The Trinitarian Mystery

Escaping Solipsism

by Mark Tracy

Preface: “Waiter, There’s an Ant in my Pi”

Imagine an ant in a three-dimensional universe (2 spatial dimensions and time) that is forced to march from left to right along the statement “pi = 3.1415…” (where the digits are written out eternally) from an arbitrary starting position. Suppose the ant has all of our notions of mathematics, though any symbols it may use to represent the same mathematics in its three-dimensional universe would in all likelihood be different from the symbols we use in our four-dimensional universe. To the ant, the progression of events it experiences on its march would appear to be random at first, but certain patterns would begin to emerge. It might begin to figure out that the different repeating experiences it has seem to represent numbers, though in a different symbology. The sequence might take on a seemingly permanent order during portions of the march. For example, the digits 0 and 1 may alternate a trillion times at some point in the sequence. We might imagine that the ant was dropped into that repeating sequence as its starting position, such that that pattern is all it has ever known. Eventually, though, that order would terminate, since the digits of pi are non-terminating and not ultimately repeating (i.e. it never settles into a sequence that repeats infinitely). The clever ant might be able to sift through these appearances of illusory order and determine what it may call a “true” interpretation of the pattern in terms of the ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter. Here “true” should be taken to mean that when tested it always predicts the next digit accurately. The ant is experiencing a nonrandom sequence. But the ant could only ever be satisfied with the interpretation, or model, that it has of the sequence, which at best will never have yet failed. Yet even when it has landed on a model that has never yet failed, the ant knows that its previous models eventually failed or proved to be only a piece of the larger pattern. This ant represents humanity.

Note that I am not saying that the universe has a potentially comprehensible, fully determinate nature, as we know the digits of pi do in the above allegory. But I am saying that even if it does, we are epistemically in the position of the ant, never even potentially able to know whether it does. It is from this fragile position of knowing one’s not-knowing that this book of poetry is written.

The Poems

God and the Process of Self **4**

Dissection 5
The Speaker 6
The Saying-So 7
The Blue Hillsides 8
Rebuilt 9
Is Nihilism Coherent? 10
You Wrote This Poem 11
A Love Song to Myself 12
Remember 13
Let He Who is Without Sin Cast the First Stone 14

Authenticity and Becoming **15**

To Poetry and Magic 16
The Mother Goes Ahead 17
The Frog and the Wren 18
River 19
The End of Humanity 20
On Sitting Up Straight 21
Crystal Teardrops (on Gender) 22

Nature **23**

A Wave 24
Conversation with a Tree 25
In the Buzzing of Dragonflies 26
We Lose Sight of it in Small Towns 27
The Grasses 28
Pick 29
On Vegetarianism 30
From the Mountains 31
It Was Good 32

Impermanence and Loss **33**

Be Imperfect and Die 34
Memory Blender 35
Nothing Essential is Lost 36

Natural Selection 37
Baby Bird 38
To the Birds 38
And What of All This Swirling? 39
A Wondrous Duel 40
The Reflecting Wall 41
On Emphasizing the Out-Breath 43

Science and Philosophy 44
Platonic Silence 45
The Age of Reason 46
Triunity (on Marriage and Doing Science) 47
Ode to Redundancy 48
Philosophy and Pragmatism 49

To Catherine 50
As Petals Fade 51
To See and Be Seen 52
A Meatball 53
Still Tomorrow 54
Reflections 55
Fence 56
Movies of You 57
What I've Learned from Marriage 58

Mental Health and Healing 59
The Three Singers 60
Can I Be? 61
Bipolar Disorder 62
Is this Relatable? 63
Orison for a New World 64
On Prayer 65
On Fatherhood 66
To Know Everything 67
A Prophet of Honesty 68
Adam and Eve 69

God and the Process of Self

Dissection

God gave himself up to our dissection.
An ultimate openness; a kenosis.

“Leaves don’t exist as such”—sure.
But can there be such a house with no foundation?
Can there be haecceity all the way down?

