

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO

Worlds  
of  
Shouts  
and  
Whispers

Poems and Effects of 2024

# **Worlds of Shouts and Whispers**

**Poems and Effects of 2024**

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## **In Retrospect**

**She**

*Modelled on the Personae of Suparna Ghosh*

She is the Hope Diamond as well as the hope of the Human Condition.  
She is the lady gowned in black with the greatly rimmed hat.

She is the woman whose eyes appear bright like egg-whites.  
She is the girl who sees all even when she looks away.

She is both Dame Edith Sitwell and Dame Edith Everage.  
She is the female or the *fille* of the fiercest species.

She is the personification of rest and unrest.  
She is the Grand Daimon and the Grand Demon.

She is neither Madame Bovary nor Madama Butterfly.  
She is the youngest miss or the oldest peeress.

She is nameless yet not needful of a name.  
She is the princess of engaging thoughts.

She is either grouchy or good-natured.  
She is and she is not ... yet ever will be.

*For S.G. from R.C. and J.R.C.*

*29 July 2023*

### **Short Poems and Long Poems**

This collection is a compilation of short poems and long poems” (or as I like to call it “shorter poems and longer poems”) which were composed during the calendar year of 2024. In length, each line ranges from a couple of words to a few sentences in length. If a few of them are shorter than that or longer than that, it is the product of the mood of the moment and the movement of the words themselves – the words in my mind, on my computers screen, and on the printed page.

The year of their composition was a year that saw more than the usual amount of stress and strain in private and in public life and in the aftermath of the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic. Both in Canada and in the countries of the Western world, as a whole, as well as in the writings of the sensitive scribes in countries and cultures to be found around the world, there was suffered a greater sense of distance, dislocation, and dismay than was customary, though not necessarily comparable with those breakdowns caused by the two World Wars. Readers may perhaps notice no attempts have been made by the author to solve the major or even the minor problems noted in these pages, or even to face them head-on. After such major concerns have been out-stared and diminished by time itself, it is likely the minor ones will be around for decades if not centuries to come to annoy us all the more.

For the record I regard the majority of the so-called poems to be what I term “effects” – that is surprises or what might be regarded as “unexpectations.” It seems to me that this feature is characteristic of many non-verbal expressions as well as numerous verbal ones, embracing architecture, art, cinema, dance, literature, music, painting, performance, sculpture, theatre, etc.

Behind these manifestations of the perplexed human spirit is the disruption of the Seven Liberal Arts and before those the once-unassailable Trivium and Quadrivium which acquired the

extension in time in the academies as the Seven Liberal Arts. (Such are the seasons of a darkened Moon and the cycles of a distorted Sun.) What follow are recollections for the forgetful: The Seven Liberal Arts still identify the following studies: Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music, Geometry. These are based on the Trivium and Quadrivium, a period presentation of their most practical and useful nature, as these words recall the following functions: Grammar speaks; Dialectic teaches truth; Rhetoric adorns words; Music sings; Arithmetic counts; Geometry measures; Astronomy studies stars.) Now herewith are “worlds of shouts and whispers.”

1 Jan. 2024

## **A Year of Short Poems (plus Some Long Ones)**

These days there is a vogue for poems that are very short, like the couplet, the distich, or the haiku, not to mention the modern innovation of micro-poetry, etc. Some of these forms are conventional; others like the current ones are very occasional and indeed casual. Yannis Ritsos, the modern Greek poet, laboured over a volume of poetry with no single poem longer than one line in length. He published an entire book-length collection of these so-called *monochords*. His volume consists of over three hundred specimens, 336 to be exact, and the compilation itself is titled *Monochordia*. An English translation by Paul Merchant was published in 2007. The one-liners that appear here are inspired by but uninfluenced by those of Ritsos. Let us grant each writer his own year. In passing it should be noted that the line measures have not been observed as a good many of these poems or effects are longer than the length of one line. Indeed, some are a few short sentences in length. It matters not. In addition, prose poems abound. As well, a good number are essentially proverbs or anti-proverbial expressions in statement and structure and so might be regarded as laconic poems that are apothegmatic in nature.

1 Jan. 2024

### **Short Ones**

Is it true that men and women are capable of falling in love with men and women they have never even met?

There is one night for every day, one evening for every morning: the reason is that no more, no less, is best.

I wonder who was the wit who first observed that the toilet bowl is designed to hold the three p's: pee-pee, poo-poo, and toilet paper.

Only the astronaut or the astronomer is in a position to attest to the curvature of our planet in space.

A *bacterium* is a giant, whereas a *virus* is a dwarf, yet the latter is a thousand times more dangerous to mankind than the former.

To be a specialist is all too easy, as it requires only travail and effort, whereas to be an expert is tough, as it takes talent and training and study that may (or may not) result in great achievement.

Never belittle an artist's actual accomplishments. In whatever genre he works, he has to produce many more trial runs than master works.

There are nights without lights, though when we see such sights we do so without our two eyes but through the single oculus of the human imagination.

Relief in the morning is staring out the window and seeing only *the lightest of coatings of snow* and concluding that the coatings temporarily disguise the works of nature and the deeds of man.

The fall of snow is the reflection of the quintessence of No.

Nature is a form of nurture that shows some but little evidence of gender.

There is true goodness without greatness, but no true greatness without goodness.

My life takes place on a checkerboard. I would prefer it to take place on a chessboard, chess being a more prestigious and challenging game to play than checkers.

Friends may be compared with those family members with whom we disagree but do not dispute.

Family members are human beings who will be re-evaluated in one's later years when members will be found to be more helpful and agreeable than they were in one's past.

Literature is a form assumed by the shape, the sound, the sense, the story, and the rapture of words.

Meanings of words are ever so multiple that confusions and contradictions will ever remain rampant.

Single-minded people who proclaim "freedom whatever the cost" mispronounce the

word *freedom*. They should pronounce it *freedumb*.

An autobiography begins with the tenth letter of the alphabet, unlike a biography which begins with the twenty-first letter of the alphabet. The records of all human lives extend from the alphabet's first letter to its last letter.

What lies between a shout and a whisper is a vacuum of space for signs, symbols, syllables, and sounds, not to mention interpretations and understandings.

