihāratya citta varano
 citta varano na siddhitvad (nāstitvat) atrasto viparyasa
 ti kranto (tikranto)

Only through body can you clasp the divine . . .

THERE'S nothing mystical about my cock
 or butt *unless* prokaryotic suits
 in which parades began — the early stock
 which swam sea's processes of love's salutes —
 are *manitou*. Is my cock just meat
 or cosmos isomorphic, from one source,
 evolving, groping toward the sacred seat
 of god's all-knowing magic intercourse?
 Is my body blessed, a fane for DNA
 to dwell, with just four letters spell the spirit?
 Well, I surrender to pelagic play,
 conjoined with you to write and to revere it.
 Is this the gate to heaven or a butt?
 My love, become and make me priest and slut.

The Sanskrit EPIGRAPH, from the short Mahayana Buddhist scripture, The Heart Sutra, can be translated, "Because there is nothing to be attained, a Bodhisattva coursing in (or relying on) the *Prajñāparamitā* has no hang-ups (or thought-coverings, obstacles to perception, obscurities, blinders, compulsions, unconsciously patterned behavior)." The scripture is noted for its teaching that "form does not differ from emptiness," and that distinctions are ultimately meaningless. Its famous ending, *Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi-svaha*, I like to render, "Far out, way out, way far out, All right!" **E2**: from "Shaman Psalm" by James Broughton.

Prokaryotes are (mostly single-celled) organisms without a membrane-bound nucleus, perhaps evolving within waters. Some question whether eukaryotes (organisms with a true nucleus) evolved from prokaryotes. **Manitou**: an Algonquian term for a spiritual force pervading everything, similar to the Iroquois *orenda*. A **fane** is a temple. **DNA** (deoxyribonucleic acid) is a molecule encoding the genetic instructions for living things composed of the four nucleobases, guanine, adenine, thymine, and cytosine, which are commonly represented by the **four letters**, G, A, T, and C. **Pelagic**: relating to the open sea; also a strained pun on Pelagian, the doctrine denying the taint of original sin, affirming free will toward human perfectibility through grace. **Play**: → «Thanks for Noticing». **Cock / butt**: "And your dick stands up like a steeple, your goddam ass-hole stands open like a church door." —African American blues singer Lucille Bogan, aka Bessie Jackson (1897-1948), "Shave 'Em Dry," recorded 1935; see Nigel Williamson, 2007 *The Rough Guide to The Blues* under the Bogan listing.

131. *Islam: Harran*

“Where can you live safely then?” “In surrender.”

Fay çe que voudras.

S’ei piace, ei lice.

Dilige, et quod uis fac.

WITHIN your rules I come to see your man-
hood now unhooded in my mouth. These lines
are camel’s tent, our course’s caravan,
this unplanned visit to the pole of shrines.
They’re limitless and everywhere, but all
are centered, sacred, even improvised —
before surprise becomes a protocol —
in revelation of what’s been disguised.
Your pulse now floods the desert; angels sing;
the cowl pulled back, and you stand forth, and fresh,
and I am foraging and ravishing,
beholding, holding your most holy flesh.
Like you, my text this night fools gender,
for its one word is all: surrender.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Rumi, p79 → «The Sun»; E2: “Do what you will,” from Rabelais (1494?-1553), is in *Gargantua*, 1.57. E3: “What you wish, you may,” from Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) is line 26 of the Chorus in Act One of *Aminta* (1573). E4 “Love and do what you will,” is from Augustine (354-430), Homily 7 on the First Epistle of John, 8. **Harran** حران is an ancient Mesopotamian ruin near in modern Turkey near the Syrian border. The **pole** in the Islamic mystical tradition is leader who acts as an axis at the world’s center, without which the world would collapse → «Penetration». **Islam** is an Arabic term which literally means **surrender**. **Floods** is an obscure allusion to the the thought of the Franciscan Bonaventure (1221-1274) who describes God the Father as *fontalis plenitudo*, a fountain of fullness flooding the divine with creative energy, complemented by **desert**, an image of the Godhead frequently presented by the Dominican Meister Eckhart (1260?-1327?). A **cowl** is a hooded garment worn by some monks. **Holy flesh**: “We [in our culture] value pleasure so much that we do not want it to point beyond itself (as when pleasure of sex is an expression of a deeper reality of mutual love). When pleasure for pleasure’s sake is the goal — when it is not placed into a structure of meaning — melancholy emptiness is often the result. Our pleasure is truly human and therefore genuinely satisfying when it is an expression of something more important and enduring than the pleasure itself. . . . Desire is fulfilled when love of pleasure gives way to the pleasure of love.” —Miroslav Volf, 2011 *Allah: A Christian Response*, p215-216.

132. *Adhan: Konya*

The way you make love is the way
God will be with you.

Get me a room at Hotel Eternity
Where Time likes to stop now and then.

Mutual erotic love, erotic adoration,
is the most natural religion.

OUR bodies did not merge, though members twined
and penetrated every way they could
as parts were loosed and then again combined,
so safe, as winged Jibreel close by us stood.
Not just your toe or thigh or your blessed brow,
but every pore, each turn, rejoiced and joined
with me, *barakah*'s flesh become a vow,
the bouts of moans and praise, for we were poind.
And places touched a thousand times proclaimed
this sacred pledge, yet louder than before:
"This flesh is wild and holy, God-inflamed,
and swollen sacrament's enigmas pour."
All day, all night, that sleepless week we met
and answered well each other's minaret.

The *Adhan* is the Muslim call to prayer recited (as a chant) by a muezzin at designated times each day, traditionally from a balcony of a tower called a *minaret* attached or near a mosque → «Fallen Tower + Seville». *Konya*: → «You are Rumi». The first EPIGRAPH is from Rumi, p185 → «The Sun». E2: from Charles Simic, "Autumn Sky," 2002 October *Poetry Magazine*. E3: from Harvard psychologist Henry A Murray in Harlow Shapley, 1960 *Science Ponders Religion*. "We awaken in Christ's body . . . hand . . . foot . . . all over . . . every most hidden part of it . . . is in Him transformed and recognized as whole, as lovely and radiant in His light. We awaken as the Beloved in every last part of our body." —Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) in Stephen Mitchell, 1989 *The Enlightened Heart*, p38-39. **Members, toe, thigh, brow** . . . : see the "Gaudeamus igitur" line, *Vivat membrum quodlibet* where *membrum* is a pun (*membrum virile*) for, in context, students; in ecclesiology *membrum* refers to members of the Body of Christ (the Church). *Jibreel* is the Arabic form of the angel Gabriel, the angel who gave the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad (pbuh). *Barakah* is a divine blessed presence; the concept is found especially in Sufism. **God-inflamed**: "Faith is not a 'lullaby' that lulls us to sleep, but rather a living flame to keep us wakeful and active even at night," Pope Francis, Catholic News Agency, Aug 14, 2022. **Poind** is a legal term meaning to impound, to distraint, seizing (goods) to satisfy of a claim. Note **pore** and **pour**.

133. *Nirmanakaya*

To attend to the moment is to attend to eternity.

To “violate” you is your wish again?
 Or *validate!* until my empty urge
 reveals, unites us: buddhas, gods, and men!
 Break out of trance, imagine one round. Merge
karuna, transcendental skill. This thing
 can — patient — wait, or rush and unfold all
 to you and me, recalculate and fling
 past Euler’s matches, in all matter sprawl.
 I touch you when my body starts to burn,
 I hear you in the wind from those who rave,
 I see you in the eyes of those who yearn,
 I smell you in the scent of all flesh brave.
 This strange abuse you call me to molest
 convention vacates dress and makes time rest.

Nirmanakaya refers to the Buddha’s ephemeral physical body as he appeared before his disciples; other modes in Mahayana Buddhism, are Dharmakaya, the source reality, and Sambhogakaya, the enjoyment body manifesting in visions of adepts. Symphony #5 (1999) by Philip Glass is subtitled “Requiem, Bardo and Nirmanakaya.” The EPIGRAPH is from *Pirke Avot* 6:2 (2nd Century?), a tractate in the Talmud, a key text of Rabbinic Judaism. “Euler’s identity, $e^{i\pi}+1=0$, uses addition, multiplication, exponentiation (*recalculating*), and equality (*unites*) by employing the constants 0 (*empty*), 1 (one), *e* (*transcendental*), *i* (*imagine* — imaginary number) and π (*round*) each once. “Like a Shakespearean sonnet that captures the very essence of love, . . . Euler’s equation reaches down into the very depths of existence.” —Keith Devlin in Paul J Nehin’s 2006 *Dr. Euler’s Fabulous Formula*, p1. Violating expectations, Euler (1707-1783) was surprised to discover the identity named for him. *Violation* of social norms and expectations is sometimes required in some forms of tantra to achieve Enlightenment, to awake from the *trance* of ordinary consciousness preventing us from seeing reality as it is. “There’s something about sex where we want to transgress against our ideas of self.” —Dan Savage, *The New York Times*, 2023 Jan 10, Ezra Klein podcast transcription. *Karuna* is Sanskrit for compassion. *Matches* is a pun. A magnificent image of compassion at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, is a painted wood sculpture, “Guanyin of the Southern Sea,” (13th Century?). Prominent in Mahayana Buddhism, Guanyin (Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit) is the bodhisattva of compassion, seeking to save all sentient beings from suffering, perhaps an expression the universe drawing us toward Enlightenment. Guanyin’s calm awareness and readiness is the supreme expression of what I mean by *noticing*. Because a bodhisattva endlessly postpones entrance into nirvana to bring others to Enlightenment, a bodhisattva finds no *rest* except in the profound perfect peace of freedom from illusion (convention) and selfish desires. The *Empty* → «Seasoning» (*sunya* in Sanskrit) in Mahayana Buddhism is the Void, the source of all; our thoughts *dress* the Void with the illusions we mistakenly call reality. The *to* in line 13 is a zeugma.

134. *Καῖρός [Kairos]*

Awareness of a kairos is a matter of vision. . . .
It is not a matter of detached observation
but of involved experience.

The self is a charlatan; all memoir is fiction.

IN artificial time I sleep with you
three summer nights. We talk, we touch, we love
what's present, flesh perishing as we woo
the unexpected breath. Shrive and shove
me, as I shrive you, to where there is no
shoving, only notice, no control, my
"best friend for the night." Lambent selves we show
are lingered flashes, nimbus to the eye,
and then, as other images succeed,
become the sinews, witnessed with the bones;
thus, from oubliette, our reach is freed;
intention fades and flees in timeless zones.
Lust wants one's filling; empty is love's vow;
to open vanishing is knowing now.

The Greek, *kairos*, "opportunity," is a term used by theologians to mean the fullness of time or a propitious moment. *Now: kairos*, the eternal vividly present, Sartre's "perfect moments," Emile Dermenghem's "privileged instants," Eliade's "sacred time" when something "new, strong, and significant" is manifested —1963 *Myth and Reality*, p10. The EPIGRAPH is from Paul Tillich, 1963 *Systematic Theology*, vol 3, Part V, II, A.3, p371-2. **E2:** from Stephen Prothero on Buddhism's *anatma-vada*, *the selves that we show*, in his 2010 *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World*, p186. **Flesh perishing:** "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." —Romans 12:1. **Shrive:** hear or make a confession or impose penance or absolve the penitent. **Notice:** Attention "is the whole point. Attention to the experience of something given, something you haven't invented. Not the memory of a form of words addressed to somebody in your imagination." —Aldous Huxley, 1962 *Island*, p202. **Timeless zones:** "spots of time, That with distinct pre-eminence retain A renovating virtue, . . . our minds Are nourished and invisibly repaired" —William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, 1805, 12.208-. **Lust . . . empty is love's vow:** Tillich in his 1957 *Systematic Theology*, vol 2, p52, Part III, I, C.4, describes concupiscence, the theologian's word for lust, as "the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self" and, p54, says such "distorted libido" desires "one's own pleasure though the other being, but it does not want the other being." Thus lust can be considered the opposite of emptying oneself of one's own will. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be exploited, but emptied (ἐκένωσεν, ekenōsen) himself . . ." —Philippians 2:5-7.

135. *Stars and Skin*

In lectulo meo, per noctes, quaesivi quem anima mea.
Quaesivi illum, et non invent.

Δέδυκε μεν ἃ σελάννα / καὶ Πληΐαδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες πάρα δ' ἔρχετ' ὥρα, / ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω

THOSE years ago we fucked and I said then
how that sufficiency would last through time
like constellations in the sky, of men
and women, gods, and beasts in endless mime
of human slopes made fixed, to contemplate
such strange configurations of the flesh
as ruler, enemy, or severed mate
in ancient stars, their stories always fresh.