Things evolve at random when there’s nothing at stake;
but what strange trajectories mine have!

And when does the bread I eat become me?
Where does it become not-bread?
And shouldn’t I ask this on Sunday?

Oh, what can I make of all these games?
Only silence! Breath. Heartbeat.

The Speaker

I built for myself a cage,
So that I could stand apart from myself—
inside myself—to look at myself
and say, “You are doing this.”

If I let my view draw near
To my furthest reaches,
The outer frontier of my becoming,
I would become all too much, and nothing.
And what would I say then?

And while the cage confines me,
It defines me, or else
It allows my definition, or else
It is my definition.
The Speaker, Speaking, and Spoken:
a God in a cage.

The Saying-So

There is no office space inside my skin
where my brain and body do their number-crunching
and come to “me” for the final say-so;
because I am not other than the number-crunching,
and the number-crunching is the saying-so.

If I be atomic particles in flux with my surroundings, so be it.
And if I be entangled with my surroundings, all the better.

I cannot comprehend another way but that all is one
process, one Self,
of which I am the body and a mouth.
I declare myself the one Self as my mouth declares
“I am a body”:
The mouth is not the body,
but the declaration that “I am a body”
can only be made by means of the mouth.

In just this way I declare that
I am an individual and one with this Self:
the Speaker incarnate as the Word through the Speaking.

The Blue Hillsides

Don’t make the person behind the person;
Don’t put the man inside the machine.
Don’t have desire about your desires;
And have no fear of your fear.
Let the dusty green moth rest beside the fire;
Let the shadow-blue hillsides be seen.

Rebuilt
Tobit 13

Don’t think too hard.
See the statue, look up.
There are phrases all around the Lord.
There are tendrils in the air.

To think deeply is not to think hard
(unless you play for that team—
then my hat’s off to you).

The sun on the horizon
is muted through a haze
of moonstone *en cabochon*.
I crease my brow to hold it.

There’s a spire from a church;
        but higher
the university building;
        and higher still
the ugly brick apartments;
        and finally On High
are the four radio towers
        issuing their Spirit.

So this will be rebuilt
with sapphires and emeralds?
These streets with rubies?
These towers with pure gold?

I guess I’m an early investor then.

Don’t think too hard.
See the statue, look up.
There are phrases all around the Lord.
There are tendrils in the air.

Is Nihilism Coherent?

I spoke with God today.
He told me sorry.
He said,
“You were meant to compete,
but you weren’t meant to realize you were doing it.”
He said,
“You were meant to solve problems,
but not well enough to see The Problem.”
He said,
“Please have patience with yourself (with me);
there is no ‘detached’ perspective to be had;
look through your own eyes, and be at home.”

You Wrote This Poem

If you don’t know what a poem is, this isn’t one.

If you truly don’t believe in poems at all, then this isn’t one.

This is only a certain interaction of fundamental particles. (If you don’t know what those things are, they aren’t.)

If you don’t speak this language, it doesn’t say anything at all.

If you are of the intelligence that they call “artificial” and receive this as a binary stream, it is only that.

If you see only the contrast of dark lettering on white, then this is a painting.
Perhaps a bad one.

This poem is the experience of this poem.

You wrote this poem, and write it still. (You are I are the poem.)

A Love Song to Myself

The halcyon time was almost real:
The half-bare tree tops did form a cathedral,
but the cathedral never knew your sins.

The breath of the Defender quakes,
and its tremble carries a whisper,
a love song to myself:

“God is around as you are among;
You can be little; you are enough.”

Remember

Remember what you are and what you aren't.
(forget, occasionally)

Let He Who is Without Sin Cast the First Stone

Take up space in creation.
You already do.
Take your place in creation:
Your place of creator and creature,
As the imaginer, the imagining;
What you slow grows; and what you let pass shall slip away at its pace.

You see, there never were any rules.
But if you want one, here:
You cannot play by any rule that you have not yet discovered.
And so on it goes, running
fingers through sand and
weeping at its passing.
But the motion is relative.