*1 Jan.- 30 Jan. 2024*

## **Long Ones**

### **Stormy Musical Evening**

One stormy night a multitude of years ago on a stage in an auditorium in Brooklyn I saw a leading American theatrical group perform, and while individual musicians and actors excelled in special roles, the overall effect was chaotic. The director, the producer, and the performers were unable to remove from the stage an unruly member of the audience who simply took it upon himself to climb on the stage, enter into the activities, presumably in a drug-induced haze, confusing the theme of the play with the festivities of the evening. The audience at first applauded his antics and then tiring of the nonsense applauded his removal: enough was enough. The name of the company is the Living Theatre. I wish I could remember the name of its production though it may have been *Paradise Now*. Unfortunately *The Village Voice* did not review that evening's allotropic presentation.

*1-6 Jan. 2024*

### **Unfinished Symphony**

Life resembles Franz Schubert's Eighth Symphony which is popularly known as "The Unfinished Symphony." Various reasons may account for the fact that it remained incomplete, with only two of a symphony's four movements finished at the time of the composer's death. Perhaps in this way it resembles the spirit of life itself which is all-embracing but never complete.

*7 Jan. 2024*

## **Woke**

*Woke* is a useless word. It is the past tense of the verb *to wake*. To be woke is to be aware of how we are largely unaware of how much we discriminate against people and principles unlike ourselves and our own. As I see it, the word is redundant. Its real meaning is “unexamined prejudice.”

*8 Jan. 2024*

## **Leonard Bernstein**

How is Leonard Bernstein’s name pronounced? A puzzling matter! Is it “Bernsteen” or is it “Bernsteyen”? It is the latter. A riff on the proper pronunciation of the American composer and conductor’s surname is the subject of a scene in the Hollywood bio-pic *Maestro* released in 2023. It is easy to remember the proper pronunciation if it is recalled that “I” is pronounced as “eye” and not as “e.”

*9 Jan. 2024*

## **World Class**

It used to be popular to refer to something that was excellent as “world class” but I notice that the world is in such a condition these days, with its values everywhere in disarray or decline, that the accolade has pretty well vanished from advertising and promotional copy. Nowadays it is said “everybody is excited about” whatever it is that is being commercially promoted: a gross exaggeration to be sure.

*10 Jan. 2024*

## **Prejudice**

The word that heads this observation could be spelled *preJewdice* because of the racial prejudice directed against the world’s Hebrew / Jewish people. This is so despite the fact that today there are hardly more than seven million Jewish people in the world, a world that has a global population in excess of eight billion people. The Jewish people, their beliefs and their practices, are believed to go back some 1,300 years B.C.E.

*11 Jan. 2024*

## **Wonderful Title**

A book of new poems is to be published in late March of this year, so at this time I have yet to see a copy of the new collection, but I know its title because the forthcoming publication is being featured in early advertising on the Web and elsewhere. Its title is fascinating and memorable: *A Year of Last Things*. I anticipate reading this forthcoming volume with purpose and pleasure. The five words of the title suggest both memory and loss: themes that are unbeatable. The author is most intuitive and versatile: Michael Ondaatje.

*12 Jan. 2024*

## **Found? Poem? List!**

What follows is what I consider to be a poem of some sort or other. It is not a “found poem” *per se* because it is not meant to be a poem at all, though it has been found in prose form in the pages of a scholarly journal published in London with an international distribution. Placed by a personnel firm, the notice offers the reader a list of the characteristics to disregard of aspects of recruitment and hiring for the head position with a major artistic organization. Note that the list comes in two parts and seems to be thorough – exhaustingly so! What follows is this list of no impediments to employment:

... without regard to age, alienage, caregiver status, childbirth, citizenship status, color, creed, disability, domestic violence victim status, ethnicity, familial status, gender and/or gender identity or expression, marital status, military status, national origin, parental status, partnership status, predisposing genetic characteristics, pregnancy, race, religion, reproductive health decision making, sex, sexual orientation, unemployment status, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply for vacant positions at all levels.

*13 Jan. 2024*

## **Inspired by the Old-fashioned Flip Book**

*Good ... cry fly high lie my nigh sea sigh sky spy vie why good ... bye.*

*14 Jan. 2024*



## **Fortune**

No meal in a Chinese restaurant is complete without its dessert in the form of the Chinese fortune cookie. These “fortunes” are invariably positive ones. What I have yet to encounter is one that has a negative message – a Chinese “misfortune” cookie, so to speak.

*15 Jan. 2024*

## **Our Lady**

Our Lady of Pompeii. I thought it was a jest, given the fate of the site of the Roman settlement of Pompeii in the Bay of Naples that was demolished by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Yet there is a Roman Catholic order of Our Lady of Pompeii which includes a church so named and so dedicated in Montreal of all places. But nowhere to my knowledge is there a religious order or a church dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Vesuvius!

*16 Jan. 2024*

## **Wrong Advice**

Dylan Thomas composed a poem of considerable power that urged his aging father to resist the approach of death. The Welsh poet wrote it in 1952 in the form of a villanelle and he would recite it in his deep rich voice at public performances with great intensity. The refrain runs like this: “Do not go gentle into that good night. / Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” Is that sound advice? Is death not naturally the end of life? Should it be so steadfastly resisted? Is it even wise to urge someone to do so?

*17 Jan. 2024*

## **Witches or Warlocks**

“A witch hunt!” is how Donald J. Trump has repeatedly dismissed charges directed against him. Yet he chose the wrong word. It would have been more accurate to call the charges against him “a warlock hunt!” It is not female witches but male warlocks who pursue him, despite the fact that he is the leading warlock of the lot!

*18 Jan. 2024*

## **The Three Magi**

As a youngster I thought the names of the Three Wise Men who traveled afar to visit the scene of the Nativity in Bethlehem were Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. In later years I learned instead that these are the names of the gifts borne by the Three Magi who are traditionally known as Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. It pays to grow up!

*19 Jan. 2024*

## **Moving**

I have to move  
I need to move  
I ought to move

I hate to move  
I fear to move  
I decline to move

I must face  
Difficult decisions  
Erase them to move on

*20 Jan. 2024*

## **Anatomy**

One mind one brain one head two ears one mouth one tongue two nostrils one neck two shoulders two elbows two forearms two hands ten fingers one chest one stomach two testicles one penis two knees two legs ten toes etc.