But now those years erased from your embrace,
the pageant of the cold night sky won't warm
my bed; the phantom figures in their chase
around the pole now play an empty norm.

Our love still shines, a daylight sun within,
but how I wish my nights were spread with skin.

The EPIGRAPH is from Vulgate version of the Song of Songs 3:1: On my bed at night I sought him whom I love. I called but found him not. "The Song of Songs enshrines this love in the heart of our scriptures: the love of the human beloved is our closest, most decisive analogy to the love of God. Both loves are difficult to express adequately. But somehow poets, from antiquity to today, have learned how to write of this skittish, well-camouflaged best we call 'eros.' You may not think that love poetry is important to Christian faith, but if the poetry of human love ever ceased to exist, we would lose the best means we have to speak of our drawing near to God." — L. William Countryman, *Love Human and Divine*, 2005, p55. **E2**: Sappho [Voigt 168 B]: The moon and the Pleiades have set, now midnight, time passes, and I lie in my bed alone. **Fuck**: → «Holy Words». **Fixed**: as in the "fixed stars." **Pole**: the pole star or North Star, Polaris, the axis around which, in myth, the cosmos revolves (in astronomy, the proper term is *rotates*). **But now**: "masturbation is . . . the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. 'Both the Magisterium of the Church, in . . . a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action.' 'The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose.' For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of 'the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved.'" —1994 Catholic Church Catechism, paragraph 2352.

136. *The Purpose of Sex*

Quia igitur in te coincidit amabile cum amante et amari cum amare,
tunc nexus coincidentiae est nexus essentialis;
nihil enim in te est, quod nonsit ipsa essentia tua.

FROM yearning God conceived and teemed the world
to know and to be known in fullness; so
in his own image he made us, and curled
his cosmic longing in our loins, and lo!
Where passion is, God finds his silvered glass,
presenting what is lost in our found eyes,
uncovered in raw wonder, lad or lass,
re-formed in seeking him in strange disguise.
As from us he wants all of nothing, all,
but to behold us clear as we see him,
so I love you in every rise and fall,
in mounting cadence swelling Shlomo's hymn.
Blow thrust gaze mask ride shimmer shade stop flow:
In inter-course His love we come to know.

Purpose: →«Penetration», see *fuck*. Famous for his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites and *De Docta Ignorantia (Of Learned Ignorance)* and astronomy, Nicolaus Cusanus (Cusa) (1401-1464) wrote the mystic *De visione Dei (The Vision of God)*. The EPIGRAPH is from ch17, in which he presents a Trinitarian view of love: these three "components, . . . the lover, the beloved, and the bond (between them), are your own absolute and most simple essence." Similar triadic conceptions of love can be found in Christian discussions at least as far back as Augustine. **Yearning:** "I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known; hence I created the world so that I might be known," a Muslim hadith qudsi. →«Wound Wick». **Teem/team. Image:** "We say God and the imagination are one" —1954 *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," p524. **Lost in our found eyes:** "Love alone can unite living beings so as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves. . . . At what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say they are lost in each other?" —1959/1961/1965 *The Phenomenon of Man*, p265, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), tr. Bernard Wall from *Le Phénomène Humain* (1955). **Eyes** is, of course, a pun. **Shlomo** is Solomon in Hebrew; The Song of Solomon (also called The Song of Songs, *Canticum Canticorum* in the Vulgate) is a short erotic poem in Jewish and Christian scripture. **Inter-course:** "The Hasidim . . . deliberately give themselves erections during prayer . . . to unite with the Shekhinah [by] moving back and forth as in the act of intercourse." David of Makov (18th Century), quoted in David Biale's 1992 *Eros and the Jews*, p121. **Shimmer:** *O sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert!* O see how clearly the universe shimmers! —from Richard Dehmel's 1896 poem, "Verklärte Nacht," used by Arnold Schoenberg in his 1899 string sextet (later for orchestra). The poem was also set by Oskar Fried for two voices and orchestra.

137. *The Sovereign's Bed*

And for you, my love, blessings
for the times we lay so naked in a bed
without the sense of turbulence or tide.

Day and night there is movement of foam on the Sea.
You see the foam but not the Sea!

We reasonably worship indeed
what we love in the highest degree.

IN which I confess ecstasy was scarce,
blank, absent, truant though the night, and my
arm ached, and it was mighty hot, and stares,
fermata's darkness, went nowhere. And why?
My hot passion's ostinato, now ebbs
(ardor twists stronger than tsunami tide);
melisma leavings sweep in swells and webs;
the feeling fades. But love's what we decide.
For passion's not the sea, it's more like spume;
like perturbations in the dark, not light;
Love's deeper than a stormy surface doom,
unstained by any catalectic fright.
Our Sovereign's bed we share and always will:
our worship's deeper than a shifting thrill.

The first EPIGRAPH is from "Blessings" in Jay Parini's *New and Collected Poems: 1975-2015*.
E2: from Rumi/K Helminski, *Mathnawi* 3, 1271, p129 → «The Sun». E3: from *A Method of Prayer* by Johannes Kelpius, 1667-1708, edited by E Gordon Alderfer, p121. **Sovereign** is a (metaphorical) term some use for God. Musical terms: a **fermata** is a indefinite pause of a note or rest; an **ostinato** is a constantly, sometimes insistently, repeated phrase; a **melisma** is a cluster of notes sung to one syllable of text. **Spume** is foam or froth. **Love's deeper**: "Spiritual progress has no other test in the end, nor any better expression, than our ability to love. . . . It gives us the ability to discover in the other person an inward nature as mysterious and deep as our own, but different and willed to be so by God." —Oliver Clément, 1982 *French Sources / 1995 English The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, p270. **Worship**: Michael J. Himes in "Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effects," describes "the sacramental principle: that which is always and everywhere the case must be noticed, accepted, and celebrated somewhere, sometime." —*Becoming Beholders: Cultivating Sacramental Imagination and Actions in College Classrooms*, ed. Karen E Eifler and Thomas M Landy, 2014, p13. → «Intimate Commitment».

138. *Seasoning*

Sed haec prius fuere.

OUR holy season's sex is over, done;
 and Nothing, that thing holier, doth obtain;
 the *lustrum* now to grow much closer, spun
 as earth still sails in stars where we have lain;
 though abstinence itself's not worth a damn,
 as fasting in itself can't purify;
 it's what one does instead: pile, heap each drachm
 of pungent time in every empty sigh . . .
 to overflowing with abstention's juice
 so spry, the swollen ocean's high tide's brine,
 from which some Power enticed and did seduce
 the puissant creatures forth, in sun's warm shine.
 That Power who once selected us through sex,
 gybes us a sea change to enshrine these decks.

The EPIGRAPH is from Catullus 4: "But the fact is what's previous is past." A *lustrum* was a purification rite in ancient Rome, and hence the period following it. A *drachm* (also spelled dram) was an Attic coin and weight (probably meaning a handful). The term was later used by apothecaries for 60 grains, 1/8 of an ounce; hence it means a very little. **Nothing**, emptiness, the void (*sunya* in Sanskrit), and other terms point to the potential **Power**, such as evolution, out of which all things continually arise, the emptiness which is the source of all; our thoughts clothe the void with the illusions we mistake for reality. The void does not deny reality; it means that all our labels and distinctions about reality are relative, products of our inherently limited human scopes. We suffer when we take the relative to be absolute; in Buddhism the chief example is clinging to the idea of a self instead of noticing that we emerge from an infinite number of situations and influences; fully perceiving the void is an experience of compassion. *Sunya* implies the absence of God, but in some ways such emptiness functions like God. For example, many Christians say that ultimately everything depends on God; similarly, some mystics say that all things appear from the void: all things are interrelated and interdependent. A difference between the void and a transcendent Creator God is that God is the ultimate criterion by which all is judged, whereas the doctrine of emptiness says there is no such criterion: everything is relative — in relation to — everything else. Some Buddhists call this emptiness *suchness* to indicate that no ultimate distinctions are possible. Buddhist master and scholar Joshua R Paszkiewicz suggests 'transparency'; in his 1982/1992 *The Myth of the Great Secret*, p56, Toby Johnson suggests 'contentlessness'; → «Interbeing». Does this parallel those Christian mystics' God about whom nothing can be said? "Because the human mind cannot come within light years of comprehending God's nature, we do well to follow Rainer Maria Rilke's suggestion that we think of God as a direction rather than an object." —Huston Smith (1919-2016), 2001 *Why Religion Matters*, p3. **Sea change**: "Nothing of him that doth fade But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange." — Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1,2.

139. *Penetration*

αετου γηρας κορυδου νεοτης

Ne proiicias me in tempore senectutis;
cum defecerit virtus mea, ne linquas me.

I'M OLD and shriveled, but my vital force
is quite refined. One thrilling drop is worth
a thousand squirts in power intercourse
from youthful cocks of prideful length and girth.

You're young and fresh; against the sky your lats
are spread, a tent to heaven with the pole
round which the world revolves. And these two vats
that hang below circumnavigate your soul.

So we're an even match, as judgment weighs
about the same as weaned, unwrinkled skin.
Disparity is equalized in praise
of few or many days as virtues spin.

Your stalwart youth defeats not stud-eyed me.
I pow into your heart and fuck you free.

The EPIGRAPH is an ancient Greek saying, Aetoû gêras, korydoû neôtês, "An eagle's old age [is worth] a sparrow's youth." And Chaucer, CT.2447: "As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage. . . ." **E2:** Psalm 70:9 (Vulgate), in the Book of Common Prayer, Psalm 71:9, "Do not cast me off in my old age; forsake me not when my strength fails." **Lat** is colloquial for the latissimus dorsi muscle. **Pole:** The Maypole as a phallic image in a ritual dance may originate in an ancient ceremony at Delos. In early Altaic, European, Native American, and other cultures, a pole was homologized with the *axis mundi*, the center of the world. The hole at the top of a tent through which a pole might be placed was a path linking earth and sky, transcendent reality. In some cultures, shamans climbed trees or poles to show elevation above mundane matters; initiates climbed for a blessing. In the often erotic Hindu Holi festival, the central pole surviving a bonfire is identified with Prahlada, transformed by devotion to Vishnu. In Islamic mysticism, the pole (*qutb*) is a metaphor for the present spiritual leader without whom (as in Suhrawardî's writings), the world could not exist, even if the *qutb* was hidden. **Fuck:** What is the purpose of sex? A traditional answer from primitive patriarchal economy, in the "be fruitful and multiply" mentality, is offspring. But a better answer is that sex is for companionate pleasure. 1. Children are only an occasional, not inevitable, result of sexual union. With contraception, people fuck for fun, not offspring. 2. Through sex, older, infertile, and same-sex couples can have pleasure, though not children. 3. Unlike most mammals, humans are sexual even during infertile times. 4. Reproduction is biological; pleasure is a spiritual benefit. 5. The ecstasy of sexual union has often been a metaphor for mystical union with God. →«The Purpose of Sex».

140. *Your Next Visit*

That you were once unkind befriends me now
 But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
 mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

Je ne viens pas ce soir vaincre ton corps

Don't let the past remind us of what we are not now.

AND when you come again to this, my home,
 I urge you, do not spend the night unless
 you ask to sleep with me. I'll make a poem
 for you, and flatter you, and warm and bless
 you, whether your request I grant or not,
 for you'd decide to put aside your fear
 to grant an old man comfort in his cot,
 and let his fleshy wishes pull you near.

Though mostly you elide what you well want,
 and all I want is knowing who you are;
 so don't shut down: you're better than your punt,
 your shuffle back, your perpendicular.

I'll not withdraw my love for any cause,
 and listening may sanctify this pause.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's Sonnet 120. **E2:** begins the poem Angoisse, Anguish, by Stéphan Mallarmé (1842-1898): I come tonight not to conquer your body **E3:** "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" —Stephen Stills (Crosby, Stills & Nash), 1969. **Fear** **Knowing who you are:** "Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word 'love' here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace — not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth." —from the fifth paragraph from the end of James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross" in his 1962 *The Fire Next Time*, beginning, "White Americans find" **Punt:** "A kick made when a player drops the ball and kicks it while it falls toward his foot. A punt is usually made on a fourth down when the offense must surrender possession of the ball to the defense because it couldn't advance 10 yards." — *Football For Dummies*, 5th Edition. Among its colloquial uses, it means to take an uncertain provisional action or decision. **Listening**, a kind of noticing, witnessing, beholding, mindful attention: "When we feel that someone is really listening to us, we feel more alive, we feel our true selves coming to the surface — this is the sense in which worldly presence matters." — Lawrence Berger, "Being There: Heidegger on Why Our Presence Matters," *The New York Times*, 2015 March 30. Listening respects the other person's self-disclosure as a sacramental gift.