As sailboats tack upwind, we beat into the future against the wind of the past.
Our sail is Symbol, representation.
Our vessel is one another in turn: we hold as we behold.
The sea is our Loneliness:
the way you cannot visit a friend's dream;
the way that Red has no clear meaning.

The point is the persistence, the persistence the point.
All cannot be well, for well cannot be All:
All has no Other, and well is a relation.
But All can be slowed in its passing from dark to dark
by fingers run through sand.

Authenticity and Becoming

To Poetry and Magic

My poems create their maker
(I'm taller than I think I am).
When I search among fields of choices
to call forth dialogue from noise,
I grant peaceful power conduit
to create myself by prophecy
and reckon myself by words and worlds
beyond my reaching
(I'm smaller than I think I am).

Let me be for these words as all for all:
a passage from passing to passing;
and let me drag along meaning through dogged mud
drying always as it is to dust.

The Mother Goes Ahead

Maiden, whither do you go,
with your diadem of silver and
your ecru shantung robe?
Won't you stay a while and count with me
the ways a net can hold a sphere,
and whether it may flow?

Else let me wander in your wake:
Give to me hibiscus dress,
hedge maple breast:
And I will guard your taxa;
And create myself by declaration,
And unhold the names that falter.

Oh, but won't you stay to speak my name!
In soothing and in psalter;
Giggle light upon my altar,
And let me worship you with wine.

Else carry me a while:
Teach your bird to sing in chroma;
Wash me sweet in the aroma
of the levity you keep.

Queen of sorrows, bless me please
to release the fist I clenched in fear;
That I may not punish what in me appears
and in vain crucify my king.

Oh, but whither do you go?
Please call out to me from there!

The Frog and the Wren

I'll make myself a character
if it enhance our storytimes.

(Authenticity is not-being;
it's only not-to-do.
The being is your game;
it's ultimately up to you.)

This sort of divination
is our duty and our right:
to seed ourselves by inclination
and build by day as dreamt by night.

So I'll be a frog and you'll be a wren;
and we'll decide what that means.
We'll live in a cottage with a little smoke
whirling gently round the beams.

And if it please to be a rat,
we'll squeeze together in our den.
And in our deepmost ratwrought dreams
we'll sing a song of frog and wren.

River

In the mirror
I see
river. River—

if I name it,
does it cease to flow?

if I
cease

A man only knows other men.

The End of Humanity

The end of humanity (and its source) is to know
that there is not “humanity” to inhabit as such.
There is only the ongoing “I”—and what
I take it and make it to be.

On Sitting Up Straight

My fathers hold my back straight:
my father and his father.
Their mothers too—
a cascading line of waterfalls that moves this one wheel, now.

My mother's tugging at my chin who told me once
that men who hold their backs too straight are likely to be gay;
My wife then soothes my shoulders when she told me that's ridiculous.

Mywifeme holds my back straight,
and God looks through my eyes.

Crystal Teardrops (on Gender)

My poems are crystal teardrops
born of confusion, crystallized
by its resolution.
They work their way out;
I cannot push them.
Here's one.

I am the lightest amongst women
and I beat the heavy drum
amidst the company of brothers—
And why shouldn't I?

I carry years of
Knowing and Unknowing,
of the hardening and softening,
of the chortles and the fire;
and it turns out I am all of it,
(or at least a pretty bird or two
    has bounced around before me while I
    paid attention to my head and noticed
    it within me.)

Now if I bow down to your office,
will you carry me awhile?
Life's too wonderful to be something;
and all that's there to choose
are silly beats within a background that is
Orchestral,
so why bother?

That I may be nothing to myself,
I am Yours.

Nature

A Wave

There is a place, a starting point for thought,
Where the wave is not a breath, nor an unseen excitation;
A time when the ocean wave is entirely and only itself.
Here I see the space is vast that isolates a lover,
And turbulent the time
    that shakes the brittle tie of one to one.