*21 Jan. 2024*

## **What Do I Need**

Stars overhead  
Galaxies therein

Solar systems above  
Planets below

Grey skies  
Green pastures

Two bodies  
One old one new

A night's starlight  
A day's sunlight

A second person  
Soon three

*22 Jan. 2024*

### **Losses**

One morning I mislaid my map and my keys.  
I lost my sense of direction and everything that I knew that I needed.  
From that day forward I have remained at a loss –  
A lost one. And it continues to be so to this day.

*23 Jan. 2024*

### **Prayers**

Prayers do not grant requests but require them.

*24 Jan. 2024*

### **JRC**

JRC is the writer of this “squib.” He is the author of innumerable collections of verse and countless anthologies of prose. Yet he does not consider himself to be a poet or anyone other than a collector or anthologist of literature and learning.

*25 Jan. 2024*

## **A Late Morning in January**

Again it is a quasi-morning ... one with clouds, hence sans the sun, one with drizzle, one accompanied by downcast spirits. Were the mornings in late January always like this? If so I do not remember them being so.

*26 Jan. 2024*

## **Sunshine**

A bright Monday noon hour. Yes, the sun did shine yesterday, briefly, beginning about high noon and ending about late afternoon. It lent a surprising sense of enchantment to the day, a lightness of spirit ... but oh so fleetingly.

*27 Jan. 2024*

## **Telephone and Cellphone**

These days few people under the age of forty know how to speak on a telephone because they treat the receiver of the telephone as if it is the receiver of a cell phone rather than that of the telephone. Cell phones catch whispers that telephones fail to detect. A telephone may have a volume enhancer whereas few cell phones come so equipped. Women's voices are often more difficult than men's voices to understand on a telephone for these and no doubt other reasons as well or as ill.

*28 Jan. 2024*

## **Pirate and Privateer**

The long-standing distinction between the *pirate* and the *privateer* is now a thing of the past. These days authoritarian states fail to differentiate between acts undertaken to meet one's country's needs and those undertaken to advance one's personal needs. Theft by any other name ....

*29 Jan. 2024*

## **Philosophical Poem**

Here is a philosophical poem that is only two words in length. It is the shortest and the most fetching such poem that is known to me – and maybe to you as well. When I reread it or think about it, I imagine that there are waves of energies that are being released and coursing over and around the colon, the impeding and enabling colon that connects or disconnects the two words and/or worlds.

Life : like

*30 Jan. 2024*

### **Likeable Things**

I like things  
I do like things it seems  
Little ones or big ones  
I like those that last

I like things that are elastic  
But not ones that are plastic  
I like nothing that is spastic  
Bombastic or overenthusiastic

Now that I have defined limitations  
I know that I do like more things  
Than I thought I would like  
But certainly not everything

And as silly as it seems  
I am uncertain about one thing  
One thing that is three things  
Me myself and I

*31 Jan. 2024*

### **Perplexing**

Whether or not the world is round or flat hardly matters to any one of us, for it may be a natural wonder or an unnatural wonder.

It is certainly unique in our planetary system, maybe solitary in the Orion Arm of our own Milky Way Galaxy, possibly unique in our Universe too, perchance an

orphan of the Cosmos itself.

Nobody knows. Indeed, no one now living will ever know. It could be that our distant descendants will learn what's what, if we are still a space-faring species.

Earth – our Earth – if not a natural wonder – may turn out to be an unnatural wonder.

A one-shot, or one among “billions and billions,” as the sage of space may or may not have said.

Now unique and known to us alone ... likely the Only Earthers ever in existence.

31 Jan. 2024

## **Sigmund Freud**

These days I am surprised nobody puns on this man's last name: *Freud*. His theories are the basis of many a *feud*. In decades past more battles were lost and won before he emerged in another pun as *freed* of the insults of the narrow-minded. In Old German the name *Sigmund* means “victory” or “protection.”

1 Feb. 2024

## **Music**

The appreciation of music has played as small a part of my life as the performance of music based on five years of piano lessons that led, alas, nowhere. Indifferent to the cloying sentimentality of popular music as heard on radio programs of the period, I took to Miklós Rózsa's score for the MGM movie *Quo Vadis*, then to the Saturday afternoon CBC radio broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera, with thrilling Wagner, lyrical Puccini, etc., then the mysterious rhythms of the Peruvian multi-range entertainer Yuma Sumac, then hearing Heitor Villa-Lobos direct the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in his perennially moving “Bachiana Brasileiras” (and exchanging a short letter with him), then the sophisticated allure and cynicism of Marlene Dietrich whom I beheld and heard and never forgot on the stage of the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in New York City, then on recordings, and live in Toronto's Koerner Hall, Philip Glass's intense rhythms which still hold sway over my emotions. At this time I have no serious expectations of any evolution in my taste and appreciation beyond “the great Glass.”

2 Feb. 2024

## **Beware**

Act now  
Contents may vary  
Do it right away  
Don't miss your opportunity  
May not be available in every location  
Not always as advertised  
Phone Now  
Quantities are limited

3 Feb. 2024

## **Poem Based on a Line of Paul Eluard's**

I have never counted the number of “the women I have lived with” for the simple reason that the number is one. I have been married but once. One woman, one wife. Otherwise I have not been celibate, so there are other women but no other women who are wives. Life is simpler that way than it would be if it were otherwise!

Over the years, over the decades of years, I have resisted, mightily, the temptation to count them. I have no idea how many woman I have loved, using the most amorous of terms. I hesitate to do so, especially while dropping off to sleep. Numbers are not important *per se*.

Some occasional lovers were younger (though not underage, as I am a law-abiding person as well as one who prefers women with the maturity of experience) and others were older, some of considerable if less-than-obvious beauty, others in possession of detailed knowledge of male sexual desires and of female expectations.

In my idle day-dreams they account for my harem of beauties. But there are problems here because some of them without prompting fell in love with me, whereas others of them fell out of affection without any direction to do otherwise.