141. *Sutra Practice*

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι

i like my body when it is with your

Lo verace giudizio del detto sogno non fue veduto allora
per alcuno, ma ora è manifestissimo a li più semplici.

There is no place like a bed for confidential disclosures
between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very
bottom of their souls to each other thus, then, in our
hearts' honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg—a cosy, loving pair.

YOU hesitate, then ask, “I’d sleep with you?
This night? Your bed?” My text: Yes; no sex.

Pieced, seamed, sutured, stitched, spliced,
we throw clothes through

excitement. Territories we annex.

We snuggle, bundle, fold, unfold, turn, fetch,
and cradle one another, toward sleep wend,
our hands still weaving, warm against the stretch
of cold around us, naked friend with friend.

We brush with weaned respect and honest greed.
We wake and sleep and in each moment pleat
our arms and legs, for sex is not our need,
though flesh persuades the soul when pilgrims meet.


We dote and doze and dream as you clothe me
and I clothe you in sleep’s close custody.

A *sutra* is a collection or thread of sayings in Hinduism and Buddhism, and by extension, a scripture-like text. Some such sayings were originally written on palm leaves literally sewn together with thread. From the Indo-European root we get in English the words sew and suture. **Text** is a recondite pun in the context of this sonnet’s sartorial language: *text* (think textile) derives from the Latin, *texere*, to weave; from that, to weave a story; from that, a set of words; from that, a message. The first EPIGRAPH is from Hebrews 10:5: a body you have prepared for me. **E2**: the title and first line of a 1925 poem by e e cummings (1894-1962). **E3**: from Dante’s the *Vita nuova*, 3: “The significance of the dream I described was not seen by anyone then, but now it is manifested to even the unlettered.” In Dante’s dream Love personified appears, leading forward to the agonies and lessons of love. **E4**: from Melville’s 1851 *Moby Dick*, Ch 10, A Bosom Friend.

142. *Tinnitus*

And curious are to hear, what happ'ns new

But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

WHO'S there? please tell; don't wait, your voice is soft
and hard for me to hear; I'm old, I feint:
round edges of your discourse fades. I coughed
and lost my grip on what your stripped vowels paint.
Each day the freight my fraught ears carry grows
and I, though weary, cannot set it down.
I read (when I would kiss) your lips; and woes,
noise, echo this tin barrel called my crown.
So speak; be clear. And yet a timeless way
appears for me to hear identity,
infinity's close silence, when you lay
your head on mine in muted euphony.
Lo! Incarnation is a word for quirks. 
So let me know your flesh; my skin still works.

The EPIGRAPH is from John Milton's 1671 poem, *Paradise Regained*, Book 1:333-334. **E2**: Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.72. **Don't wait**: "But at my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near." —Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress." **Timeless**: "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment" —T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Little Gidding, the penultimate line in the first section. **Incarnation . . . quirks**: in his 1995 *Sexuality and Catholicism*, p251, Thomas C Fox quotes from Richard Rohr, 1994 *Quest for the Grail*, p162: "Of all the world's religions, Christianity has the biggest bias against the body. This is a disastrous theology. If I were Satan, and if I wanted to destroy Christianity, I would work overtime to tempt Christians to hate the flesh. . . . The incarnation means that God moved from spirit to word to flesh. Jesus took on a body. He had genitals. He sweated. He defecated. . . ." The ubiquity and omnipresence of Incarnation is a theme in many poems. Concerning Eliot's: "It seems to me that Eliot's overarching theme in *Four Quartets* is the divine (Incarnation) in art, music, literature, and spirituality can be experienced in our everyday existence. . . . [The] intersection is always there; we just need to be looking." —Tom Brous, 2011 *Timeless Journey*, last page. **Hear identity**: "I hear it in the deep heart's core." —Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." **Skin**: See Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2: 11 in which he notes that "in the perception of objects of touch we are affected not by but with *along with* the medium . . . of flesh," and that touch is our most fundamental mode of perception. See also the famous article by Franz Bibfeldt, "I'm OK, You're DOA," mentioned in the 1995 Feb *University of Chicago Magazine*, p21, citing the *Journal for Scientific Study of the Weird*. Bibfeldt is also wrote, a la , *Both/And and/or Either/Or* which received mixed reviews; ha.

143. *The Last Sail*

If during your youth you toy with passion,
 some will excuse you; men will regard you
 with indulgence and say that you are young.
 No indulgence is granted to old men.

That is no country for old men. The young
 In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
 — Those dying generations — at their song,
 The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas

THE best way I can love you is — is not
 to love you. For sweet love you've years of spunk
 before you need to launch a search to spot
 and board the perfect mate for cruise and bunk;
 but I have weeks before my body wrecks
 in currents you can't call or comprehend,
 clipped hours to sound, to boast close breaths with sex.
 So you must merely be a farewell friend.

Yes, I extoll you as a frat boy-god,
 fresh, strong in stride, though not yet fit for sea;
 your place is strutting on the esplanade,
 for my deep love would drown you at the quay.

I'm good for one more passage, one more trip.
 I sail and leave to you this vacant slip.

The EPIGRAPH is from Kai Ka'us ibn Iskander's 1082 *Qabus-nama*, instructions to his son, Gil-ansah, prince of Gurgan, in Persia near the Caspian sea. **E2**: the beginning of "Sailing to Byzantium" by William Butler Yeats. **Spunk** is vulgar slang for ejaculated semen. "The **sea** continuously jerks off." —Georges Bataille (1897-1962), 1985/1993 "The Solar Anus" in *Visions of Excess*, tr Allan Stoekl, p8. A **cruise** can mean simply a pleasure trip by sea or it a search for a sexual partner. A **clipper** ship was built for speed rather than cargo capacity. **Love . . . Friend**: Amore è fiamma, cener l'amistà — translated at the Met as "Love is a blazing flame; friendship is only ashes" in Francesco Cilea's opera *Adriana Lecouvreur* (libretto: Arturo Colautti). **Sea**: He that will learn to pray, let him go to Sea.—George Herbert (1593-1633), *Jacula Prudentum*, 1891 ed, p223; see Cervantes: *Quien anda por la mar, aprende a rezar*. The title of a Paul Taylor dance classic, an **esplanade** is a place on level ground for public walks or drives. A **quay** (pronounced kee) is a landing place on water like a wharf. A **slip** (or slipway) is a boat or ship ramp from which a vessel can be launched into water and to which smaller vessels may be returned. **Sail**: "I have hoisted sail to all the winds / Which should transport me farthest from your sight." —Shakespeare's Sonnet 117.

144. *Numbers*

Hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,
ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem.

In povertà mia lieta scialo da gran signore rime ed inni
d'amore. Per sogni e per chimere e per castelli in aria

Sur la gloire un instant j'osai fixer les yeux

I tumble in my trance since we first met;
that second time made summer vertigo.
O Yes, you prowl in my mapped dreams, a threat
to my adjustment, lone though public, slow.
Too tired for love, so I can only weep;
your beauty and your bounty's sweep make clear
what I'm denied to kiss, much less to keep;
thus I decend into a sonneteer.
Why should I spend my last few lines on you,
to purchase shade from your display's bright drive,
when I will wither anyhow in view
of friends and foes? though numbers may survive.
My body bends to balance; your tart touch
finds my fine rimes and rhythms don't chart much.

Numbers is an archaic term for poetry or rhythm in poetry; see Shakespeare's Sonnet 79, for example. The EPIGRAPH, from Catullus 50, can be translated, For you I made this poem, my friend, from which you may perceive my misery. **E2:** Rudolfo's first aria in Puccini's *La Bohème*, "Like a lord, in my carefree poverty I squander rimes and hymns of love. For dreams and visions and castles in the air" And from the 1989 film, *Dead Poets Society*: "We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering — these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." **E3:** For a moment I dared to stare on glory —Gérard de Nerval, "Le Point Noir." **Mapped, chart:** "The map is not the territory." —Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950). Akin is the old proverb, "A painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger." **Sonneteer:** "What is a poet? An unhappy man who conceals profound anguish in his heart, but whose lips are so fashioned that when sighs and groans pass over them, they sound like beautiful music." —Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) in his *Either-Or*, in *Selections rom the Writings of Kierkegaard*, tr Lee M Hollander, 1960, p35. **Drive:** machinery for movement, guidance, conveying, compelling, a trip, inner urge, computer device (with **display**). **Balance:** ". . . not balances / that we achieve but balances that happen." —Wallace Stevens, 1942 *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, 1.7.

145. *Birthday Eden*

γηρασκω δ αιει πολλα διδασκομενος

If the sun and moon should doubt
they'd immediately go out.

Unendliche Schöne! . . . Umfangend umfängen!

Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is.

THIS park is where I touched the ancient sun
some minutes — eight — ago, away, now strobed
into a year and eighty now, the run
around the orbit almost over, probed
each moment till the heart lets go. — Without
replies or answers, ecstasy or awe:
show ignorance by searching what's devout,
prove what it means to move through streets, or draw
the time in meetings, bring a body bread,
grasp *barakah* with mere hands! — I wane
yet swelling happens, how I store what's said,
retrieve, and love. Such facts you can't explain.
Conceive how real orgasm is! And shout!
Still I cannot believe it. Nor can doubt.

Eden is the name of the paradisaical garden ("park" in the Moffatt translation) in which God placed the first humans, Adam and Eve, according to Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew and Christian Bible. The first EPIGRAPH is attributed to Solon (638?-558? BCE): "I grow old ever learning many things." **E2**: from William Blake, 1803? "Auguries of Innocence." **E3**: from Goethe's 1770? poem about the glory of nature, "Ganymede": "Unending beauty! . . . Embracing, embraced!" **E4**: from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, 6.44. **Eighty**: sixty when first written. **Awe**: "Awe is the salve that will heal our eyes." —Rumi/Barks, p65 →«The Sun». "From wonder to wonder existence opens." —Tao Te Ching, 1, Witter Bynner translation. "Where there is no sense of awe, there will be disaster." —Tao Te Ching, 72, degenderized translation by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. "Maybe the universe is a quantum fluctuation!" —physicist Ed Tryon, quoted in Jim Holt's 2012 *Why Does the World Exist?*, p141. **Ignorance**: see Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia*. **Bread** →«Epiclesis». "To be sensual . . . is to respect and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself, and to be *present* [italics original] in all that one does. from the effort of loving to the breaking of bread." —James Baldwin's 1962/1963 *The Fire Next Time*, at the sixteenth paragraph of "Down at the Cross," beginning "But I cannot leave . . ." **Barakah** is a divine blessed presence; the concept is found especially in Sufism. **Shout**: God is a "shout in the street." —James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Episode 2 Nestor.

146. *Monastic Exercise*

For I impair not beauty being mute

HE teases pious time with luscious porn.
 He favors smiles and bodies ripe with drive,
 though even in repose with nothing worn
 there is a beauty promised to arrive.

Why porn? His muted life is in one cell,
 companions gone and none — not one — to come
 and offer some relief; though he can swell
 like all those lads who think age burdensome.

The oratory of the monk for prayer
 or chapel or a shrine to find one's God
 is where the soul, uncumbered and laid bare,
 can contemplate, commune, and shoot one's wad.

While others to this practice offer scorn,
 like prayer or holy icon, he lauds porn.

The EPIGRAPH is from Shakespeare's Sonnet 83. *Monks* are presumed celibate. Ignatius of Loyola developed the *Spiritual Exercises* (1522-1524) used by the Jesuits and widely adopted since. *Luscious*: "The pleasure attached to explicit sexual portrayals in words or pictures should be accepted as the powerful ally of any effort to teach the responsible use of so beautiful a thing." —L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today*, p245. *Porn* in our culture is controversial and accessible. Some say it invariably exploits the model; others say the model often benefits. Erotic "art" to some is prurient to others. Are models sexual gratification objects, atrophying the ability for genuine human contact? Is it addictive, replacing "normal" human expectations with extreme "kinks," or can it enhance sexual intimacy? Is it a good and safe choice for those whose health, capacities, or situations makes intimacy unwise or impossible? Porn users can feel shame, but — especially among young people — it can express joy and wholesomeness. Other cultures have portrayed gods and humans engaged in explicit sexual activities — genital, oral, anal, intercrural, solitary, in groups — on temples and pottery, and in sacred literature and other arts indicating spiritual values through such representations. Obscenity is sometimes defined as that which arouses lascivious, lustful thoughts or desires; but many relationships, and the human race itself, would disappear without such desires. Our culture is affected by St Augustine's perverted view of the purpose of sexuality as reproduction, rather than responsible pleasure, a view probably imported into Christianity from Manicheanism. Defenders of erotic material are unlikely to convince opponents even by quoting St Paul, "I am absolutely convinced, as a Christian, that nothing is impure in itself; only, if a man considers a particular thing impure, then to him it is impure" (Romans 14:14) or Shakespeare, "Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so" (Hamlet 2:2). William R Stayton reports clergy who have sexual experiences contemplating God in his "A Theory of Sexual Orientation: The Universe as a Turn-on," *Topics in Nursing 1*, p1-8.