If I should cast a stone at the wave in my conceit,
    might it stir the olivine sea
on distant shores
    to break at your feet?
And might you then marvel at how beautiful the world can be?

Though we insist our borders hold,
    I plainly see
        what is of you
            but in me.

Conversation with a Tree

I ask the tree,
“I know that my binaries are spectra,
and every name’s a judgment.
Any walls I have ever built worked both ways.
But how far can I extend?
And If I start, can I stop?”

It says,
“I grow upward because there is no limit;
If I began from a height and extended downward,
I would have fixed my potential from the start.”

I ask the tree,
“I know that there is neither headwind
nor tailwind if I am still;
And yet it is the stillness in her eyes
that carries one moment to meet the next;
And so time takes its hold on me.”

It says,
“Stillness is a matter of scale
and headwinds a matter of facing.
I have no face and am on many scales,
so I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

In the Buzzing of Dragonflies

There's a manlike activity in the buzzing of dragonflies:
Their darting and zipping,
their pausing to evaluate, then flitting away toward gain.
There's economy, intention, drive.

But our highest calling is not like this at all, but rather
that through our eyes the Lord may view again His Garden;
And by us stroll through His creation
to find His rest among its goodness.

To flit and fly is a worthy dance,
but if you lend not your mind to the emptied God
you merely fortify your princedom;
And why spend so long on designing your headstone?

Leave to me the river island, guarded by its lilies:
the pokeweed, the honeysuckle, and a few brave pines—
I'll approach them soft as air, with my eyes the gates of heaven opened,
and I'll leave it all to bloom.

We Lose Sight of it in Small Towns

We lose sight of it in small towns.
In the forest it is clear
What tension grips the heartwood
As bustling the leaves
And desperately the roots reach out—
To live,
        To take,
                To change.

What difference it would make
If I could live half so ardently
As once I loved you.

The Grasses

I am indebted to the grasses,
Their painter's blend of browns and greens,
The gradient that supervenes;

And to their voices,
never addressed, but overheard,
Like her playful chiding whisper
when to reason she was wrong
        but still would not allow
my truth to limit Beauty,
or the ugliness she overlooked
        to desecrate her truth.

I am indebted to the grasses,
For at wind's demand the grasses bend,
each in honest view of itself,
Without a thought for straightness.

Pick

The breadberry, picked ripe from the vine, so
red as to be almost not-red, picked. So made ready to be eaten.

And eaten. And picked. And eaten. Devoured. Picked, and eaten. Devoured.

And so the burnt, the island.
the dust which the Sower fertilized
returned to dust.
The cut off, the withering. The innocent
Forgetting that there ever were more innocents
than himself. The quiet sleep,
the tears not shed for it.

The fruit, picked.

The once loud and powerful beast: a fool.
An oaf, hated. Goliath was not killed by David: he was
shrunk.

And which of you, if your father held out a rattlesnake when you asked for a fish, would refuse it?

And which of you, if you cast your net into the sea and caught many fish, would not
Get a Bigger Net?

The kingdom is yours.

Or the fruit, picked.

On Vegetarianism

Behind the lion's
eyes, I saw no soul—except,
of course, for My Own.

From the Mountains

From a peak I watched the mist roll over distant mountains.
It was a sight that demands reverence,
a beauty that lends no closure.

At that distance, the forest looked like one being,
as if the trees had worked together to construct
some tower of Babel, with as much claim to divinity
as anything I've known.

In my rapture, I paid homage to the cardinal sin of man:
I forgot that my vantage point was not a privileged one.
Suddenly the mist poured in, like liquid silver into a mold,
and swallowed the peak on which I stood.

A moment later, I saw nothing.
I doubted if the landscape had ever been there at all.

How could there have been beauty where such a truth now stands?

It Was Good

It was good
(for even just a moment)
to stand before a single tree;
To let it be *this*!
To let it be *thus*!
And to let it be Other:
To let it be the subject
of an oath, or a song,
or dirges.

