

BOOK ONE

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

Constellations arc across the sky
Unseen, unnoticed, and unconcerned
With civilizations and the street sweeper.

The light and dark, flush and fade,
Of this year's seasons inexorably
Plait the web of life forward.

Vees of geese somehow connected,
Honk across coral-splashed dusk skies
To where they must again return now.

Sentient beings live and die before us—
The wonder if this is all there is;
That is, the purpose of living is living.

And so, glory to God in the highest:
Chill winds drive us forward systole diastole
Into the fragrant grey dawn unfolding.

MODERN PHYSICS

We are both particle and wave.
Moments of insight and enduring memories,
Awaken a time and face of love
That endures in mystery
But that will never return.

We are particle and wave.
Every effort gone in its own expenditure.
Details of every embrace forgotten in intensity.
Every chance and opportunity taken, spent,
Reserved, and spent again.

We are a particle and wave.
Alone in our separate identities—
Body and mind merged again in a passion
That returns us to these very unions.
Step into presence, expectation, fingers, and breath.

We are particles and waves.
Present at any one moment only,
Juxtaposed with your this, that and your other.
Alone in the cosmos from whence we come,
Always here and always there.

We are both particle and wave.
Infinity's purpose in a moment,
Past and present's intersection corporeal.
Fingers touch with such purpose,
And grace creates the prints that mark the place.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

I take the host and sip the wine,
 Body blood of Christ transformed;
 Touch your temple so sublime,
 Your yielding, breathing body warmed.

Mystery is that God persists
 'Midst mundane human features,
 Our passion or belief assists,
 We are such forlorn creatures.

How can God detect our hearts?
 How can we make connection?
 Some people answer with the arts,
 I answer with affection.

The priest can change the bread to Flesh,
 The wine to Blood of Son of Man.
 I say when hearts and bodies mesh,
 We consummate creation's plan.

Transubstantiation, yes,
 Alchemical tersanctus.
 It's not the lead to gold's caress;
 But tasting God in flesh that's thus.

Aloof and unconcerned is God,
 Accessible through rituals,
 Breaks through mind's conceptive façade,
 These symbols, thinking's victuals.

Body is the self's expression,
 Mirror of the universal,
 Takes the world for its possession,
 Faultless action, no rehearsal.

Embrace the flesh of moments' scope,
 Love people in your touch's call.
 It's there God climbs down time's steep slope,
 And grants you treasures' wherewithal.

WHO WILL CARRY LIGHT

A horn of fire, burning embers,
 Passed from rider's distant travels,
 Outposts, darkly he remembers,
 Urgency his time unravels.

Carry fire, carry light, for
 Someone up ahead the trail,
 Anyone with tinder store,
 Move the fire on, prevail.

Darkness stalks elucidation,
 Wanton subjugation's face,
 Find your horror's depredation,
 Defiled centripetal embrace.

Look ahead and to the side,
 It lurks in the periphery.
 Arm yourself with weapons tried,
 Move through wastelands, run, flail, hurry.

There is no time for condescension,
 Glory, reverence disemboweled.
 Waste no time on blind succession,
 Touch not those whose heart is fouled.

Move on ahead to find a way 'round
 Imperium and degradation.
 Destitution so profound,
 Then mastery, and extermination.

Not Vishnu, Shiva, Christ, can come
 To put back landslides, glaciers, seas.
 Don't call on them, the tune they strum
 Evanesces on the breeze.

There is no plan nor rubric bright
 To offer hope or consolation.
 The only glow that pierces night
 Shines in the heart's deep desolation.

THE FIRE INSIDE

Swells of cloud banks roll out across
 The valley foothills, relentless,
 Unmindful, pulling me with them.
 I go easily, eagerly.

Rather than pulling me to them,
 They provoke me deeper somehow,
 As if the farther I follow,
 The further I elude their storm.

I seek deep shelter, oasis,
 Welcoming caravansary,
 Where a fire burns unceasing
 At a secluded inner hearth.