147. *Night Voyage*

Sing your death song, and die like a hero going home.

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck;
And yet methinks I have astronomy.

Be curious, not judgmental.

THE cold night clears. O prance! you countless stars
apprising all who stare within the dark
ancestral sky above the abattoirs
of every age, inquired from tower and ark
and hominiodal mounds; and now among
them is the Hubble, scoping curious light
for secrets of the start and, chanties sung,
how we will end, despite our appetite.

My hunger and my compass-love points north;
my polestar you have been through all the waves,
swab perspiring, lining your light forth
which still my steered soul's randy tanker craves.

But I shall dock and find what love's terrene
when sun shall come, though stars remain, unseen.

The EPIGRAPH is from the American Indian, Tecumseh (1768 – 1813). **E2**: from Shakespeare, Sonnet 14. **E3**: *Ted Lasso*, s01e08, fake Walt Whitman quotation. **Abattoirs** are slaughterhouses. In the *Harry Potter* books, students study the skies from the Hogwarts Castle Astronomy **Tower**: → «Fallen Tower». Premodern observatories include towers from Chankillo, Peru, to the stepped structures of the Jantar Mantar in Jaipur, India. Noah's **ark** (Genesis 7-8) rested atop the mountains of Ararat, where he eventually released birds into the sky to see if their searches for dry land were successful. **Hominiodal** means pertaining to the primate family which includes humans. The **Hubble** is an orbiting space telescope named after Edwin Hubble who discovered that the universe consists of many galaxies beyond our own, the Milky Way. **Curious**: strange; eager to learn, from Latin *cura*, care(ful). Sea **chanties** are songs sailors sing as they work. Compass: "The Sailor cannot see the North, but knows the Needle can." —*Emily Dickinson: Selected Letters*, ed 1986 Thomas H Johnson, p175. **Polestar**: the North Star, Polaris currently (or the South Star) used in navigation to determine one's latitudinal position. A **swab** is a sailor. **Line** is the nautical term for many kinds of ropes. **Waves . . . light**: waves as on the surface of the ocean, as the gesture for goodbye, as in the theory of electromagnetic radiation (a portion of which spectrum we see as light) in which energy is propagated by transverse waves. **Start** and **end** refer to the beginning and death of the universe. **Dock**: "My love is an anchor tied to you" — "Southern Cross," Crosby, Stills & Nash. **Randy** means lascivious, bawdy. **Terrene** means earthly.

148. *Bequest*

O if, I say, you look upon this verse,
 When I, perhaps, compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
 But let your love, even with my life, decay.

Even if the corpse-washer binds my jaw shut,
 you'll still hear this refrain

. . . Is it only when you become like me
 that you will hear what I have to tell you? . . .

Look at it any way you like, it's an old man's book

○YEZ! When soon I leave you for all time
 (for this once-sailor still can say "avast!"),
 what tortured skin is tranche you'll find in rime,
 and what is right, when shed, may sometimes last.
 These lines I cashed and never sent you'll find,
 and you will wonder what strength really meant
 to you, and curse delay and every bind
 that kept you bent away from me, unspent.
 The anguish that I felt you'll feel; regret
 will never die, but grow in my account.
 So give it all to whom you love, this debt
 transformed by verse to treasure's full amount.
 When my flesh rots and looks like shit and piss,
 my leveraged love will trade in bounty's bliss.

The first EPIGRAPH is the third quatrain of Shakespeare's Sonnet 71. **E2**: from Rumi →«The Sun», Baldock, p224. **E3**: from Sir Andrew Motion, 2012, "Better Life." **E4**: from Derek Walcott, 2004, *The Prodigal*, p364. **Oyez**: "Hear Ye!" said three times by the Supreme Court marshal announcing a sitting of the Justices. **Sailor**: "Farewell to this grand, rough world. Never more shipmates, no more sea." —Billy Budd in Benjamin Britten's 1951 opera based on Melville's novella. **Avast** is a nautical term used imperatively: stop! cease! **Tranche** is often used in finance to mean a portion of an asset pool; or generally, any part of an aggregation. **Cashed**: cached. **Strength**: "As prettiness turns to pomp, and strength to fat . . ." —Rupert Brooke's "Jealousy." **Trade in** can be read several ways, two of which are as in "trade in an old car for a new one" and as in "trade in the stock market." **Leveraged** and **bounty** are also financial terms; Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 uses financial language.

149. *Passing*

Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, . . .
Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be
seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.

A candle in the thighs
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age

HOW frail is this, once fair, my body! strong
to climb those mountains, dive far under sea,
make love for days and days, yea endlessly,
and carry pain, O Christ! at least as long.
Yet hearing fails, and vision blurs, and song
grows faint; my mind now tires; and elbow, knee,
and other joints have lost *euoi!* and flee
from reason into trouble: smack! I'm wrong.
My words inflate: I fail, I ache, I die —
a few days left till this declension's close,
and my trashed bones, a flash, in ashes fly;
vitality itself must decompose.
O my young love! —: immortal, find your thigh;
for soon your power, past polish, slumps to prose.

The EPIGRAPH is the conclusion of Shakespeare's Sonnet 14, with a theme similar to this sonnet's couplet. Contrast → «Shakespeare's 73 Redux». **E2**: from Isaiah 47:2-3. **E3**: from "Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines" by Dylan Thomas. **Fair**: "I was ful fair now I am foul/ my faire fleishe begynnyth forto stinke./ Wormes fynden at me greet prow,/ I am hir mete I am hir drinke." —cited in J.C. Hirsch, *Medium Aevum*, 1979, p61. **Christ** is the Savior in the Christian religion, the god-man who heals others through the suffering he endured — "he was wounded for our trans-gressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," a passage from Hebrew scripture, Isaiah 53:5 appropriated and interpreted by Christians as if it referred to Jesus the Christ. **Euoi** — εὐοί — is described as "a cry of impassioned rapture in ancient Bacchic revels," with the *eu* element (meaning "well") found in many other English words including eucharist, euphoric, eureka, euphony, and my middle name, Eugene (well-born). **Past**, of course, is a pun. This sonnet uses a Petrarchan rime scheme though with a concluding unrimed couplet.

150. *Personal Trainer*

Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body,
to the god he worships, after a style purely his own,
nor can he get off by hammering marble instead.
We are all sculptors and painters, and our material
is our own flesh and blood and bones.

Why else should I at sixty-one
feel myself shriveling into fadeout?
He insisted he had been given authority
To provide my future happiness
Was it possible he had been sent
From some utopian headquarters?

MY temple trembles, frescoes fall and rot,
a pudgy ruin not yet diseased to death,
the deed uncumbered, legal for this plot,
through crumbling from the brush that chokes off breath.

Still, treasures in these ancient jars remain
on altars where the gods still dance and feed
from wisdom and compassion grown from pain
and all that is profane, to intercede.

Restore, rebuild, is what you do; the spire
again erect, the fenestration clear
and in repair; the marvel of desire,
not marble: faithful flesh is your career.

This tope of bones and muscles, air and skin
you train and bless, and breathe new life within.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) in *Walden*. E2: from "Wondrous The Merge" by James Broughton. The *treasures in the ancient jars* may remind the reader of the Dead Sea Scrolls or perhaps the formal form of these sonnets. *Dance*: "Primitive religion is not believed, it is danced." —Arthur Darby Knock quoted in Sam Keen, 1970, *To a Dancing God*, p160. "We don't have theology. We dance." —a Shinto priest, quoted by Joseph Campbell, reported in *The Power of Myth*, 1988, Campbell and Bill Moyers, pXIX, based on the PBS-TV series. From what he told me, I think the priest was Yukioka Yamamoto of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine, near Suzuka, Japan; he received me in his office in 1984 and arranged the *mi-sogi* ritual for me. *Fenestration* is the style and arrangement of windows. A *tope*, a stupa, is a type of religious construction containing relics of the Buddha.

151. *Maya's Workbench*

There were incidents and accidents
 There were hints and allegations

. . . che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

. . . this huge stage presenteth nought but shows

ONE reevaluates, as one ages:
 O tornado raging and the sunny day;
 those things one does for free, those for wages;
 the secrets kept, the well-staged exposé;
 those chiseled moments we call eternal,
 the scratchy crises lost now in the void;
 the dying of the year, the vernal,
 despair and gratitude, and love enjoyed.
 Are these unstable pivots from One Source?
 Or tenons mortised in a perfect joint?
 Does youth hinge age? Do graves latch life, and force
 the food chain to conclude some cosmic point?
 This package, mitered from infinite scraps,
 is plumbed puzzle-snug — still with several gaps.

In Indian thought, and particularly some forms of Hinduism, *maya* means the phenomena that deceive us into thinking they are real; *maya* is sometimes often rendered simply *illusion*. The first EPIGRAPH is from Paul Simon's "You Can All Me Al." E2: from the first sonnet of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in which he asks forgiveness for youthful folly in love, acknowledges his shame, and realizes "how the world's delight is a passing dream." E3: Shakespeare's Sonnet 15.3.
Reevaluates: After mentioning, p351, "deepening relativisms introduced not only by Einstein, Bohr, and Heisenberg, but also by Darwin, Marx, and Freud; by Nietzsche, Dilthey, Weber, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein; by Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, and Foucault; by Gödel, Popper, Quine, Kuhn, and a host of others" undercutting even what Kant thought might be secure, Richard Tarnas in his 1991 *The Passion of the Western Mind* writes, "The world does not exist as a thing in itself, independent of interpretation; rather it comes into being only in and through interpretations." p397. While reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in high school helped to shock me out of my religious Fundamentalism, shortly thereafter Thomas Kuhn, 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, demolished my scientific fundamentalism. Aging can work a similar deconstruction of one's judgments on one's life. →«Postmodern Faith». **Void (nothing)** →«Seasoning». **Chisel:** "through the chaos of the world / Like a fine, an exquisite chisel . . ." —D H Lawrence, "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through." A **tenon** a projection formed on the end of a timber or the like for insertion into a **mortise** of the same dimensions in order to make a secure **joint**.

152. *Last Watch*

Siqua recordanti benefacta prior voluptas

Summum nec metuas diem nec optes.

I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

He who binds to himself a joy / Does the wingèd life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in eternity's sunrise.

Que sont mes amis devenus
Que j'avais de si près tenus / Et tant aimés ?

THIS chaste life I now lead I do not like;
though I need nothing, yet desire is fierce.

Fantasies, images, copper I strike
while Cupid jeers and holds my heart to pierce.
Many friends do not one companion make
to bless each day with night's close devotion;
lacking this, praise seems counterfeit and fake.
My faith lies in evolution's motion.

So stay. From Big Bang genesis aroused,
embracing is what sanctifies the world
for in each kiss the Infinite is housed;
in paradox, Eternity unfurled.

Observing like a ghost is my soul fun —
and will suffice quite well until I'm done.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Catullus 76, "If one can take pleasure recalling any good deeds [one's performed] . . ." **E2**: from Martial, X.47, "Neither fear death nor desire it." **E3**: from "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is," traditionally attributed to Sir Edward Dyer (1543-1607). **E4**: from William Blake's 1787?-1810? Rossetti Notebook, p105. **E5**: from "Pauvre Rutebeuf" by Rutebeuf (1245?-1285?): "What happened to my friends who I held so close and dearly loved?" **Copper** is among the earliest worked metal; copper can mean the least valued coinage. **Big Bang** refers to a theory of cosmic origin. **Soul** is, of course, a pun. **Kiss the Infinite**: → «The Kiss» for Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). "In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play, and here have I caught sight of him that is formless." —Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, 1912, #96. **Observing**: "Proper attention is our refuge now, our perch and our praise." — "Looking Around" in Charles Wright's 2002 *A Short History of the Shadow*; attention, noticing, is the title theme of these sonnets. **Done**: "Do not be troubled. Death will come." —"Bach's B Minor Mass" in Robert Bly's 2005 *My Sentence Was a Thousand Years of Joy*.

153. Γραμματικός [*Grammarian*]

οιη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιη δε και ανδρων.

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

In you is spring, while in me is autumn, perennial autumn.

I AM that once-green leaf turned gold and red
 not ready yet to fall — unless a gust
 should unexpectedly wrest my stem's thread
 by which I hang in autumn's pendent lust.
 I linger these last moments, still robust;
 then I'm humus from which the shrub is fed.
 When from the tree of life will I be thrust?
 Will the wind be gentle or blow full dread?
 You are springtime, budding, bursting, juice-full
 and green, unweathered in the sky-wide sun
 and soil. Now twisting, making straight, you pull
 our tenses, separate seasons, into one.
 In you my spring survives. Anticipate
 in me your prize. Matched times we conjugate.