Impermanence and Loss

Be Imperfect and Die

Be imperfect, and die!
Envy not the ancient constellations,
With their stick-figure constancy
fixed in the heavens.
No! Forgive this conception and transcend it.

Be a real constellation:
Burning, ever-moving and glorious
for your never-waiting, your
indifference to the supplication
of that old, inquiring organ
which churns inside you
but would petrify the churning.

Be imperfect, and die!
Envy not the ancient spring,
which pushes life from lifeless darkness
and originates the stream.
No! Use this conception but doubt it.

You do not stand outside causation,
launching balls of substance
To a cold, indifferent Other
that would bounce around by Patterns
and return to reward or punish.

Be a real spring: Take and give!
And affect your future taking,
and modify your giving;
But be part of the dance of things!

Swirl, and know that you are swirling!
Burn, and know that you are burning!
Sit awhile to hear your crying:
“Be imperfect, and die!”

Memory Blender

I wish my memory were not such a blender.
I want more of the “one time she,” and not the “she would always” that I’ve got.
The “she would always” might be fine without the “until.”
But instead my memory blends and bends the one to fit them all;
and it doesn’t ask my say.

I suppose the blessing I must take is that
she found herself one
who would string the beads of “one time” with an “always”
and wear it as a necklace,
a talismanic meeting point
of “she would always” and “I will always.”
I carry it over my heart.

Nothing Essential is Lost

Start yourself here:
"Let all be True!"
So are we to filter and hold the source—each.

Nothing essential is ever lost.

Natural Selection

I woke up.
It hit me all at once
(Winning so many tickets in my dream at the arcade)
My dad is getting older.
(someday.)
The blankets are a warm loneliness that is
humiliating.
(The light cuts clean through the slats.
Beyond, the world in slivers—
Ailanthus trees, the cracked lot, a couple parked cars—)

Did death really create all of this?

Baby Bird

Baby bird
On the sidewalk;
Gone so young, never feathered;
Once encased, never fettered—
Through your intercession:

Let my death be like yours—in a whisper;
To a hymn sung by mi familia;
For my tomb the whole world.

And let them sing unto new millennia:
Those who flew that I may try to fly, who
Landed that I may find ground.
Let them sing, then let them whisper;
But let them not be drowned out.

To the Birds

And to the birds still on wing,
Can it be that your song is always a cry?
Always a yearning, always in earnest?
I choose to think
That you sing from time to time just because you are
happy.
And that sometimes you fly
just because you like flying—
dipping and weaving,
Letting the wind blow you off your path,
then rebutting its objection, and enjoying the dance.
I choose to think
That you bob on the breeze for the thrill—
the almost-falling, the catching yourself by your wings.

Let my feeder be where you land.
Let it be a place where you eat your fill;
and then more than your fill, for the taste.
A place where you find seed, never rocks,
evermore.

And What of All This Swirling?

And what of all this swirling?
To see life always in reflection
On the eye to which I hold myself

And when until its stopping?
Can I hold for longer still
With all I know awash?

And essence—what to know
And what to let slip through—
When will it matter?

Time—to hold and time for
All. But what—and more,
For whom? It never started.

And if I should exist
Only for my own sake—
Then what?

A Wondrous Duel

After she was in
position above the grave,
we cooed at babies.

The Reflecting Wall

I was thinking
that one has a certain amount of time with one's lover to essentially memorize their responses and reactions to things; to download, as it were, their "software." During this period one obsesses over their loved one's least gestures, tells stories to their partner in their own mind—and they imagine the lover's response.
They have many repetitions planned to test their hypotheses and adjust their expectations.

So that then, when one lover is lost, the surviving lover can continue, to some extent, the connection.
They can still speak to their lover and imagine their response.
They have memorized their touch and their laugh, their gait.
It is as if they can still see them. But the difference is,
Before they departed, their lover could surprise them.
The lover was always capable of being funnier, more beautiful, even,
than he had imagined in his mind—
more perfect—more correct, somehow—than he remembered.