It is a still point, a word point,
 Where I struggle to make dense sense
 With a faith in every moment,
 The temptation of unknowing.

I go to the inner fire,
 Stoke it with words, feelings, phrases,
 So it will burn, so it will burn,
 Burn emptiness, pain, love, missing.

The fire burns white-hot in me,
 Everything thrown on the fire,
 Want, have, do, feel, think, understand,
 Everything charred in this fire.

Fire, summon words; words, fire.
 Touch fire with phoneme, morpheme.
 Taunt fire with fervid metaphor.
 So it will burn, so it will burn.

I carry a fire in my mouth.
 Put fire into my hands to speak.
 Hurl every moment onto fire.
 Squat close to this devouring.

THE YEARNING LURKS

The yearning lurks, words fall apart.
 The chaos sours in my heart.
 A distance broadens uncontrolled.
 I need an answer to unfold.

I want vibration, rapture deep,
 Cathexis when I wake from sleep.
 I want it ever, want it now,
 Want it if it's in the Tao.

The way is open, four-lane highways,
 Pass a hearse with stiff and bouquets.
 Drive right on, wide vista opens,
 Roam a beach, take shells as tokens.

Detritis by the freeway off ramp,
 Time clicks off by LED lamp.
 Daily work, an endless sidewalk,
 Postal worker brings his new Glock.

Phone poles rush past as I'm steering,
 An abstract death forever nearing,
 Apples on the counter linger,
 Santoku knife cuts through my finger,

Coruscation of distant stars,
 Bulerías from three guitars,
 Water shimmers psychedelic,
 Twilight flushes rouge, angelic.

This yearning lurks, words stumble past.
 Chance episodes uncoil at last.
 These puzzle pieces mobilize,
 The guise of God before my eyes.

God's fulgent darkness flickers on,
 Fractals blaze out, then are gone.
 Thirst for water, daylight hasten,
 Eve's sin cracks the crystal basin.

MIND SPACE

Open book upon the table
 Fondled by two hands so able,
 Page by page creates a mind space
 Built on words that fell from gods' grace.

Once we heard the gods speak to us:
 "Do this, go there, solve that..." No fuss.
 Then with trade and travel flowered
 Words' hold on metaphor, empowered.

Men traveled seas to distant lands,
 Saw idols, gods, sphinx in the sands,
 Learned language new, smelled women strange,
 Heard their god's voice start to change.

Upon return with visions new
 They sought new concepts, what to do,
 With new beliefs, concepts distant:
 Old words newly used, persistent.

Now all language takes for granted
 Metaphors in brains are planted.
 The mind with which we think we think:
 A map of life that our words sync.

The space we see, from words create,
 There is no "there" you can relate
 To your "I's" home, the "me" you see,
 Your life's film on mind's marquee.

Our consciousness is like a map,
 Subjective analogue, a trap:
 It's not reality, concrete,
 Just our perceptions, they're discrete.

Loose the mind of idle thought-flow,
 Let crystal mind with ease bestow.
 Let metaphors fly, merge with light,
 Let gods return, to their delight.

IDLE THOUGHTS

“So clear your mind of idle thoughts,”
Said Zennist master, Alan Watts.
When as a youth, I studied Zen,
I read the masters, now and then.

Upanishads, the Gita too,
Huang Po and Dali Lama knew
That mind is clouded in its hold
Of concepts coursing uncontrolled.

Those clouds in mind’s sky disappear
When let go, then the mind is clear.
“Each day becomes a new day,” thus,
On tape the master did discuss.

I’ve lost that tape but not the jewel
Unearthed from life, but not in school.
Now when I fly off in my mind
I say the mantra, then I find

The cooling breeze across my skin,
The flowers’ colors’ joy within,
My muscles stinging when I work,
The love I feel as memories lurk.

A million million humans breathed,
Sought meaning in beliefs believed,
Resisted with their iron wills,
Lashed out with intellectual skills.

The master said to be yourself,
Take down your Buddha from its shelf,
Find suchness in your nature’s gift,
This party passing much too swift.