I have been inspired to write this prose poem by the French poet Paul Eluard's line “the women I have lived with.” He writes lyrically but generally, more enamoured of the body than captivated by the lover's heart or spirit. Maybe the French, especially the poets, do these things with different expectations.

4 Feb. 2024

## **An Acrostic for D. G.**

*On His Birthday, 5 February 2024*

**D** ecent  
**A** ltruistic  
**V** alorous  
**I** ntense  
**D** isciplined

**G** radely  
**O** riginal  
**T** ruthful  
**L** ucid  
**I** ndividual  
**B** ounteous

*5 Feb. 2024*

### **Magical Visions**

I saw you among the stars of the heavens  
I saw you among the caverns of the earth  
I saw you among the oases of the deserts  
I saw you among the plains of the west  
I saw you among the clouds in the skies  
I saw you among the waterfalls of the hills  
I saw you among the trees of the forests  
I saw you among the depths of the oceans  
I saw you among the peaks of the mountains

Yes I saw you everywhere that I looked  
But “saw” is the wrong word to use  
It is the past tense of the infinitive verb “to see”  
It has to be the verb’s present tense  
It is “see” and not “saw” and definitely not “was”

*5 Feb. 2024*

**Love**



Only I only wish only to only love only only you.

5 Feb. 2024

## **Life & Death**

I am afraid that to date my sole mission in life has been to avoid a singular death.

5 Feb. 2024

## **A Life in Periods**

An embryo for weeks on end  
An infant for months after that  
A baby then a toddler for additional months  
A child for a few years  
Then an adolescent  
Then a student and then a scholar  
Then a man or a woman for years ahead  
Then a young husband or a young wife  
Then a parent a grandparent a great-grandparent  
Then an octogenarian then a cripple  
Then but a mere and meager memory

6 Feb. 2024

## **Freud and Jung**

Sigmund Freud's last name, as I mentioned earlier, is close to *feud* and *fraud*, whereas Carl Jung's is close to *junk* and *jungle*. I do not recall anyone noting these equivalences before. Could they matter more than that?

7 Feb. 2024

## **Transcendental**

So-called transcendental temptation existed ages before so-called transcendental meditation, though whether the desires of the former are met by the fulfilment of the latter is a matter that is yet to be examined.

8 Feb. 2024

## **Ritornello**

The Italian musical term *ritornello* which has so lilting a sound in English means “little return.” It refers to a specific style of repetition in musical form identified with classical composition and performance in the past. The word should be enlisted to apply to life’s dire conditions characterized by repetitions that are setbacks so typical of modern times.

8 Feb. 2024

## **The Four Seasons**

There is a cycle for the four seasons yet it is not the cycle best known to most of us. By tradition the seasons run from Spring to Summer to Fall to Winter. Yet the cycle that is known to our bodies goes like this: “Summer springs and winter falls.”

9 Feb. 2024

## **Childhood**

There are two stages of early life: infancy and childhood. The first is the vocal stage of “baby” and “babble” and the second is the lively stage of the “chwild.”

10 Feb. 2024

## **The Second Coming**

I raise my eyes from the page of the book that reprints the text of “The Second Coming,” the prophetic poem composed by W.B. Yeats – and what is it that I see surrounding me? Warfare. It surprises me to realize that the Great War, far from being over, is still being waged around the world turning it into a wold.

11 Feb. 2024

## **Donald J. Trump**

Is there a reconfiguration of the appearance of Donald J. Trump with yellow hair in the figure of the monster of the apocalypse? It seems there is. Here is how it is described: “A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun ....” It appears in the powerful prophetic poem composed by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats in 1918; “The Second Coming” has been widely read and been found relevant ever since then. In the poem the shape of the Trump-like figure, being or beast, has “the head of a man,” but surprisingly its body resembles that of a “lion.” The great Irish poet was not wrong when he regarded poetry as prophecy.

*11 Feb. 2024*

### **Trump Once Again**

Donald J. Trump, while notably given to hyperbole, is the grand master of aporia, neither a good state or condition to be in. Trump was schooled in the mastery of aporia by his lawyer friend Roy Cohen who in the 1960s controlled, if it may be so imagined, the Lionel Electric Train Company, then one of the largest toy manufacturers in the world, which subsequently fell into bankruptcy. Since Cohen’s death in 1986, Trump has been reported to cry out, “Where is my Roy Cohen?”

*12 Feb. 2024*

### **Arguably**

I have observed that the adverb *arguably* is widely used in advertising matter to modify extravagant if not dubious claims. It is also widely used in political speeches and discourses to place the onus on the listener or reader rather than on the speaker or writer as to its suitability or applicability.

*13 Feb. 2024*

### **Philosophies**

*Pyrrhonists* are ancient philosophers who doubt that secure knowledge is a possibility. There are those who are *ephectic* (they suspend judgment), those who are *aporetic* (they engage in refutation), and those who are *zetetic* (they pursue the truth). As a group they are known today as *pyrrhonists*, after the sceptic Pyrrho of 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Greece.

14 Feb. 2024

## **My Handwriting**

I write from left to right, from left to right, from ... or I write from right to left, from right to left, from ... on the assumption the sheet of paper is higher than it is wider.

If I suppose the sheet of paper is wider than it is higher, something of a novelty, rather like two pages of an open book, then I am inclined to write from top to bottom, from ... though not in any instance from bottom to top.

Thus the world is described differently ... indeed the world is different ... depending on its orientation ... and presumably what is being said about it. The scripts in my handwriting on its sheets of paper say a lot, but I prefer to think that the spirit of the writer says somewhat more.

15 Feb. 2024

## **Regina Rini Writes about Plagiarism**

I really enjoy reading the irregular columns contributed to *The Times Literary Supplement* by their regular learned columnist with the regal-sounding name of Regina Rini. Never heard of her? She is described in these words in each issue that includes her highly interesting column: “Regina Rini holds the Canada Research Chair in Social Reasoning at York University in Toronto.” The column is about half a *TLS* page in length, perhaps 2,000 words in all. By now, as a regular reader of her fluent prose about a galaxy of subjects (whatever captures her attention and strikes her as being useful to her readers), I should know what “Social Reasoning” means, but that is another matter. What I do know is that Dr. Rini is a clear-headed reasoner and someone with a strong commitment to equally clear-headed communication.