Someday the image in my head of you will not surprise me like you used to.
And I will find
That I am not surprised by you anymore, but composed of you.
That you have given me structure—a reflecting wall inside my own self.
And when I am no longer surprised by you it will be because
You gave me all you had to give.
And I will do the same for you—that is, to give you all I have—
In case it may be I that runs out first.

That was a good one. There's probably a poem in there somewhere.
I should tell the lady. I'll tell it generally, because I thought of it generally. But of course,
no matter how generally I present it she'll still instantiate my abstractions, i.e.
bring them into the particular by applying them to herself, and then she'll cry.

Maybe I shouldn't tell her.

"Hey lady, do you wanna hear something I just thought of? I think it's quite interesting but it might make you cry."

"Are you gonna talk about you dying?"

"Umm, well no, not about me dying but about any couple in which one member dies first. So I guess me? Or you."

“Don’t tell me—you know I’m gonna cry.”

Maybe she’s right. I probably shouldn’t tell her. But I suppose all that should be in the poem too. Or short story?

I think someday I’ll have her read this.

On Emphasizing the Out-Breath

Play your hunger.
Strum it like a silver chord.
Let it dance like a cool flame
round the earthen walls of
the fine ceramic vase of your body.

Relish the out-breath.
Without it there is no in-breath, no relief;
Yet it is not only an assistant but a
companion.
Let it tickle your lip and whisper to you
quiet songs of going.

Stare at darkness.
Let it fill your eyes like warm water
in an onyx bowl; and let it
bellow its vacancy, its opening.

Open your windows to let the darklight in.
And now out.

Science and Philosophy

Platonic Silence

I walked in the forest.
I cannot say what I saw.
But what I did not see is
a single instantiation of a class.

The Age of Reason

Suppose “energy”
were instead called
“spirit.”

What changes?

Triunity (on Marriage and Doing Science)

There is no fact that is Fact,
(the Father is above all)
nor truth of what is Truth;
(only the Word is Truth)
but Relationship is not blind to itself,
and so the Spirit testifies to Love.

When I dissolve my borders I
reveal them;
And when joined in love,
I became to myself a triunity
of self, other, and relationship.

So is Love unto Truth
As is Truth unto Fact:
revealing, leading, yielding
Faith unto
all who take part.

Ode to Redundancy

And then God said: “Let there be redundancy in their systems,
but not so much redundancy that nothing gets built;
to give solace to those who are afraid and to give
light where there was darkness.
And let there be checkers and maintainers.
Let the cost of this redundancy be borne in a distributed manner:
By some in the form of boring jobs, by some
as bills, by some in tolls, by others in audits, and by others in audits.”

And so it was.

I thought absolute faith in God was the only way back to absolute trust in mankind.
Perhaps it is.
But I also saw that all along I had nearly absolute faith in the creations of mankind—
or at least in those that had gained sufficient approval from mankind—
even if I hadn’t trust in any single man himself.
Perhaps God is the ultimate system redundancy, the last fail-safe;
or perhaps He is the first principle.
Take your pick: to me it seems about the same.

And so it was.

Philosophy and Pragmatism

Sir Dentoya bought a butterbridge
Across from Penny's garden;
And while the radishes gave a crunch
(in the mouths of Monsieur's party),
I stirred and purred in a codswallop bath
In a stew not half so hearty!

To Catherine

As Petals Fade

As petals fade pale pink and fall,
more delicate than before,
so is there beauty in the twilight of love,
which moves us even now
to take all in (and then out).

Time flows to lovers as a warm breeze.
Let the warmth be an urgency and a blanket.
Let us hold each other as if we're falling.

For love must be a surrender, a fall:
It is to say, "This power you have over me
is there whether I grant it or not."

And in this surrender, release.

Whatever I have seen of heaven,
    I have seen with you.

To See and Be Seen

It is a burden to be seen.

Does she stare at people too long because she is trying
to see herself in their eyes?
And what does she see there?