So clear your mind of idle thought,
Find the treasure you never bought,
Each day becomes a new day, yes,
The richest prize you could possess.

WHEN LIGHTS GO OUT

When lights go out and sun departs,
The spirit stripped from out our hearts,
The minute hand still moves around
The numbers that our life surround.

Time melts away to form the past,
We grab for life that doesn't last—
Oblivion from pleasures' swoon,
The last warm light of afternoon.

Obituaries on a page,
Comfort yields its place to rage
At sickness, absence, emptiness...
Where is the God for us to bless?

In the silence lurks our demon,
Enemy of slave and free men.
Fear of pain and senseless dying,
Mourning, grieving, trembling, crying.

Meditation's calming power
Practiced every minute, hour,
Cannot fill the yawning chasm,
Makes my heart and mind both spasm.

Death will come before its time,
Drop your glass of sweetest red wine,
Crash your car against some trouble,
Aneurysm bursts your bubble.

"Best not dwell on death and dying..."
If I agreed, catch me lying.
Shift from one foot to the other,
Stand in line, lament your mother.

Darkness, darkness, makes us humble.
Some lash out, and some just mumble.
Face the shadows' darkest heaven.
What is bread without this leaven?

SUMMER CONTRASTS

Colors in the distance shimmer—
 Is it surface shine or inner?
 Contours juxtapose with backgrounds;
 Puzzle piece fits in or confounds.

Geese in cut alfalfa cluster;
 Stabbing grass hones dark bills' luster.
 Pigeons wheeling figure-eights high;
 Who is following whom awry?

Lex cuts back canal's dense thickets;
 Tractor waits near listing pickets.
 Purple loosestrike, such noxious weed,
 Its comely blossom is indeed.

Ducks in squadrons, stragglers quacking;
 Boys in caps buck bales, are stacking.
 Two signs announce summer sweet corn;
 On bed of Ford One-Fifty borne.

Passing corner, house dismembered;
 Turquoise backhoe crawler, absurd.
 Construction work detours traffic;
 Drivers mutate, anger graphic.

Last boys swinging into river;
 Snow melt water makes them shiver.
 "Le point vierge" 'tween light and dark;
 Sunlit shadows' protean spark.

Two horses flank to shoulder stand;
 Share secrets lost to shifting sand.
 Summer fades to autumn's light;
 Regrets give way, nostalgia's plight.

Another summer's endless bliss;
 What have I lost that I'm remiss?
 How much more... the seasons shifting,
 When I die, my soul set drifting?

MY DEATH LOOMS

Darkness in the morning, whisper,
 She does not wake, they do not stir,
 Into the darkness of the hall,
 I stumble through my mind's bleak squall.

Schedules switch on, lists to do,
 Life shows itself for my review.
 I try my best to slow it down,
 Must clear my mind before I drown.

The same routine presents itself,
 Complete one thing, put on the shelf,
 Pick up another challenge, fight,
 Work on it till I get it right.

One week of five blurs into past,
 Sweet weekends disappear so fast.
 Projects left undone, forgotten,
 Unpicked fruit I left is rotten.

Love I left to find one better,
 Chattel bought now makes me debtor.
 Freedom comes at such a price,
 Don't apprehend what will suffice.

Get the paper, read the headlines,
 Check Internet to meet more deadlines.
 Grab a coffee, drug my senses,
 Make excuses, build defenses.

Muscles ache, my organs flutter,
 Try to speak but only stutter.
 No crying in this wilderness;
 No one attends to such distress.

I practice dying everyday,
 Obituaries' point the way.
 I'll never learn it, stubborn me,
 'Till from mind's prison I can flee.

THE END OF POETRY

Like silence calls my heart's attention
 From the world of man, convention,
 Letters, words, my poems are crumbling,
 Losing connotation, stumbling.

They are just symbols, pointers, paint,
 Used with artistic style, restraint.
 Yet now they lack the function, power,
 Instead of sweet, they taste so sour.