The first EPIGRAPH is from the *Iliad* of Homer, "As the generation of leaves, so it is of the human." The English words *humus*, *human*, *exhumation* and *humanities* are derived from an Indo-European root referring to the ground, implying that humans are earth-bound rather than beings in the sky like some gods. **E2**: from the line concluding each stanza of François Villon's (1450?) poem translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) as "The Ballad of Dead Ladies": Where are the snows of yester-year? **E3**: Fr Pavel Florensky (executed by the Soviets, 1937): "Два Мира" ("Two Worlds") in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, tr Boris Jakim, 1997. **Tree**: → «Barren Golgotha». Climbing Shankaracharya Hill in Kashmir some years ago, I was instructed about trees: "I am heat for your hearth, shade from the summer sun. I give fruit to quench your thirst," said one of many notices posted on a path upward, all signed simply, "Tree." Another notice read, "I am a gift of God. Do not harm me." **Green**: see Shakespeare's Sonnet 63. **Conjugate** is both a grammatical and biological term, as well as having the simple meaning of bringing together. This sonnet's first quatrain rime scheme is mirrored in the second quatrain. The opening quatrain of Shakespeare's magnificent Sonnet 73 presents a related autumnal image → «Shakespeare's 73 Redux». **Times**: "People like us, who believe in physics, know the distinction between the past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." —Albert Einstein, quoted by science writer Dennis Overbye, "A Quantum of Solace: Timeless Questions About the Universe," *The New York Times*, 2013 July 1. The passage is from a 1955 letter to the family of his friend, Michele Besso, who had recently died.

154. *Closing Instruction: Kansas City*

Committed to the future — even if that only means
 “se préparer à bien mourir.”

Yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia

May I, composed like them / Of Eros and of dust

ANGEL OF DEATH, who each instant strikes, kills
 some blood in my only body, and cells
 of other sorts as well, but still gives thrills
 which, while I charge and wait, whole death repels:
 the world entire becomes Beloved Friend;
 let me make love rapt to each animal,
 vegetable, mineral; and comprehend,
 embrace spiritual and mechanical.

COMPANION, late I am to chase for you.
 Who most I sought I yield — and make this gift:
 these songs, surviving, my shaped residue.

READER, learn your union from your rift.
 From yours and others' ecstasy and pain
 draw close to whom you love, and close remain.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings* (English, 1964). The French can be translated “one is preparing to die well.” **E2**: from *The Book* [1979] of Common Prayer, p499. **E3**: W H Auden, “September 1, 1939.” The three categories of *animal, vegetable, and mineral* (three kingdoms, *mawalid*) were developed by Muslim scientists and utilized by Rumi in his mystic poetry about the Friend → «Intimate Commitment». My short definition of *spiritual* is breathing with a sense of the sacred; see the chart in the appendix on “The Crises of Our Time.” See William R Stayton's “A Theory of Sexual Orientation: The Universe as a Turn-on,” *Topics in Nursing 1*, p1-8. **Union**: “Reality is paradoxical and complementary. Non-dual thinking is the highest level of consciousness. Divine union, not private perfection, is the goal of all religion.” —Richard Rohr, 2013 *Yes, and . . . : Daily Meditations*, p355. In Kabbalistic Jewish mysticism, the process of creation involved *Shevirah*, the shattering of the vessels of the divine; our joyful duty is to mend the *rift*; the Hebrew phrase *Tikkun olam* means repairing the world. “Not finitude but fragmentariness is the mark of the nondivine.” —Charles Hartshorne, “Divine Absoluteness and Divine Relativity” in *Transcendence*, ed Richardson and Cutler, 1969, p165. **Sought**: → «The Grail». This concluding sonnet is paired with this book's first sonnet → «Al-Fatihah: Opening Instruction».

Appendices

About Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

DID Shakespeare (1564-1616) authorize the 1609 publication of his sonnets? The Elizabethan sonnet-writing vogue was over. Shakespeare's reputation as a dramatist was well established; he retired in 1611. Thomas Thorpe, a marginal publisher, perhaps to make a buck — I mean a *guinea* — issued them, perhaps without Shakespeare's permission. Nonetheless, bless Thorpe for them. In 1640, as if the sonnets had never been in print, another publisher rearranged and issued them.

Two of the “dark lady” sonnets appeared in an anthology of 1599, and a year earlier a critic praised Shakespeare's “sugared sonnets among his private friends,” but we don't know what the selection might have been. The first seventeen may have been commissioned by a third party. What we have today may have been written well before 1600. (The 154 are not Shakespeare's only sonnets — sonnets appear in his plays *Henry V*, *Love's Labor Lost*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, but they are dramatic, not lyric, sonnets.)

Modern editions vary as the scholars seek the best ways to bring the spelling and punctuation from practices over 400 years ago to today's readers, and deal with textual problems and printer errors like the obvious one in 146. We do not know if the 1609 sonnets are in the order Shakespeare would have wanted, although many seem to flow from one to the next. The authoritative edition is by Helen Vendler.

Sonnets like number 20 have been used to prove both that Shakespeare's passion for the young man (1-126) was sexual — and that it was not. It need not matter when we consider the spiritual weight of the poems. The lust for the promiscuous dark lady (127-152) certainly seems sexual. (The last two are anacreontic.)

Because there is bare mention of the *Sonnets* for thirty years after their 1609 publication, despite Shakespeare's fame, I wonder if Shakespeare tried to suppress the Thorpe edition. Shakespeare may have been embarrassed by so full and intimate a record of his mercurial passions; but without any evidence, I like to think that perhaps he hoped that, should others read them, his — and his readers' — struggles might be redeemed through such ingenious verse.

Vern Barnet

FOR eighteen years the weekly religion columnist for *The Kansas City Star*, Vern Barnet has been honored by Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and other groups. With three others, he wrote and edited the 740-page *Essential Guide to Religious Traditions and Spirituality for Health Care Providers*, published by Radcliffe in 2013. He was the developmental editor for *Binding Us Together: A Civil Rights Activist Reflects on a Lifetime of Community and Public Service*, the memoir of Alvin L Brooks, published by Andrews McMeel in 2021. His articles, reviews, and poems have appeared in many publications.

He has taught world religions and related subjects at several universities and seminaries, and served on the faculty of the nation's first "Interfaith Academies" sponsored by Harvard University's Pluralism Project and Religions for Peace-USA. He has been featured in national media, including a half-hour CBS-TV special in 2002. His civic activities, including chairing the Jackson County, MO, task force studying the five-county religious situation after 9/11, have been recognized with local and national honors, and in 2010 an annual "Vern Barnet Interfaith Service Award" was initiated to honor select Kansas Citizens.

His interest in poetry was heightened when he studied with US Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner KARL SHAPIRO at the University of Nebraska where he also studied with philosopher O K BOUWSMA and visiting Buddhist scholar and Bollingen Fellow GARMA CHEN CHI CHANG. He completed his doctoral work in 1970 at the University of Chicago and an affiliated seminary. Among his teachers were historian of religion MIRCEA ELIADE, philosopher-psychotherapist EUGENE T GENDLIN, Templeton Prize winner RALPH WENDELL BURHOE, and psychiatrist ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS. World religions expert HUSTON SMITH was a life-long friend. He also studied with mythologist JOSEPH CAMPBELL. Ordained a Unitarian Universalist minister, he served parishes in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Kansas before dedicating his career to interfaith understanding in the Kansas City area.

Now minister emeritus of the Center for Religious Experience and Study ("CRES") which he founded in 1982, he is an active Episcopalian layman. A brief biography appears on Wikipedia. A full biography with bibliography appears at <https://www.cres.org/vern>.

The Three Crises of Our Time

THE DISEASE of our desacralized culture presents three symptoms: our environmental crisis, the uncertainties of personhood, and a destructively partisan, exploitative, and violent society and world civilization. Each corresponds to three realms in which the world's religions have discovered and emphasized the sacred, on which our lives depend.

- In PRIMAL faiths (American Indian, tribal African, Wicca, the ancient traditions of Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Maya and Inca are examples), we find ecological awe: nature is respected more than controlled; nature is a process which includes us, not a product external to us to be used or disposed of. Our proper attitude toward nature is wonder, not consumption.

- In ASIAN religions (such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) we rediscover the awe of genuine personhood as our actions proceed spontaneously and responsibly from duty and compassion, without ultimate attachment to their results.

- In MONOTHEISTIC traditions (including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the awesome work of God is manifest in history's flow toward justice when peoples are governed less by profit and winning and more by the covenant of service.

Now traditions are encountering each other and perhaps we may learn that religious pluralism is gift, not a threat. This interfaith promise is nothing less than *the restoration of nature, the recovery of the whole self, and the life of a community of love.*

In the context of metaphors from the magnificence of a Primal vision of nature and the oppressive structures of our society subverting the Monotheistic vision of peace and justice, most of these sonnets record the sometimes torturous, sometimes ecstatic, exploration toward the Asian wisdom of personhood, through the perils of desire and attachment leading to surrender and compassion — and the gift of awe.

Another word for secularism is denial; another word for awe is authenticity.

We will perish without authenticity in the three realms of nature, personhood, and community. We are beginning to see that these three realms interpenetrate and compose each other, different dimensions of a single reality, largely hidden from previous generations. Still, today we are distracted and benumbed by particular and competing agendas; we do not notice what might often seem peripheral, where, paradoxically we might behold or at least sense that whole reality.

Gaining skill at truly noticing anything can lead us to beholding the sacred in all its expressions; an exploration of one dimension may improve our fragmented and prejudiced vision of the others, and of the larger sacred reality awaiting our troubled and fearful world. In muddled, modest, and minute ways, these sonnets show one person's several stations seeking the sacred path of unitive vision.

Only by *noticing* can we recover the sense of awe that leads to gratitude, and the gratitude that matures into service. The Tao Te Ching warns, "Where there is no sense of awe, there will be disaster." Greed, exploitation, and the lust for power crowd out awe. But Rumi writes, "Awe is the salve that will heal our eyes."

- This way of looking at religions of the world is presented in greater detail elsewhere, such as in *The Essential Guide to Religious Traditions and Spirituality for Health Care Providers*, edited by Steven Jeffers, Michael Nelson, Vern Barnett, Michael Brannigan, Radcliffe, 2013 (p12-16).

- The detail of the following chart of the Three Families of Faith is mine, working from hints found in places such as Eliade's 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, where he discusses **cosmic**, **personal**, and **social** contexts (p93-94), and the "**individual**, **social**, and **cosmic**." (p170).

- In Roland Bainton's 1964/1966 *Christendom* (Vol 1, p3-4), we find this: "Judaism is a religion of **history** and as such it may be contrasted with religions of **nature** and religions of **contemplation**. — ¶ Religions of **nature** see God in the surrounding universe; for example, in the orderly course of the heavenly bodies, or more frequently in the recurring cycle of the withering and resurgence of vegetation. This cycle is interpreted as the dying and rising of a god in whose experience the devotee may share through various ritual acts and may thus also become divine and immortal. For such a religion, the past is not important, for the cycle of the seasons is the same one year as the next. — ¶ Religions of **contemplation**, at the other extreme, regard the physical world as an impediment to the spirit, which, abstracted from the things of sense, must rise by contemplation to union with the divine. The sense of time itself is to be transcended, so that here again history is of no import. — ¶ But religions of **history**, like Judaism, discover God 'in his mighty acts among the children of men.' Such a religion is a compound of memory and hope. It looks backward to what God has already done. The feasts of Judaism are chiefly commemorative: Passover recalls the deliverance of the Jews from bondage in Egypt; Purim, Esther's triumph over Haman, who sought to destroy the Jews in the days of King Ahasuerus; and Hanukkah, the purification of the Temple after

its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. And this religion looks forward with faith; remembrance is a reminder that God will not forsake his own. The faith of Judaism was anchored in the belief that God was bound to his people by a covenant, at times renewed and enlarged."

- In Huston Smith's 2005 *The Soul of Christianity*, he says that "[B]ecoming God' happens **individually**, **communally**, and **cosmically**" (p124).

- The three divisions of world religions, in the scheme developed by The Encounter World Religions Centre in Toronto, the Balance, Indian, and Middle Eastern traditions; and Robert Arkinson's three categories of indigenous, Dharmic, and Abrahamic religions in *The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness*.