It is a treasure to be seen.

In her I see
a brook, carving gently, slowly
Soothing with a crisp whisper
anyone who listens.
Or a birch sapling, opalescent bark
lending beauty to any who look.
Never demanding.

It is a burden to see

What lies behind a loved one and
What weight they carry still.

It is a treasure to see.

I want to take her to see
Outside herself.
Outside of me.
Outside of us.
The world and all its beauty,
All its kindness, not demanding.

And we will sit,
Hand in hand and both in wonder
While the wind runs through the birches
and we listen to the brook.

A Meatball

I fold my napkin gingerly, like it's afraid of my touch.
There are so many sounds in the wall it's like a quiet river.
The cold outside makes our warmth more fragile, and that's just as well.
Scarcity creates value, I suppose.

The thing is, my thoughts are broadcast commentary,
since there is no other way. Of course,
the Grand Voice is wrong; and it disagrees with itself. And though I may be
we, sometimes we calls and I do not listen.

After all, why should I bother tracing lines on headstones to read what they say?
a bird doesn't bother with birding. And besides,
if all is passing from dark to dark, why should I even watch its passing?

But a drum beats other drums, and it can't refuse the sound.
You cough, I look down.

In the reaches of a moment, a meatball really can be
Everything: and if you can't find the end or start, it may as well be
Always.
And if a meatball makes you warmer, I would do well to be yours.

And I'm sorry. I suppose that's the bottom line here.

Still Tomorrow

Still tomorrow. I find
I can't use words to say how I love you, but I find
the simplest words work closest.

The crinkling of paper,
Quiet water on a mountain stone,
A walk through snow, a puffy coat—
These are wrapped up in you.

Probably everything good is connected to you.
Every song that was ever written
should be written to you.

How do I love you? Still tomorrow.
How will I love you? Still tomorrow.
Still tomorrow, and again.
And on and again and on and on until each song
is yours and all days are ours,
And you'll draw a bath that's hot like tea and I'll
whistle in the sunset.

Reflections

I see my own reflection
in the eye upon the mirror;
and in that eye another still.
I see how far back I can count.

A reflection there for sadness,
The days on which I shrink,
When anyone could hurt me.
I focus on my breath.

For fear,
When I pull away—give myself up
to be held (in place, or carried forward.)
I sing.

A reflection there for joy,
Linked as it is to sadness
by the knowledge that both end.
The days on which I bask, and hold, and cling.

A reflection there for anger,
Pain with poor translation;
I hide, then wait, then sing again.

I see my own reflection
in the eye upon the mirror;
and in that eye another still.
I see how far back I can count.

And through the holes in all these selves,
A thread to hold them up:
All of my reflections
Smile when you smile.

Fence

Past the hills now, a wooden fence runs along the road.
“Someone put up that fence,” I think (a thought
I would never have had before her).
I would like to put up a fence like that—
To know each log and lay each piece.
In everything hard-won and earned, I see her;
in everything sturdy and known.

The road cuts now through
Warm green hills, covered with ivy.
In curves of earth I feel her.
I am reminded of what I see in her eyes,
In warm amber brown with greens: Life.
In all that is warm and alive, I see her;
in everything simple and real.

Movies of You

I'll give up to you.
The black and pink glows
on the sidewalk as
My eyes make movies about you.

What I've Learned from Marriage

1.
Some autumn leaves
burn hot like embers,
and when they fall they
glow upon the Earth like coals.

2.
The voice in your head
need not be privileged.
It can be joined by another.

3.
Sometimes, just do the dishes.

Mental Health and Healing

The Three Singers

I was brought down
To the place where all the world's a poem, an art-garden,
and all the people only sculptors.

Unwillingly admitted, in fact—
a three-day sojourn among the cluttered, the broken-in.
The fallen leaves, coloring still; not green again or yet
(but greenness is self-serving anyhow).

I met perchance three singers with one braided song.
The song was mine, and they sang in my voices. I joined in despite myself.