I am not going to summarize her argument in the article titled “What Makes a Plagiarist” in the issue of January 19, 2024. Instead, I will encapsulate it. Our “social reasoner” distinguishes among three uses of the word “plagiarism.” In brief, here is what she says. The worst form of plagiarism is “stealing,” a simple crime that she calls a “no-no.” It is out of bounds and seldom escapes detection. Then there is what she oddly but accurately calls “muddying.” She regards it as “a more subtle harm” for it is meant to confuse rather than inform the earnest reader or listener. Every reader will probably recognize what is possible here: attack the intelligence of people with clever argumentation and confuse them with no end in sight. Politicians are singularly adept at doing this. The third type of plagiarism is “cheating.” This is simple misuse of the material of other people. It “cheats the system” and leaves people often

unaware or sometimes astounded that copy may be pilfered, purloined, or pinched without compunction – and much of the time without suffering the consequences.

I found her distinctions to be unexpectedly meaningful and I recommend that her readers take them seriously. Thank you, Regina Rini.

16 Feb. 2024

### **Tribute to Michael Snow**

Here are the amazing words of Hollis Frampton, New York filmmaker, recalling the films of his friend, the multi-talented, Toronto-born artist and musician, Michael Snow.

“His work has already modified our perception of past film. Seen or unseen, it will affect the making and understanding of film in the future. This is an astonishing situation. It is like knowing the name and address of the man who carved the Sphinx.”

This tribute appeared in the insightful obituary of the Toronto-born artist that was carried in *The New York Times*, 6 Jan. 2023, by J. Hoberman, a copy of which was kindly sent to me from Vancouver by Jen Griffin, herself an artist.

17 Feb. 2024

### **Regina and Irina**

As I mentioned in an earlier item, Regina Rini is a columnist with a Canadian background who contributes regular columns to the *Times Literary Supplement*. It is interesting that she seems to have a “double.” The “double” who also contributes to the *TLS* is Irina Dumitrescu, a regular columnist with whom she shares a Canadian education. Irina is (get this!) Professor and Head of English Medieval Studies,

*Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie,  
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.*

In other words she is a medievalist who teaches at the University of Bonn in Germany. Perhaps in the future I will find occasion to discuss one of Irina’s columns too.

18 Feb. 2024

### **Direct Communication**

This incident occurred in 1970 some months following the appearance of my collection titled *Neo Poems*. In the title the adjective “neo” was chosen to describe a free-association style of writing prose-like poems that were and remain largely associative in intent. The reviews of the collection fell between being half-hearted and half-interested.

One day there was a phone call from someone who was hesitant to identify himself but did so when I asked him directly. He said he was a senior student at the University of British Columbia who lived in Vancouver and was reading *Neo Poems* with some interest. “Yes,” I said.

“You remember the line of one of the poems that includes your actual telephone number, complete with area code, plus the suggestion that any perplexed reader could phone the author for any further information that might be in order. I’m that reader. I’m phoning.”

I suppressed a chuckle.

He asked, “Are you the author of the book?”

I replied, “Yes.”

“Why did you do that?”

“I did that because it seemed in keeping with the style and content of the collection. To my knowledge nobody has ever done that before and it seemed a way to encourage or at least indicate direct communication between author and reader. Go to the source. Always a good idea when researching information.”

“Where are you now?”

“Still living in Toronto, where I have long lived.”

“Oops, then this is a long-distant charge and I should hang up before I run up a bill.” That was followed by the sound of the click of the receiver being hung up.

To this day I wonder if the nameless caller feels he got his money’s worth.

19 Feb. 2024

## **Surprising Sunshine**

Another sunny day. I feel rewarded by the elements but also indebted to the elements for brightening a cold day with a seemingly warm sun. Would that “sunny days and sunny ways” were every day!

20 Feb. 2024

## **Choses vues**

The French have a way with words, French words anyway, especially with their inherent warmth and precious sense of wonder. For instance, the phrase “*choses vues*” may merely mean “things seen,” but the gracious expression seems to reflect well on the person who is seeing what there is to see and sharing an inherent appreciation of it with other people who have yet to appreciate the rarity of that experience.

21 Feb. 2024

### **Youthful Affections**

In retrospect, it seems that the attitudes of the majority of the youthful girls and the nubile women whom I encountered as a young man was reflected in the wording that still appears on the labels of bottles found in every kitchen cabinet: “Extra Virgin Olive Oil.”

22 Feb.2024

### **Necessaries**

Bread, read, breed, need, lead.

22 Feb.2024

### **Now More than Ever**

Now more than ever, it seems, we need more dramatic terms to refer to developments in Artificial Intelligence. No longer are computers *dynamic* – these days they are *trynamic*, to coin a word for the present and for posterity.

23 Feb. 2024

### **Which Line?**

The Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden was inspired to write a most memorable and arresting poetic line that goes like this: “We must love one another or die.” It is part of his great elegiac poem “September 1, 1939” that was published at the time of the German invasion of Poland and marked the commencement of World War II. The poem first appeared in print in *The New Republic*, 18 Oct. 1939, and then in Auden’s collection *Another Time* (1940). But by the time he was reviewing his texts for their

appearance in *The Collected Poems of W.H. Auden* (1945), he had tired of the poem itself and eventually changed the line to read as follows: “We must love one another and die.” He felt that the latter words (“and die”) were more truthful and appropriate than the former words (“or die”). The jury is still out as to whether the two words “or die” are more or less desirable than the two words “and die.” While the jury has been sitting for a long time, it seems it will continue to sit for decades to come.

13 Dec. 2023 – 24 Feb. 2024

## **Email to an Historian**

Dear Michael:

Thank you for your interesting email. I will share it with Ruth who will appreciate very much your response to her *Sisters of Elysium*. Few readers of her epic have commented on it knowingly as you have.

Yes, as tourists, on the first of our two visits to Greece, we took the tour from Athens to the site of Delphi. Realize that we have merely a layperson’s knowledge of the oracle plus perhaps a special feeling or at least regard and respect for sacred places whether once sacred or still sacred.