- Sociologist Robert Bellah's 2011 *Religion in Human Evolution* notes that meaning obtains in "**cosmos**, **society**, and **self**" (p175); this triad appears in varying forms throughout the book, as for example where he claims that music is "related not only to **inner reality** but to **cosmic** and **social** reality as well" (p25), and that it can attune "the **individual** to **social** and **cosmic** order" (p26); he also uses the triad "**soul**, **society**, and the **cosmos**" (p27). He does not relate these terms to the triad of Primal, Asian, and Monotheistic faiths; rather he believes that "Both tribal and archaic religions are 'cosmological,' in that supernature, nature, and society were all fused in a single cosmos" (p266).

All emphases are mine.

- The Encounter World Religions Centre in Toronto also uses a model of world religions similar, but not identical to mine — with its three divisions as the Balance, Indian, and Middle Eastern traditions.

- Robert Arkinson's three categories in *The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness* — indigenous, Dharmic, and Abrahamic — also largely overlap with the model I offer.

Chart developed by CRES, www.cres.org, vern@cres.org, Box 45414, KCMO 64171

A View of Our Desacralized Society and the World's Religions as a Whole System

Crisis	<i>Examples of secularism's crises</i>	Faith Family	Sacred found in	CAVEATS
Environmental <i>Perversion:</i> Superstition	pollution (toxic wastes, as from the auto) overpopulation; loss of diversity of species deforestation; global warming damaged and dying oceanic life	PRIMAL Ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman; Mayan, Incan; American Indian and Tribal African; and many others.	Nature (ecological interdependence)	1. Specialization can deprive us of a sense of the whole. This is a research program aiming to remedy that. 2. With any generalization, exceptions and qualifications abound. Examples: Shinto is Asian but is a nature religion, Sikhism is sometimes called syncretistic, and Marxism may be atheistic. Nonetheless, this scheme may be useful as a starting point for study. 3. This outline does not characterize any <i>particular</i> faith. 4. Religions are dynamic; this summary chart does not limn historical development. 5. Primal faiths can be just as sophisticated as Asian and Monotheistic. 6. In any richly developed faith, elements of many other faiths can also be found, though they may not be as frequently emphasized.
Personal Identity <i>Perversion:</i> Narcissism	addiction (substances, consumerism, power) dependencies (handling others' feelings) prejudice (sexism, racism, homophobia) loss of sense of vocation and direction	ASIAN Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, etc. See note, right, and below for Sikhism	Consciousness (inner awareness, Larger Self)	
Social Cohesion <i>Perversion:</i> Self-Righteousness	violence (in movies, games, real lives); terrorism exploitation (disparity between rich and poor) disengaged citizenry (private over common weal)	MONOTHEISTIC TIC, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Bahá'í, Zoroastrianism, Zoroastrianism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Manichaeism, Manichaeism.	History of covenanted community	
The Four Wisdom Treasures — Our task: apply them and find them one.				
PRIMAL faiths emphasize	NATURE is to be respected more than controlled; it is a process which includes us, not a product external to us to be used or disposed of. Our proper attitude toward nature is awe, not utility.			
ASIAN faiths emphasize	WHO WE ARE IS DEEPER THAN WE APPEAR TO BE; this means our acts should proceed beyond convention, spontaneously and responsibly from duty and compassion, without ultimate attachment to their results.			
MONOTHEISTIC faiths emphasize	THE FLOW OF HISTORY TOWARD JUSTICE is possible when persons in community govern themselves less by profit and more by the covenant of service.			
LIBERATION movements show	Those disempowered by a secular age may, through the varied struggles, show THE IMPULSE TOWARD THE SACRED in fresh ways.			
How terms are used				
<i>Secular</i> ► fragmented, broken, partial, divided, unrelated, disconnected; the profane.				
<i>Sacred</i> ► ultimate worth, the network on which all depends, cornerstone of all values, holy, holistic, wholesome, cosmic connectedness or well-being, sensed in "peak experiences" which shape or direct or give meaning to life, opening us to the Infinite in nature, personhood, society.				
<i>Religion</i> ► arises from the search for, and encounters with, the sacred; we discover how to live in the world; the holy evokes wonder, grows in gratitude, matures in service.				
<i>Spiritual</i> ► breathing with a sense of what really counts.				

Comments on *Thanks for Noticing*

As I compiled these sonnets, I asked friends and acquaintances to inspect drafts of the manuscript, and invited them to respond frankly as they wished. Their comments offer different approaches and perspectives. —VB

•Mark Belletini •Alvin L Brooks
•Cynthia Clark Campbell •Sunyananda Dharma •Tom Fox •Larry Guillot
•Jerry Harrington •Mark E Hoelter
•Robert H Meneilly •Robert N Minor
•David E Nelson •Donna Ryan
•Paul R Smith •Susan Sommer
•Bill Tammeus •Dennis E Thompson
•Gerald Trimble •Charles B Wheeler



MANY of William Shakespeare's sonnets were written to a young man he loved. Although famous now for his plays, his longer poems, like "Venus and Adonis," are what made him immortal in his own day. But among his friends, his smaller, tighter poems, the sonnets were passed around first, which I think fitting for such intimate works. And these shorter poems are the very hands which open a window into his deeper heart more than anything else he wrote.

Many modern critics dismiss the erotic content of those sonnets by insisting that men just used more colorful language in those days, meaning, "It's not really erotic." But when I as a gay man first read them, it was impossible for me to see how anyone could see them as un-erotic. I felt more at home in my own skin just reading them. I felt relieved. They surprised me and seized me totally.

Michaelangelo Buonorotti wrote many sonnets to beautiful men, even though he was clearly tormented personally by his same-gender attractions because of the ferocity of his religious wrestling. But when he died, his embarrassed nephew simply changed all the male references to female references, so that the vividness of his uncle's gay passion would not end up tainting him.

In the twentieth century, things began to civilize, and you find poets like the great James Broughton, who used erotic language in his poetry that many formerly would have considered crude or raw, but which Broughton's mighty heart served up both playfully and nonchalantly, refusing to give our received American puritanism the time of day.

Today, Vern Barnet steps into the same stream of love and longing with his sonnets, *Thanks for Noticing*. In these poems, he crafts in words something of what Bernini crafted in stone with his sculpture of St Theresa in Ecstasy, found in the Capella Cornaro in Roma. The spiritual and the erotic, love and limerence, the luminous and the flesh united into one Reality. And with Vern, the intellectual also unites with the beautiful. The historical settings he weaves into his sonnets hold fast to showcase the jewel of his present ardor.

With Broughton, he refuses to give puritanism any final say. Like Michaelangelo and Shakespeare, he is faithful to the pleasures of strict form. And like me, he does not seem to be able to separate the worship of the sublime in a sanctuary from the worship in the bedroom. Nor is the twin meaning of the ancient blessing "This is my body" lost on him.

Read the poems without the commentary first, and then go back and take in the notes. And rejoice that beauty, after years of puritan exile, is now the equal again of truth and goodness.

—**The Reverend Mark Belletini, DD**, who chaired the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook commission; author: Sonata for Voice and Silence and Nothing Gold Can Stay.



Vern Barnet has long been a leader in the Kansas City region, promoting interfaith understanding. I am glad he uses his knowledge of world religions to advance discussions, even of controversial areas, including the powerful emotions of love and spirituality.

—**Alvin L. Brooks**, former City Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem of Kansas City, MO, founder of the Ad Hoc Group Against Crime



Dear Vern, As a friend and fellow Shakespeare lover (I quote him in my closing arguments as a trial lawyer), you asked me to read your book of sonnets in the Shakespearean tradition. I have done so and must briefly comment, unlike Polonius!

I was thoroughly impressed with your work and found the sonnets quite worthy. Particularly, your scholarship with respect to world religions surely enriched the sonnets and the reader's understanding of human nature in unexpected ways. Your other reviewers' notes add value in the glosses and commentary provided by a wide array of persons.

Because of your time devoted to the beautiful eliciting of love

(homoerotic) it is now dispositive same sex couples can legally marry as of June 26, 2015; in Obergefell the Supreme Court has spoken. There is yet much to do legally in terms of anti-discrimination laws to carry that recognition forward, but I think your work should be read and studied to help promote that effort.

—**Cynthia Clark Campbell**,
Campbell Law Firm



THROUGH the lenses of the world religions, Vern Barnet's one hundred and fifty-four original sonnets intimately and comprehensively explore the broad theme of love in the subtle light of sanctifying attentiveness, a focus in Buddhist teaching. "Simply beholding, without agenda, is the only way we can truly see [and love] another person" — this I underlined in the Introduction, even before I got to the sonnets.

The sonnets themselves are accompanied by epigrams and extensive footnotes to map the intricate web of double entendre and esoteric nods masterfully woven throughout the book.

As I read these pages, often just two or three sonnets at a sitting, I sometimes resisted phrases and ideas even though I thought I had dealt with such issues; the sonnets gave me new opportunities to more fully discharge the power of rigid assumptions. With scholarly and experiential homage to many spiritual languages, this superbly composed offering will challenge, enchant, and enthrall both the ordinary reader and the erudite, and suggest that the sensual person may also be the mystic.

—**The Most Ven Dr Sunyananda**

Dharma, *Guiding Teacher of the Dharmakaya Buddhist Association and provost, Buddha Dharma University*



I'M no sonnet connoisseur, but was drawn into Vern Barnett's collection, *Thanks for Noticing: The Interpretation of Desire*. He offers 154 sensual and subversive expressions. Why 154? Writes the wily Barnett: "I want to be compared to the best." Shakespeare published 154. Our contemporary sonnet poet, by nature, a modest soul, reveals, even courageously, his sensual longings through this old art form. Secure in faith and with considerable self-awareness, he enjoys pushing boundaries, breaking old religious taboos. Barnett has had a love affair with sonnets for years and now comes clean, feeling it time to share yet another expression of his mystical faith, or, as he describes his exploration of God-given desire: "the spiritual meaning of sexual yearning."

His musings and imagery are enhanced by a wide exposure over many years to varied religious traditions. There is an undercurrent to these sonnets, his attempt to shed readers of inhibition into a state of a aroused awareness of what it means to fully human, a state in which one experiencing the sexual and divine as one. Some might view Barnett as writing at the edge; others will recognize his toils in an age-old tradition of spiritual gurus who delighted in the flesh as they sang divine praise. This is not a book to be picked up and read quickly. No, it rather belongs at bedside, each sonnet to be savored and explored, slowly – lover at your side.

—**Tom Fox**, publisher, *National Catholic Reporter*



THANKS for Noticing is a revelation — and a tour de force — unique in lyricism about the love of one man for another. Vern Barnett's 154 sonnets are supported by an extraordinary framework of epigrams and notes rich in the lore of many religions, cultures, and mythology over thousands of years. The sonnets' sexual explicitness might be read at several levels: as an intimate sharing of experiences and reflections over a lifetime; as vicarious opportunities to love another person; or, if one is comfortable mixing sexual imagery with religious dialects while conceiving of God as both within oneself and as the great mystery of reality without, then also as an expression of divine love.

—**Larry Guillot**, *Roman Catholic, Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council advisor and facilitator of the Sacred Texts Book Club, retired nonprofit manager and consultant, senior graduate faculty, Park University*



The very title of Vern Barnett's book of sonnets, *Thanks for Noticing*, points to a key function of art: helping us to notice what is going on within us and around us. As someone most familiar with the art of film, a good film usually involves a good story. And, if that story is well presented, we notice not only what is on the screen, but what is in our hearts. While Barnett's story is as ambiguous and incomplete as Shakespeare's sonnets, their very ambiguity directs our attention to the complex and contradictory feelings involved in a single situation, and, through artistic skill, shows us glimpses of our larger selves.

—**Jerry Harrington**, owner, *Tivoli Cinemas in Westport*



MY FRIEND, Vern Barnet, is indeed the trickster. He who says, “No boxes can contain love’s sacred play,” smiles, winks, does a backward somersault, turns the corner, and we follow and catch him jamming appendages of love’s sacred play into sonnet boxes.

It is tempting to say that our society has cheapened the word “Love” by inflating it. But perhaps it would be more accurate to diagnose that rather our society has deflated not only the word “love” but the very act of it.

Vern vocalizes a modest response to the deflation: “I hope this book [of sonnets] encourages some to find appropriate ways to honor friends and communicate how we feel . . .” He turns trickster again, for he follows that so-American Gothic expression of hope with some immodest word wildings. And, most wild, it’s clear that he’s lived what he writes and what he writes lives him.

Fred Craddock, a famous teacher of preaching at Emory University, says, “There are times when the language of excess is the only right language. You would rightly flee from the would-be lover who says only, ‘I have an intense attraction to you.’ But you might have swooned to the lover who first said ‘You are the wind beneath my wings.’”