It's not my muse that cedes control;
 Her whispers still provoke my soul.
 But lists of words, taut, ordered, spare,
 That rhyme and meter— my despair.

The kite I flew once overhead
 Fell to the ground like birds of lead.
 Where once I soared with passion's wings,
 Imprisoned now by mental strings.

The poems no longer fill my heart,
 They're atrophied, some body part,
 Contracted virus virulent,
 Then withered without my consent.

Let go of love, let go of hope,
 Slide down longing's tear-slick slope.
 Forget what once was beauty, grace;
 Abandon harmony's sweet embrace.

This poem is painful, strained, and cold;
 The end of poems, my spirit old.
 It represents lost loves forlorn,
 A threadbare coat, a pocket torn.

Put down the pen, it's ink dried up,
 Put up sweet liquor's empty cup.
 I pull my collar 'round my throat,
 Gelded, wordless, in lands remote.

MY FEELING WORLD IS LEFT TO DRIFT

The morning freezes soundlessly;
 These dahlias, pumpkins, linden tree,
 All cringe and recoil from the ice
 That chokes them in its frigid vise.

Their leaves' betray the shock, they cringe,
 Curl up, turn brown and crisp—a twinge
 Of death distorts the season's shift:
 My feeling world is left to drift.

Surfaces reveal confusion,
 Bruises, empty words, illusion.
 Wrinkles, furrows eloquent,
 Compose their song, a dirge, lament.

Below this epidermis flows
 A world of worn, familiar clothes:
 Images turned grey by time,
 Gestures like a eunuch mime,

Spirits, visions, fantasía,
 Sweet, rhapsodic aphrodisia.
 No one knows such worlds I share.
 Secure a ticket, pay my fare,

Then travel out of time and space,
 Find love and passion, leave no trace
 Behind me, I become mankind,
 My heart's arms with yours entwined.

The gift of poets, curse divine,
 To feel life brimming, so sublime.
 And when no ewer holds such cream,
 Fall on my knees, write poems, I scream,

“My feeling world is left to drift!
 Depart! Sweet Muse, forsaken, shrift,”
 Take down your candles, *démodé*,
 My altar's heart's in disarray.

NIGHT

“The night is an experience of our desire’s inability to find its depth and intensity matched by anything in this world.” Welch, *When Gods Die*, p. 113.

When it is night again, I weep
For too many unknown dreams dreamt,
Missed signals, underestimations,
Placations of the spirit world.

When it is night again, I touch
My face in places you would have touched,
Gestured in ways only I know,
Closed my daily door on hope’s love.

When it is night again, I shield
My heart’s flesh from harm with silence,
Wait for a time that I create in earth,
Dig in my heart’s heels out of love.

When it is night again, I yield
The only way I know, to mystery,
Empty desire and fill with desire,
Surrender to the night ocean.

When it is night again, I smell
Riparian, alluvial, cold peat smells,
Celtic, sylvan, ancient spells there,
Omens or portents of another time.

When it is night again, I tend
A young hermit’s hidden garden,
Pace a well-worn walk, vigilant
For a blooming of lemon thyme.

When it is night again, I bend
To pick up a shoe, a bone, a ring,
Fling everything into well-worn boxes
For another time or celebration.

When it is night again, I hurl
My heart out into this dark night—
Messenger, envoy of Eden’s call,
Stunned since Adam’s flesh-felt fall.

SMOKE

A pile of winter cuttings grew,
Spent pumpkin and tomato vines,
Sere summer and winter grasses,
 Dry wildflowers colorless now,
Daylily bare stalks once saffron,
Still sharp and angry rose prunings,
Layers from this summer's harvest,
 Autumn's unexpected cold snap,
 Winter's silver dun undergrowth,
And my fifty-eighth year conscious.

The third match I strike takes hold,
 Transfers its flickering message
To the dry grass, to the crisp leaves,
 Catches slowly in freezing air,
 The flame lingers, descends into
 The deep pile of winter cuttings,
Wisps of tiny white smoke pulse up,
 Carried away by a west wind
As the flame catches fire and spreads
 Like cognitive epidemic.