One showed how I lie to myself.
One revealed how I have lied to others—in my names and with my hats; with myself the first fruit of this deception.
One testified to where I should raise my eyes—whose gaze I should seek, and what else I may avert.

I was become blind to my blindness;
and now agnostic to my sight.

"Behold your God" is to "Be many-holed; you're just a man" as "zoo" is to
"centrally planned garden-structure," and that's just as well: Just speak quickly.

I'd take any of it or leave it for a whole bowl of soup (if the
bowl is a nice ceramic and I get to keep the bowl).

Can I Be?

Post-risk.
Post-chance.
Post-failing.

Post-change.
Post-growth.
Post-uncertainty.

Post-trying.
Post-feigning.
Post-fearing.

Post-worry.
Post-losing.
Post-dying.

Post-dominance.
Post-surrender.
Post-“playing the game.”

Post-money.
Post-diet.
Post-strength.

Post-competition.
Post-comparison.
Post-legacy.

Post-searching.
Post-repetition.
Post-interpreting.

Post-deadline.
Post-punishment.
Post-disappointment.

Or pre-?

A philosophy is only right
insofar as it can be forgotten.

Bipolar Disorder

I felt all the sadness of the world.
It threatened to crush me.
I cried at your breast, You,
Mother of the World,
And within your blessed womb
Grew a pit of sadness for her.

Hear me, both:
    Your beloved is with you.
    He gave it all away—
    the joys of heaven and the
    sins of Earth.

Is this Relatable?

My psychopathy
is on a spectrum of creativity.
Flowing always like a river, it
smooths stones with crisp whispers.

And the water is life-giving; it
slakes my thirst
for eternity; or
for eternal ever-structure, ever
chattering, chattering, winding
on course without ends.

But flowing always like a river,
it may flood and drown;
it may gather silt and brown.

And so I must be watchful.

Orison for a New World

I offer to the Other my orisons—
moments in which I am vulnerable
to overreach, moments
beyond equilibrium, asking
catechesis from void, awaiting
compassionate critique to pour
spirit into my cup of offering.

Oh, hear my orison now!
full of compassion with skeptical ear,
that time itself may call back lovingly,
letting me learn
what has already shaped my calling.

On Prayer

(we can all hear each
other's prayers; but we need
to be listening)

On Fatherhood

Man alone in his violence
And woman alone in her fear
never learned to make love as equals.

If it must be so,
then grant me senescence,
that I may be at rest and released
from this cycle of release.

Else let love precede bodily union,
and fulfill it. Let it be as the
melting snow to the springtime, as a
log lain bare to a flame.

Oh, let me view you at a distance!
Guard me always from taking life,
that I may give.

To Know Everything

Toward an open-handed epistemology

To know that you don't know anything absolutely
is to know that you don't know
whether you can know everything absolutely.

This is to hold everything and grip nothing.

A Prophet of Honesty

He came as a prophet of love;
Then His Spirit came to me as a prophet of faith,
Telling me that I must come in turn
As a prophet of honesty to myself
over and over, unto the reaches of eternity.

He came in a whisper, carried by a breeze
That gave me such a shudder of excitement
That I grew to know
that I must die only at the completion of ages,
In absolute freedom from fear,
Having led to drink only those whom I could lead
as a shadow that goes ahead,
with all in truth owed to the sun warm on their backs.

And so found I the latest drink I would trade for never drinking,
And now I carry one branch from the foot of a great tree.
And what a thing to carry! A reminder,
An invitation; or a greeting.

Perhaps the day has indeed dawned.
Perhaps it is time now only to welcome the dawn
And to walk on surely in light.

Adam and Eve

It is well said
that Adam and Eve “became” naked,
because they were previously clothed
in the entirety of the Garden.

Love comes now as fire,
consuming clothing dawned in fear;
leaving flesh unscathed

So that we find ourselves again
cloaked in Beauty, wrapped in Other,
in the Garden rapt in wonder:

Dare we dawn new clothes?