To me the words that entered my mind when we stared on the sight of the dry ground ahead of us, with its crease, above which is reputed to be the actual seat upon which the pythoness sat, the words “a dry womb” came into my mind. I could not shake the impression and that description. I felt that energies it once or might have possessed have long since been dissipated by time and the works of man, though let me add that the site still appears to be a great candidate for the actual site known to historians of Ancient Greece. It should be preserved and protected for it might once more function in the revival of the spirit of prophecy. My own feeling is that “man makes the miraculous.” So determined, it may be revived.

I wish I could be more helpful. Perhaps the axiom to recall is “once sacred, forever sacred.”

JR

*Note:* The email above is dated 21 Feb. 2023 and was addressed to Professor Michael Griffin, Head of Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies, University of British Columbia. He is a young scholar but an accomplished one, the son of Jen Griffin who is a correspondent and an artist. Dr. Griffin expressed pleasure reading Ruth’s epic poem called *Sisters of Elysium* and queried us about our reactions to the visit we had made in the 1960s to see the remains of the Oracle of Delhi outside Athens. He wanted to know what I thought of such sites of prophecy as these: Are



they special in exceptional ways and for all time? Intriguing considerations.

24 Feb. 2024

### **Words of God**

If there is a divine deity who speaks to us, does the deity employ the first person in the singular or the plural, the second person in the singular or the plural, or the third person in the singular or the plural? For no reason I know, I opt for the third person in the plural, though this choice is merely a hunch!

25 Feb. 2024

### **La Forza del Destino**

One translation into English from the Italian is “The Force of Fate,” though whether Fate and Destiny share the same meaning is arguable. The music of Puccini’s opera will have to speak for itself, which it does.

26 Feb. 2024

### **Caustic, Etc.**

There is a difference – though not a world of difference – between speech that is *caustic* and speech that is *sarcastic*. Allow me to add to these two legitimate words a third term that is more playful: *sarcaustic*. It seems to fit!

26 Feb. 2024

### **Dreams**

John Porter is a poet and friend who has read through a number of these “poems and effects” in their Portable Document Format (PDF). He has observed that, although they deal with a wide range of subjects, very few of the entries discuss the nature of dreaming or the role that this activity plays in our lives, both conscious and unconscious. He is right and there is a reason for this. I have never made up my mind about the purpose or the pain or the pleasure associated with the dream state, why some of the states are more vivid than others, why some of them may be retained

upon awakening (though generally only in part), and why the effectiveness of what is called lucid dreaming, that is, retaining the little dramas in our heads while the body is in a rested and arrested state, is reserved for some dreamers and not for other dreamers. There is also the feeling that dreams are warnings about things to come and hence to avoid. There is not much to say about dreams as foreknowledge, yet there is a lot to account for here. The truth is I gave up trying to account for such matters by any way of repression or suggestion and instead now relate to them in terms of what was told to me by Dr. Cyril Greenland, a psychiatric social worker and friend of many decades. "Their function is to keep the sleeper sound asleep while the mind or brain or body sorts out the concerns of the day." In other words, dreaming does not explain anything at all. It has its own logic in that it keeps us sound or reasonably sound asleep with its sane/crazy logic. In my case the dreamer sleeps while subservient parts of the mind, the brain, and the body's needs are being met. It could be so.

*27 Feb. 2024*

## **God**

Even as a youngster I was confused about this matter. Is "God" the name of an entity, a supreme being? Or is the noun "god" a supreme power without a personality? Is this concern no more than a matter of nomenclature and a capitalized letter? What is it? To this day the matter remains an open question and so forever it will likely remain, at least for me.

*28 Feb. 2024*

## **Colour Commentators**

We used to hear sports broadcasters being described as "colour commentators." Radio and television coverage of sports events would be enlivened with the observations and remarks of knowledgeable sports reporters to explain the niceties and insights of what was happening, on the field or the ice, especially during the commercial breaks in the coverage of the action. There were also panels of colour commentators knowledgeable about "the game" who argued among themselves. One hears them sounding off quite often, but the term itself is being used less and less often, perhaps because of the reverberations of the word "colour."

*28 Feb. 2024*

## **Leap Year**

A funny idea, “leap year.” Descriptions and explanations for it – one extra day added every fourth year to the calendar between the end of February and the beginning of March – invariably involves the word “intercalary” as in the phrase “intercalary date.” Another word is “accessorial” which though used less often sounds more obvious and friendly.

Anyone born on the extra day has a problem: Should he or she celebrate his or her birthday at the end of February or at the beginning of March? Ever resourceful, Wikipedia has no recommendation to make, as it does not favour one day or another, but it does offer the following information: “People born on Leap Day are called ‘leaplings’ or ‘leapers.’” The nomenclature fails to inspire confidence!

*29 Feb. 2024*

## **The Human Body**

Dandruff in hair  
Headache  
Impaired hearing  
Watery eyes  
Tooth ache  
Blocked nose  
Sore throat  
Irregular heartbeats  
Congested lungs  
Upset stomach  
Genital infection  
Arthritic knees  
Strained leg muscles  
Sore toes

*Suggestion: Also read from the bottom up.*

*29 Feb. 2024*

## **Arletty and Garance**

I continue to be thrilled with two French women's names: those of Arletty and Garance. Arletty is the actress; Garance is the role. The former is the woman; the latter is the part that she plays on screen. In life, the woman suffers; in cinema, the part remains an ideal of desire and devotion. Every woman and all men of French cultural background know of them. If intrigued, view on the Web these very hallmarks of French cinema.

*1 March 2024*

### **Five Ws and one H**

Journalists are traditionally known to describe the circumstances of an action through the use of the "five Ws and one H." This is short for "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How." Too bad that the word "How" does not begin with the letter "W"; if it did, then it could be the sixth "W," as in the useful word "Way." Not every formulation is one hundred percent perfect.

*2 March 2024*

### **Near Misses**

action reaction  
bliss kissed  
bodily allurements  
breasts best  
embrace race  
hug shrug  
kiss missed  
lost love  
navel nicely  
nipples nature's crowns  
thrust trust  
tongues tied  
vaginas imagined

*3 March 2024*

### **Music**

forwards from tonality to atonality  
and may it seem  
backwards from atonality to tonality

*4 March 2024*

## **Supernaturalism**

I have read a number of books that intelligently argue that there are routes that take the reader from naturalism to supernaturalism. But I have yet to see even one copy of a book that intelligently takes the reader from supernaturalism to super-unnaturalism.