But these sonnets go beyond merely “the language of excess.” Vern Barnet clearly has romped, not unlike King David, who danced naked in front of ancient Israel’s sacred Ark of the Covenant, his genitals exposed, and yet, according to the Torah, pleasing God.

Or, switching religious analogies, Vern has followed the directive of his

own beloved “Heart Sutra,” and followed it in tantric devotion: *Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate . . .* (“Gone, gone, gone beyond, beyond the beyond”).

If the English Bard is in these sonnets spiritually, so also is the American Bard, Walt Whitman. Whitman also thought the electric pulse of life cannot be contained in tight little category-boxes. By his life and by his verse he caused people to wonder and still leaves people wondering: was he gay or bi or somehow beyond those sexual categories?

I am partial to my friend and to his sonnets. One («The Call») is dedicated to me, after all, and its closing sestet was (and is) as prophetic a pronouncement as I received upon my ordination into Unitarian Universalist ministry — Nathan’s “Thou art the man!” to King David, but turned positive for my ordination.

I am partial to particular lines in these sonnets.

Love, noncompulsive, nonpossessive, true, / rejoicing in your wide passions and reach . . .

For me, that’s far better than the old term (now become cliché): “unconditional love.”

I’ve come to this island where I don’t care / if you love me, though now I see your love runs / clear through me. . . .

If I haven’t at sometime been on that island, don’t I want to be?

. . . as flesh in spirit / moves . . .

What a grand reversal, instead of the usual “spirit in flesh”!

I long for you like blood needs breath when / bones are traveling fast. . . .

Any runner's or former runner's legs will ache with memory at that line. My friend turns the experience transparent to the transcendent.

And who could keep from smiling, chuckling . . . no, actually guffawing at Vern's poetic pun:

*You dance flamenco in my ass;
olé!*

Surely even the English Bard chortles in his grave at that one.

I am partial to whole poems, too: to the humor turning sublime in «Kitchen Cockroach» (I've fried more than one Kansas City cockroach thus myself, but with lesser reflection); to the "torqued down neat" engine imagery in «Acropolis Canon»; to the uniquely challenging title poem, «Thanks for Noticing», to the chameleon «Toledo Summit» (it changes color and meaning each time I read it).

I am partial to the suffusing impulse in every line, an impulse which I hear as, "Beloved reader, dear friend, do not let yourself stop or be stopped at anything less than fully making love — with desire — to every moment and every life form. And be serious about it. Be very, very serious . . . but not-too-serious."

Two poems are key for me, both folding and unfolding the collection at the same time. They are «Seasoning» ("Our holy season's sex is over . . .") and the «Closing Instruction»: "Reader, learn your own union from your rift. . . [D]raw close . . . and close remain."

So I thank my long-time friend, Vern Barnet, for sharing these poems from his heart and soul with such courage. I return now to the Zen Buddhist "Heart Sutra" ending — "Gate, gate, paragate parasamgate" —

which I shall now translate, "Go beyond, way beyond, thoroughly beyond." In his living and loving, and wonderfully in the poetic "boxes" of these sonnets, he has done just that — gone beyond the little boxes into which we so often try to stuff our sexuality, our love, our life, our spirit, too.

These sonnets tickle, shock and teach; they engage, expand and satisfy with multiple readings. There is more in them, I think, than even Will or Walt could put there; more perhaps even than Vern himself has put there.

May all who read them delight in them until "something holier doth obtain."

—*The Rev Mark E Hoelter, formerly with The InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, (D.C.), Unitarian Universalist Community Minister and Certified professional coach, International Coaches Federation, formerly with the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, DC*




CONTEMPORARY American Culture has secularized the sacred when it comes to love and sexuality. Vern has employed the unique sonnet style with a fine artistry to express the sacredness of what it is to be created by God, in "the image of God," and "but a little lower than God."

While I do not pretend to understand homosexual or bisexual orientation any more than homosexual neighbors can understand the heterosexual orientation, I do know that whatever one's gender the human being seeks and needs intimacy with another human being.


Who can judge how genuine love expresses the needed intimacy? While the author employs some vocabulary foreign to my own inherited taste, the words express for him the beauty and sacredness of unadulterated love — love that includes mutual respect, affection, and care for one another.

These sonnets have allowed me to explore certain depths of truth and life I never could have fathomed before, whether I can fully empathize with them at this moment or not.

—**The Reverend Robert H Meneilly, DD**, minister emeritus, *The Village [Presbyterian] Church, Prairie Village, KS*


 IN A SOCIETY which conditions men that closeness can only be experienced in THE act of sex, Vern Barnet, in his earlier and gently pioneering *Love Without Desire*, spoke to us with style and grace of love, closeness, healing attention, friendship and agape. Here again we see the pioneer use the sonnet to evoke thoughts, feelings, questions, and healing, calling us to a journey that explores both old and new territory through truly “beholding” the ones we meet on the frontiers of that journey.

—**Robert N Minor, PhD**, *University of Kansas Religious Studies, formerly chair of the Department; author, Scared Straight, Bhagavad-Gita: An Exegetical Commentary, and six other books*

 WHEN I started reading my friend Vern Barnet’s sonnets, I was uncomfortable — the words are so graphic, so erotic, so real, so blatant. I wondered if I dare share this

collection with close friends — would I, a heterosexual male, be embarrassed? So I read them again, and the notes, and reread the Introduction; and Vern’s honesty about sacred sexuality moved me, at times, to tears. Perhaps these sonnets will help to release our culture from the grip of selfish love and secularized sex so we can more deeply appreciate the holy gifts of love and sexuality.

—**The Reverend David E Nelson, DMin**, former pastor, *St James Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO, Appreciative Inquiry Coach, president of the Human Agenda, past convener of the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council*

 *STATELY* plump Buck Milligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. A yellow dressing gown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him. He held the bowl above and intoned, “Introibo ad altare Dei.” —from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which portrays a day of jealousy, erotic passion, friends, the church, Irish politics, lust, and Bloom’s journey home to his first love, Molly, his unfaithful wife. All led by Desire.

Eroticism’s power is not only an invitation to experience that explosion of bodily ecstasy itself, but to travel the deep journey to its core, its sacred source. Desire and yearning are created within our souls as an expression of union, beginning outside of ourselves bodily, in odor, taste, moans, and touch, for that which is incomplete within ourselves. *Desire*. Or is it attempting to be complete in its union with another?

Vern challenges our sin of dualism. “[S]ome Power enticed and did seduce the creatures to come forth, in sun’s warm shine. That Power who once selected us through sex, we yet must find in us, enshrine, and flex.”

Vern dares us to not fear the eruption but to feel its beauty and energy. “Where passion is, God finds His silvered glass presenting what is lost in our found eyes . . . in raw wonder . . . reformed in seeking him in strange disguise” «The Purpose of Sex». Who is the source of that eruption? Is this really what the Word Made Flesh describes?

Cultural anthropologists remind us that it does not matter *who* we love; rather it matters *how* we love. Are we generous, concerned about another’s pleasure, or only our own? Are we authentic, honest about who we reveal ourselves to be? Is love only measured by time or one stage in one’s life? Is not each breath and touch sacred?

The architecture of a sonnet becomes a container, as a vase, to hold the revelation of carnal desire. The fire is not dissipated within the container of the sonnet, but it is held together in a disciplined union. In ten channels that erotic fire birthed 154 sonnets: $1+5+4=10$, as did the ten chapters of Genesis, the enfleshed beginnings of the passionate Word Made Flesh. Thank you, Vern for that discipline which harnesses that to what is already sleeping in our blood, and souls.

—*Sister Donna Ryan, RSM*



I KNOW Vern as a fellow minister whose presence always expands my consciousness way past my Southern Baptist history. I often thank him for his ministry as a

kind of unofficial (and sometimes official) host in Kansas City and beyond for all spiritual paths. I like his sense of respect for my spiritual journey, the same I know he gives all others. I commend this gracious man to you.

I get excited whenever anyone blends the spiritual and the erotic, which of course, have always been blended until we unmixed them. If you want an education in world religions while rummaging through the rooms and closets of love and sexuality, these are for you.

Some years ago I held a traditional position that gay love was simply wrong. Then I read the Bible again, realized I had totally misread all it said, and didn’t say, about homosexuality. So I repented (what a good Baptist word), and led my Southern Baptist Church to welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons. What a wonderful adventure it has been in embracing God’s wonderful variety of sexual creation. Michael Bronski writes in *The Pleasure Principle*, “It is the idea, the concept of homosexuality — that is, sexual pleasure without justification or consequences — that terrifies the gay hater.” So these sonnets make a sensitive social statement also — the liberation into freedom which Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, lived, died, and rose again for.

I wrote down some of my reactions as I embraced and sometimes wrestled with these sonnets: “Classy. Erotic. Whoa! Hmmm. Whew! I shouldn’t be alone right now. You’ve got to be kidding! Fun. I don’t get that one. Too esoteric for me. Wow! I’m not ready for that. How beautiful. Yes, yes.”

And finally, if you want something to read to your lover, to open new vistas in your relationship, here it is.

—**The Rev Paul R. Smith,**

Southern Baptist pastor, Kansas City, MO



PEOPLE tend to throw around the phrase, “Renaissance Man” with reckless abandon. I do not, and I want to make this point particularly clear when I say that my friend Vern truly is a Renaissance Man. Theologian, activist, pastor, writer, teacher, scholar, embracer-of-all-things-interfaith-and-recently-baptized-Christian, musician, poet . . . Like Chaucer’s clerk, gladly would he learn and gladly teach. A lifetime of noticing (does not all good scholarship, after all, begin with noticing?) led to this remarkable collection of sonnets. And if that were not enough (*dayenu!*), the reader is gently, humbly taught by the notes that Vern includes with each. In Vern’s presence – flesh and blood and in his written word – we can’t help but find ourselves noticing right alongside him. And in noticing, find ourselves sharing the gratitude which informs the whole of Vern’s life, which we lucky ducks get to experience in full measure when we dive into what he has chosen to share with us.

I envy those who have known Vern longer than I. That said, as his one-time pastor for several blessed years, I discovered that Vern and I share a love for paranomasia – which, in part, is why we also share a love for the sonnets of Shakespeare and Donne. So it occurs to me that the notes that Vern shares, that explicate his manifold allusions to classical literature, world religions, sacred and profane love of di-

verse kinds, and works of fellow poets, remind me that Vern really is a jazz artist on top of his many other accomplishments. He note-ices everything. And like good jazz artists everywhere, he thoroughly embraces the discipline of (in this case) poetic structure and theory while riffing splendid notes you never saw coming, in his own inimitable fashion. Pull up a chair. Notice what he does and how he does it. You’ll be grateful you did.

—**The Reverend Susan Sommer,**
rector, St. David’s Episcopal Church, Glenview, IL



WHAT Vern Barnet has somehow managed to do in *Thanks for Noticing* is to produce remarkably evocative and provocative poetry even while sending the readers off to interfaith graduate school.

The sonnets are richly textured, surprising, profane, uplifting and revelatory. They certainly stand on their own without apology or explanation. But Vern was wise enough to include for each one careful footnotes to help readers get the references, the metaphors, the indirections.

This is not material that will compete with hard rock or rap music, TV sitcoms, two-star-rated action films, light summer mystery novels or any of the rest of the often-tedious offerings of pop culture. Rather, it soars above all that and invites readers to ride along into frank considerations of sexuality, desire, love, and spirituality. The ride will leave you breathless, spent.

—**Bill Tammeus,** *recipient of many awards, including from the American Academy of Religion and the National Society of Newspaper Columnists. His*

books include A Gift of Meaning and They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust. Formerly with the Faith section of The Kansas City Star, he now writes for The Presbyterian Outlook and the National Catholic Reporter.



Vern Barnet's sonnet collection, *Thanks for Noticing: The Interpretation of Desire* melds academic presentation with literary art form, creating a whole work that would please the Bard of Avon. Barnet establishes useful context throughout the work, employing epigraphs and footnotes that guide the reader on a literary journey and allow the reader to experience the subject through the form of language. His masterful sonnet choices and the unique organizational strategy of the collection weave a tapestry of transcendence, allowing one to share aspects of the physical and spiritual world, merging an evolving sense of human desire with the divine. I have no hesitation in endorsing Barnet's bold work of art.

—**Dennis E. Thompson**, *Professor of English and Humanities*



AN EARLY CONNECTION with Vern Barnet was a shared interest in the Islamic and Middle-Eastern roots of our "Western Civilization" and the open secret of this centuries-long cultural interchange.

Whereas my primary interest was musical, Vern's was poetic (the two have only recently come to be considered separate fields). What he has done within his discipline, I would like to do as successfully and seamlessly in mine.

This poetry rests on a bedrock that

runs from the ancient world through the Sufi masters of the Middle Ages to the European Renaissance — and I refer to the poetic content and well as form.