I lean on my hoe watching this,
 See smoke billowing, swirling,
 Smell sweet acrid burning brush,
Look where the smoke disappears,
 Think of Gandhi's funeral pyre,
Ask for more time, more burning,
 Bless my fathers and mothers,
Thank the ones whom I have loved.
The smoke shifts, enfolds me inside.
 I close my eyes, and am gone.

THE GODS

Clouds

Many, of course, there are, as they said,
 The slow, brooding gathering of warm air masses,
 Their rising and expanding, converging and lifting
 To the boundaries of human vision and touch.
 They are the gods, Cumulus, Stratus, Cirrus, Nimbus.
 In them condenses The Liquid's warm swarming gasses,
 Condensate, sensate enumeration of demi-gods
 Atmospheric, looming droplets, wet and wise.

Chaos

Primal emptiness, inchoate absence of shape, Chaos,
 The unfolding and place of unfolding, χάος.
 I am the god of all generative iterations, bifurcations of
 Stability and instability, folding and amplification,
 Until dense periodicity returns to darkness again as
 Three point five six nine nine four five six liturgically
 Tumbles inward–onward to filigrees of complexification.
 Chaos is God, and Order is Her handmaiden.

Order

Number, zero, lists of listings, cuneiform marks in clay,
 The penchant of mind to find Order, God of intelligence:
 This is like that; that is like this; I am like that; I am like this.
 Ouroborous backwards bends to where we start in the First Place.
 God of Pi, The Golden Mean, Poesia. Order.
 Prime numbers, sixteen, sixty-four, one-hundred and forty-four.
 Line, perspective, contour, rhyme, meter, pattern, the
 Angle-side-angle that built Stonehenge and Teotihuacán.

Harmony

Inner truth beckons Harmony, male to female they are,
 Weak and strong they are, earth and water they are,
 Inspiration and intuition's womb, feeling and word.
 Come to me now, sounds, contours, turn of a line,
 Colors of light, distillations of air vibrating my viscera—
 Music, melody, rhythm, systole-diastole it is,
 From inner truth, Non-Form to Form we arrive.
 From inner truth, Form to Unformed we return.

Earth

Grottos where ice waters seep from cracks in rock,
 Warrens of insane metallic forces— iron, copper, sulphur,
 Distortions of plant energies, geotropic hallucinations
 Craze and crackle the synaptic genetic symphony as
 Hot, unseen magma flows broodingly, slaving
 Inside God Earth, pushing against God Earth,
 Pulling creatures into Earth's dust to dust's return,
 Planted in God once more, births Eternal Springs.

Animal

And they said also that there are powers perceived
 By no man's eyes, by no shaman's vision,
 Impenetrable instinct whispering, resonant throbbing,
 Beating pulsations, rushes, tremors and stillnesses
 Combined, fermented and seething in silence.
 The animal gods, animate-inanimate, dark,
 Penetrating, invisible, unhurried subject-object.
 Behind the silent psilocybin window, He-She murmurs.

Logos

Words from the mouth of inner truth are formed
 In the clarity of intuition's mind, noumena, bliss, understanding.
 λόγος is the truth I speak to every body's witness;
 I speak λόγος across distances outdistanced by a touch.
 λόγος speaks its own name in every God's shadow,
 Gods before The Word, synthetic and digital gods,
 The gods of flesh and blood, gristle and bone,
 Crimson scenes hunted on the mindspace of hidden caves.

Consciousness

I no longer hear the voice of gods speak to me;
 I write this dialogue for them to speak.
 We lived, I live now, these words are proof.
 What else can I leave to proclaim, "I am this one.?"
 I have created a room, sanctum sanctorum.
 I go there to be with You and my people.
 I meet there the myself I didn't know.