*5 March 2024*

## **Dark Side**

The other side of the Sun is a farcical phrase for the reason that the Sun rotates with respect to the planet Earth, so there is no “other side.” Yet the far side of the Moon is the dark side of our planet’s sole satellite in space. It does not rotate with respect to earth. Its characteristic features were unknown to mankind until it was first photographed by Russia’s Luna 3 spacecraft in October 1959. The Moon’s “dark side” comprises eighteen percent of its surface and it has proven to be dreary region of the satellite like many regions of Greater Russia.

*6 March 2024*

## **Books in Quantity**

I find that two things are difficult these days. The first difficulty is to find the time to read a good book from cover to cover. The second difficulty is to find someone who will take a good book that I have read with pleasure off my hands. A quantity of books is especially laborious to dispose of. Despite their merit, books in the singular and in the plural may be described as “very hard to dispose of.”

*7 March 2024*

## **I Would, Yes**

I would if I could, yes, really, I should write at least one poem that has the charm of

a text composed by René Char, one multi-decades ago that has yet to grow any older than it was at the hour of its conception, bundled in its own special language, with all its characteristic nuances and straight-faced fancies, and it too would endure beyond the time of the present, for it would share the mystery of, say, *Domaine Ramonet, Montrachet Grand Cru, Burgundy, 1989*, to enervate the mastery of syntax, respect nature's powers, the roles and masks of the mysteries of man and of the spirit of the imagination, and capture all the atmospherics of our own times and places, including its earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, deluges, hurricanes, blizzards, plagues, pestilences, wars, murders, riots, slaughters, lies, etc., which we might withstand and hence understand and then endure. Yes, *oui*, thank you, *M. Char*.

8 March 2024

### **Straight A's**

The name of the country is spelled C A N A D A. Three straight A's. High-scoring, at least in the past, though alas today it might be downgraded to C B N B D B. Don't forget the name of the Dominion ends in NADA, which in Spanish means "nothing," "*da nada*," "it's nothing," "not a big deal," or even "the void."

9 March 2024

### **They Came!**

They came, after-all, the long-awaited Martians. They were the first and it turned out they looked like great-brained intellectuals, each with its own mischievous gaze, intent on deadly mischief. They were followed by the Mercurians, slow-flowing rivers and rivulets of a mercury-like substance: slow-thinking entities. Then came the Venusians, snake-like beings or creatures, with octopus-like tentacles, and a degree of malcontent difficult to withstand. Jupiter's creature were brutes, too big to be described, obliterating all light from their passage against the Sun, temporarily turning day into night and then back again. Uranus, "your-in-us," not "urine-us" at least, did not stand out; I hardly remember their passage among us. Saturnians had wings like bats like those described in *Childhood's End*. Neptune – make of those things what you will; words fail to prevail. Pluto is dogged but its barks are heard no more. Better than a distant galaxy, inhabited by who knows what; formidable like a planetary zoo on the world next door to us. Strangest of all of these planetary entities and passages must be us – Earthlings. If there is a mirror around, glance into it and then take a position behind the mirror to stare at the rest of us. How readily do we

recognize ourselves?

*10 March 2024*

### **The End of the World**

This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.

These lines sound like they come from a nursery rhyme, yet they are the conclusion of the poem “The Hollow Men” composed by T.S. Eliot in 1925. That was three years after he published “The Waste Land.” Then two years after composing “The Hollow Men,” he converted to Christianity and foresaw the collapse of the cultural values of the Western world. The full text of “The Hollow Men” appears in Eliot’s *Collected Poems*.

*11 March 2024*

### **Are You an Opsimath?**

Adopted in the 1800s from the Ancient Greece language, the word *opsimath* refers to a person who is a late learner of life’s lessons yet also a hard and dedicated worker. I suppose many of us are late learners but few thereafter are hard workers!

*12 March 2024*

### **What Is its Meaning?**

A word that is increasingly being used is *precarity*, the brief noun form of *precariousness*. It refers, in particular, to unfavourable social and financial conditions.

*13 March 2024*

### **William Blake**

I have long been drawn to the writings and drawings and prints of William Blake, but

at the same time I found that my enthusiasm for the characteristic works of this poet and artist was tempered somewhat by Northrop Frye's understanding of every bit of it as expressed in Frye's fearsome *Fearful Symmetry*, with the result that after a while I could take his vision or leave it. Indeed, I attended Frye's lectures and felt, at least at one imposing moment one afternoon during a lecture that Frye identified totally with Blake in a Victoria College classroom, the equivalent of an actor "becoming" the character being portrayed.

So I never expected I would come across a one-sentence, six-words description of what it was that I felt. No question Blake was a genius at what he did. But not all geniuses are so rewarding. What follows is an account that appeared in an odd book, to be sure, one titled *Walt Whitman Speaks* (2019), a collection of the Great Gray Poet's table-talk or *obiter dicta*, collected over time by his friend and disciple Horace Traubel. In the section called "Writers," Whitman shows his enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm for well-known writers. The shortest account – a dismissal – is devoted to William Blake. I have never seen it quoted by anyone, including Professor Frye, who has read just about everything about Blake. So here it is, all six words of it:

"Blake began and ended in Blake."

Whitman was not a succinct writer – for he was inclined to be wordy – and he was not a sharp-eyed reader – for he was inclined to be an appreciator. Yet he caught something here that I have been puzzling over since I first found it in the short collection *Walt Whitman Speaks* edited by Brenda Wineapple and published by Library of America in 2019. Not very gracious, a little insightful, yet thoughtful in its own dismissive way.

*13 March 2024*

## **Shelter**

It is intriguing that the noun *shelter*, with the addition of the extra letter *l*, spells out the word *hell*, as in "shellter," which is the condition of living without adequate housing, an increasing characteristic of urban life these days.

*14 March 2024*

## **Flim-flam**

"Flim-flam" has been called "nonsensical or insincere talk" and it has been identified as "a confidence trick" or even the language of an outright "swindle." Yet there is something whimsical and elaborate and even entertaining about the sound of it,



criminal in intent though that may be. Yet in terms of the promotion of Hollywood films, it is considered to be merely “exaggeration” or “overstatement.” As such I propose it be described as “*film-flam*.”