People of all persuasions should read this. These poems reveal a universal expression of desire. The notes provide a brilliantly compact education in the sonnet tradition.

—**Gerald Trimble**, *Celtic world music performer.*



Kansas City is enjoying a cultural revolution. The world-famous Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the new Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and its resident companies, the Friends of Chamber Music, the Kansas City Art Institute, the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance, the Kansas City Repertory Theater and many other performance companies, the flourishing Crossroads arts district, several renown choral groups, and distinguished literary programs are examples.

This ground-breaking book, *Thanks for Noticing: The Interpretation of Desire*, represents the excellence and the continuing promise of the arts in Kansas City.

—**Charles B Wheeler, MD**, former mayor of Kansas City, MO, and former Missouri state senator

WHAT IS A SONNET?

Often about the experience of love, a sonnet ("little sound") is usually a 14-line poem, in iambic pentameter rhythm — da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM**. The line end-rime scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet is *abab-cdcd : efef-gg*. Often a *volta*, a turn of thought, occurs after the 8th line. DETAILS ON NEXT PAGE

A poem is not the way we ordinarily speak. W H Auden calls it a "verbal contraption":—"A poem is a rite; hence its formal and ritualistic character. Its use of language is deliberately and ostentatiously different from talk." Just as a dancer may beautifully and skillfully move across a space in ways beyond the usual gait, so the poet often employs words in strange ways.

The pleasure of poetry is, in part, seeing how the structure and the theme of the poem create each other — as I say explaining the cover of my book:

The poetic form does not merely contain a sentiment as a glass contains water. Rather speak of the grail containing wine; the meaning of each is intensified by the other. In poetry the form and the sentiment are as intimately related as the body and the soul.

Even within its fixed form, each sonnet has its own rules, and discovering how each contraption works within its 700-year tradition can be thrilling.

But you don't have to know about sonata allegro form to be moved by a Beethoven symphony, you don't have to know how to score a gymnast to thrill when you see something amazing, you don't have to be a horticulturist to appreciate a garden's appeal, you don't have to be able to paint to be awed by Velásquez, and you don't have to be a master chef to enjoy a delicious meal. Still, knowing a little about an art form can greatly enhance one's pleasure. The devices of a sonnet can, in 14 lines, compress and reveal a world of meaning. **Art is the body language of the soul.**

The Hebrew Scripture presents God through sounds rather than images (which were forbidden in the Decalogue). God *spoke*, not *wrote*, to create the world. God's voice may be heard many ways, including "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

The word *sonnet* derives from "little-sound," so *unspoken* words on a page do not make a sonnet, which begins with sounds, even the groans through which the Spirit may

plead for us (Romans 8:26-8). A sonnet is to be *heard*, not seen, just as a musical score is not realized until it is performed. (A particular example in my book is 13 "Cowboy Krishna Plays his Flute.")

Something happens. It is like describing someone and then speaking directly to him or her; or a shift, as when Jesus, in the final crisis, said, "May this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).

HOW TO READ A SONNET

0. There is no right way to read a poem, only different ways. But consider:

1. How is the sonnet set in print? — Indentations and stanza breaks may be cues for the voice.
2. Which lines end with a complete unit of meaning (often one breath)? Capitalization and punctuation can also suggest how to breathe.
3. **Read the sonnet aloud**, perhaps several times, as you continue the next steps. A sonnet is a lyric, but read it dramatically. Vary your volume, speed, and pauses as the theme develops.
4. Relish the sound-play — repetition and contrasts in rhythm, phrasing, alliteration (consonant sounds), assonance (vowel sounds), words, internal rimes (but don't overplay end rimes).
5. Do you find paronomasia — punning and word-play? (Because of pronunciation changes since Elizabethan English, we sometimes fail to spot them in Shakespeare, but many of mine are pretty obvious; for example, my 23 "Examination.")
6. Are images and conceits (far-fetched comparisons) fresh and effective? How do they structure the poem?
7. Does the thought, speaker, situation, metaphor, or story-line change direction?
8. What theme or "thoughts of the heart" arise?
9. Where is theme's center? Let the voice transform any information into the theme.
10. Is this sonnet a universe of meaning in a nutshell? How can that be displayed and conveyed through the voice?

In brief, the answer to the question of how to read a sonnet is in one word: **ALoud**.

THE SCAFFOLDING OF A SONNET

The “English” or “Shakespearean” sonnet consists of 14 lines, each of which one can easily speak in one breath if the sense is complete with the line. Each set of four lines is a **quatrain** and the last two lines are called a **couplet**. The first two quatrains make the **octave**; the last six lines is the **sestet**. A regular line is in iambic pentameter. An **iamb** is a set of two syllables, the first unstressed, the second stressed. **Pentameter** is a line of five “feet” of iambs. (A unit of rhythm in poetry is called a foot from poetry’s early association with dance.)

To avoid monotony and to support the meaning, most sonnets vary the rhythm. A line may have a natural pause within it called a **caesura**, in which case the rhythm might be indicated by a vertical slash (/) in scansion as this example (Shakespeare’s Sonnet 129:13):

All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
 x / x / x / x / x / x / x /

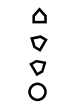
A line with a complete unit of meaning or grammatical boundary is **end-stopped**. If it continues to the next line, it is **enjambéd**.

THE INTERNAL PATTERN OF MEANING

Within the external scaffolding, Shakespeare employs various ways by which his meaning unfolds. I represent three of them graphically.

Often Shakespeare adapts the Italian sonnet’s **volta**, turn, to look at the matter of the octave from a different perspective in the sestet; but sometimes the **volta** isn’t made until the couplet.

1. The same idea is presented in three quatrains, each with a different metaphor, followed by a couplet, as in Sh 73 and my 30.



2. The octave presents a theme, the third quatrain summarizes it, and the couplet condenses it once again, as in Sh 55 and my 15.



3. The most typical internal structure Shakespeare uses presents an issue in the octave; and with a **volta**, he presents a changed stance in the sestet, as in Sh 29, my 14, often beginning with *Yet* or *But* or *While*.



4. Some sonnet writers simply meander within the external Shakespearean form.

Experimenting — even a 15- or 18-line sonnet — can work well within the 700-year tradition of this beloved form of poetry.

Supplemental Bibliographic Data

The Library of Congress classification range PS3600-PS3626 is for Language and Literature/ American Literature/ Individual authors/ 2001-. The additional categories for cross-referencing are listed on page 3.

This collection of 154 original sonnets explores the sacred beauty of sex and love, with notes capturing erotic wisdom from the world’s religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. Because the sonnets are arranged by parts of the Mass, and identify the spiritual with erotic passion, some may consider the book blasphemous.

Lovers of all kinds turn to Shakespeare’s 154 sonnets for their depth of emotion, richness of thought, and ingenuity of expression. Most were written to a beautiful young man. Like Shakespeare’s, these sonnets similarly range from youthful folly to maturity, from infatuation to insight.

Utilizing a neo-Baroque or Postmodern literary theory, the sonnets and glosses also question how art and life are related, as well as the social construction of gender and sexuality in the context of comparative religions. The 10,000-word Introduction prepares the reader for these issues as they unfold in the sonnets.

The book is a prosimetrum, that is an integrated text of both poetry and prose. Biblical texts such as the book of Jeremiah, Dante’s *Vita nuova*, T S Eliot’s “The Waste Land,” and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* are among the precedents for this prosimetrum style.

Epigraphs (from Catullus to Steely Dan) introduce most sonnets, and notes explain terms and allusions from many spiritual and philosophical traditions (A to Z, American Indian to Zoroastrian, Fa Tsang to Paul Tillich, Nagarjuna to Wittgenstein). Notes also explain references to science (xylem tissue, the Higgs boson, and such).

The book begins with a Frontispiece (the author’s original tune, a setting for one of the sonnets), a Preface, the Introduction about desire, love, sex, and the sonnet form. Appendices outline how these sonnets fit into an overview of world religions and describe the historical circumstances of Shakespeare’s sonnets. An author’s biographical sketch and several endorsements of the book are included.

[First printing:] Last year, April 26, 2014, was the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare’s baptism (his birth date is unknown) and next year, April 23, 2016, is the 400th anniversary of his death. This book, marking these observances, is a way of honoring Shakespeare’s own struggles with his beloved young man and the mysterious dark lady.

This book is offered to readers of poetry and those interested in world religions, personal development, relationships, Postmodern literary theory, sexuality, LGBTQIA literature, and gender studies in a kind of liturgical framework.

The paperback book is 224 pages, 6x9½ inches (15cm wide by 23cm high by 1.25 cm thick), color cover.

Images on 1, 2, 4, 31, 93, 221.

This second printing corrects errors found in the initial run, and some of the sonnet lines have mutated. Other writers (Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* went through over a half-dozen editions, Auden kept revising some of his poems, etc) have sought to improve their work after initial publication.

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see Style and Conventions, p224.

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CONVENTIONS AND STYLE

Just as the prose in Dante's *La Vita Nuova* appears with the poems, my *notes* and glosses appear on the same pages as the sonnets, rather than in a separate section in the back of this prosimetrum, to emphasize the unity I hope this book achieves. After all, this book praises *note*-icing.

Epigraph sources can be spotted by looking for the word EPIGRAPH in small capital letters; subsequent epigraphs are marked like **E2**. Glossing the sonnets, specific words, word forms, or phrases are placed in **bold italic** for comment. When relevant notes appear under other sonnets as well, a sagittal character directs the reader thus: → «Cited Sonnet». As just shown, references to titles of sonnets are given in guillemets. If more than one sonnet is cited, the titles are separated by a plus sign within a single set of guillemets. References to the book's § Introduction are marked with a hurricane, to sections with a ¶ pilcrow. I've often omitted names of opera librettists.

CAPITALIZATION, PUNCTUATION, AND ITALICIZATION are sometimes changed in epigraphs and other fragmentary quotations. I avoid periods with abbreviations if I can. Initials in names and abbreviations such as vol (volume), tr (translator), ed (editor), and ch (chapter) are not followed with periods, and p (page) precedes the number with no space.

I have not italicized the names of familiar sacred books such as the Upanishads, the plays of Shakespeare, The Book of Common Prayer, or when I refer to the sonnets by Shakespeare; but I capitalize when I refer to a specific sonnet, as Shakespeare's Sonnet 14, and to the 1609 book. I've spelled out names of the books of the Bible.

When it is clear, I have sometimes left a word or passage in a foreign language in roman type, instead of the usual practice of italics. Where a word is being defined or discussed, no punctuation is used to mark it unless clarity or other considerations require it. I've sometimes used a forward slash / to mark the end of a line of quoted poetry. I space on both sides of an em dash — except in making an attribution.

I use the French style of commas before the *and* in a series. I usually avoid the British, "logical," style which places a comma or a period outside of quotation marks unless it is part of the material quoted. The British style makes sense, but it doesn't look good to me. I decline to succumb to Kingdom Microsoft

with its three unspaced dots for an ellipsis.

DROP CAPS begin every sonnet. The first sonnet in each section begins with a **black** drop cap and the rest in that section in **outline**. Other letters of the first word are in small capitals as is second word if the first word is short. The first and last sonnets also use small caps for structure. In the sonnets, I sometimes use *italics* instead of quotation marks to indicate someone speaking.

ALL DATES are in the Common Era (CE, Anno Domini, AD) unless marked BCE (Before the Common Era, BC) or AH (Anno Hegirae, the Era of the Migration in the Islamic calendar). An uncertain or approximate date is given with a question mark, not c. for circa. I use a short hyphen between years (1223-1301) in parentheses for birth-death years.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES are sufficient except when the scribbles in my commonplace books have not enabled me to trace the original source more precisely. When many editions of a work exist, I may cite by means other than page numbers. The style of a specific citation is governed by brevity and the context in which it appears. Some familiar material is not sourced or translated.

NUMBERS in citations that are not dates refer to items, sections, chapters, verses, or lines, according to the material, or, if preceded with a small letter p, to a page or pages.

THE PAGE NUMBERS of this book are continuous Arabic numerals because many folks nowadays find the customary Roman numerals for preliminary material to be perplexing. The sonnets begin on page 51; thus the page number is the sonnet number plus 50.

RIME is a legitimate English spelling for rhyme, as in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." **CODEPENDENCE** is not hyphenated.

Sonnets listed p6-7 and p222-223 with slanted page numbers are reworked from my 1992 collection, *Love Without Desire*. Sonnets with language that could offend have page numbers with bolded equal signs, namely 25, 43, 55, 90, 101, 113-115, 118-125, 127-131, 135, 139, 143, 146, and 148.

READERS who report errors or who have comments or suggestions for future editions and who email vern@cres.org will receive an expression of my gratitude.