STOPPING TIME

*“Serenely let us move to distant places / And let no sentiments of home
detain us. /*

*The Cosmic Spirit seeks not to restrain us / But lifts us stage by stage to
wider spaces.”*

Hermann Hesse *The Glass Bead Game*

Each night ticks off another second on our clock.
No one counts how many gone, how many more.
What good would it do to know what’s left of life?
We are being swept away by time.

Nevertheless, there is a special place I’ve gone.
Secluded, private, without dimension, farther inside.
Like an old beveled mirror or high on a mountain top.
Something simple reflected forever there in a day.

I recognize the shimmer, glance, and gestures.
A yearning from our hearts swells into life.
There is where a current slows ‘round a bend.
Gaze into calm waters, deep, tranquil, cooling.

We prepare there dark bread and blood wine.
Pick vegetables and fruit to cook and eat.
A table holds a simple feast set for two.
Food in another realm of communion.

Words of feeling, sadness, beauty, loss.
The seconds of our clock move in reverse.
We eat every crumb of earth’s fruit.
We recognize something permanent.

Let go our fleshed embrace in deep sleep.
Touch again the spark of our skin’s wishes.
Venture into unknown, unconscious worlds.
Hand-in-hand, wider places call us deeper.

Let us travel there, ally— shield, sunset, dawn.
Find respite in that overlook that beckons us.
Destinations, a lane, a vista, call us home.
We are swept away by time.

BLACK HOLE

At the center of our universe, and at the center of every universe,
There is a black hole that eventually will pull everything into it.
Twenty-four million miles from this poem it slingshots stars back,
Back upon themselves, repulsed, and accelerated, a vicious circle,
As if the huge lordly stars were pinballs in a mindless mechanism,
And although we act freely, from compassion, anger, or ignorance,
The slide past the event horizon already began when we began.

Look up, look up, into the celestial enchantment of sparkling stars,
Ponder the day, the fate of man, love between a man and woman,
Watch the long night count the minutes of a lifetime of mornings,
Wait for day's blinding light to captivate each moment with hope,
Another word, another breath, another realization, a moment alone.
Brew a pot of coffee, batteries in a remote, stop the newspaper,
Hear dog bark at night, a paltry birthday gift, a zipper breaks.

Every inner dread, every mental reservation about this finality,
Each sadness at the passing of friends, self, morning, meaning,
All questions of origin, destination, direction, dualism, or deity
Answered once and for all, in the eternity of a lingering moment
When I heed the spark of feeling that draws me to you wordlessly,
And I pull your warm body to mine, embrace in this time and space,
Halt the pull into nothingness with this touch, and never let go.

9/24/08

THE ULTIMATE EXPANSE*

You look out the window of a speeding car and see the trees rushing;
 In a wash of blurred colors, the world flashes by the other side of glass.
 You notice again the weariness of your hands, their perfection and age;
 In the length of a heart line you realize that you owe them everything.

The hem of a new garment, a flat-felled seam, a scatter of thoughts.
 Curved shirttails to be tucked in again, fingers push them down inside.
 Delivery of yet more mail and a newspaper as regular as clockwork.
 How many tiny red electronic power lights glow mindlessly on?

You never wondered how much further beyond your mind limits
 You could push your thoughts, understand something, come back.
 Where is the receptacle of your previous thoughts and feelings?
 Is it Rachmaninoff at the virtual spin of a clicking polymer disc?

To and fro, systole diastole, it seems there is no end, but there is.
 Scent from your body, flush of your neck, movement in your limbs
 Through the time and place where you find yourself wondering
 If there is a way to understand everything that happens to you.

I will make an appointment with you to meet in that expanse, at
 A table set for your mind and mine, where there is no daily menu,
 Where a pilot light sparks the darkness all around us into brilliance,
 Where the first language recognition of this feeling is like Teflon.

Come with me into the unknown where we will plot a course, a course,
 To a magnificent alpine lake, still, where winds rush without touching us,
 And where the expanse is ultimate, vista without end, countless miles
 We might travel without night, and where stars for our eyes light the way.