*15 March 2024*

## **Worlds of Shouts and Whispers**

I have no notion of where or why or when these five words occurred to me. My mind or brain must have been especially active at the time, as the words simply came into my consciousness and stayed with me for a day or two until I gave up and appropriated them for use as the title for this “publication.” I call it a “publication” but it is not that, precisely, for it is a set of proofs and not a bundle of printed matter, not yet anyway. It is also inexact in that these are not “worlds” and the words are not precisely “shouts and whispers,” yet with a bit of poetic licence, all could be as they should be. I have the notion that language should not be relegated to right and wrong but the more associative language is the better it is for all and sundry.

*16 March 2024*

## **Casting a Spell**

Now go there,  
Don't know where;  
Now bring back,  
Don't know what.

Wording of a magic spell, slightly revised, cast in the folk tale “The Empty Drum” (1891) in Leo Tolstoy’s *Twenty-Two Tales* (Oxford University Press, 1906) translated from the Russian by Louise and Aylmer Maude.

*17 March 2024*

## **Really and Truly**

*Really* means something corresponds to facts, whereas *truly* means something corresponds to reality. These are subtle differences that are mistakenly assumed to be synonymous. If only facts corresponded to realities!

17 March 2024

## **The New York Review of Books**

Given the immense population of the United States of America, an observer would expect that its principal review of newly published and newly translated books would have an immense circulation, perhaps a readership of a million copies of each issue. Instead this semi-popular, semi-scholarly publication, which appears twenty times a year, has annual sales and subscriptions that in 2023 reached 117,315 copies per issue. (This is an absurdly low figure given the quality and interest of these issues, but the figure is based on the “Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation” which by regulation is carried each year; this statement appeared in the issue of November 9, 2023.) Where is its avid readership, where are academically knowledgeable men and women, where should be found, even a token number of them, subscribers who wish to keep abreast of new books about current and past subjects of interest? So few ... what a shame. But what a quality publication to boast about!

18 March 2024

## **Long Words to Describe People and Conditions**

*Courtesy of Iris Speed Reading Academy*

Are you good and remarkable enough to be  
*supercalifragilisticexpialidocious?*

Who fears being judged by others as much as  
*hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobics?*

What about your fear of all big or long words like  
*sesquipedalophobia?*

Are you worried about ear, throat, or nose problems?  
If so, see an *otorhinolaryngologist*.

Should you find most things worthless, the word for you is  
*floccinaucinihilipilification* as it is the word to use  
to describe your condition.

If you are fickle, you certainly suffer from being a *tergiversator*.

Nobody, including you, wants to be *pusillanimous*, that being a timid person of weak character.

Big is good, better than little, but a *Brobdingnagian* is a gigantic person.

Indeed, someone fantastically good may be described as *tellogofusciouhipoppokunurious*.

*Eellogofusciouhipoppokunurious* is a word (of sorts!) that is pretty long and challenging to spell and pronounce, but it does describe someone who is fantastic.

Avoid the lung disease caused by the inhalation of fine quartz: *pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis*.

To be *discombobulated* means to suffer embarrassment and confusion.

Be pleased if you are a woman who is *pulchritudinous*. It means being beautiful.

If you love raising offspring, you are presumably *polyphiloprogenitive*.

Did you know that a *valetudinarian* describes a person who is always worried about health issues?

Are you worthy of receiving honours? If so, *honorificabilitudinitatibus* describes you best.

An old word, from the nineteenth century, now nearly forgotten, might apply to a learned person who disagrees an awful lot

with received information and opinion. He is said to suffer from *antidisestablishmentarianism*. Now I am sure you already knew

that you knew that!

*19 March 2024*

### **Pretendian**

One word that came into vogue in the 1970s is “pretendian” which combines the two words “pretend” and “Indian.” It refers to a person who has no evidence or proof of claims of indigenous identity as a native North American Indian yet nonetheless claims such an identity and displays it to some personal advantage. An early instance is the author and performer Grey Owl (Archibald Belaney) and a current one is singer-songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie. (Beverly Jean Santamaria). Belaney was a superb story-teller and role player; Buffy is a superb singer-songwriter, who nonetheless thrilled and continues to thrill readers and listeners with her accounts of her earlier life. Earlier lives? All of it fictional yet based on fact and feeling.

*19 March 2024*

### **The Four Cities**

Every city is four cities in all, simultaneously. There is the city of antiquity of which much is rumoured though not remembered. There is the city of one’s youth of which much is withheld. There is the city of one’s maturity about which so much is immature. There is the city of the far distant future of which nothing at all is known though much may be surmised. Such is the four-square city in perpetuity.

*20 March 2024*

### **Thirteen Words**

*Taken from Wallace Stevens’s poem “Of Modern Poetry”*

act finding in mind of of poem suffice the the the what will

*20 March 2024*

### **Poems to Compose**

I would dearly love to write an original poem that consists entirely of lines that are

un-rhymed and un-rhythmed and reprinted virtually at random from my earlier poems. Indeed, so vain (and curious) am I that I have now done so. Here are two poems, each four lines long, that attest to this casual form of construction.

1.

I bring these gifts  
The Sun shines in your right hand  
There are places in the world where it is always late afternoon, or early morning, or early evening, or high noon or midnight, at least in our experience or our imagination. It seems so, anyway  
I am I and myself

2.

You have a choice to make  
I have a brand-new misgiving each day  
Resolutions and inevitable irresolutions, now  
If you expect a platitude or two, close this book now

*Note:* Preparing these two poems based on lines from other poems of mine took me on a journey into the past. I was quite surprised, really, to realize that the original poems themselves are quite intricate and heart-felt (when not somewhat cynical, possibly at times a bit rude) and yet the selected lines remain quite moving. To my readers, I recommend the collection of the 170 poems that appear in *A Standing Wave: Poems and Effects of 2012 (2013)*.

21 March 2024

## **Running Caption**

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney lying in state at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building in Ottawa.

The double meaning of the verb “lying” is possibly discernible in the wording of this Chyron which appeared on CTV News Channel prior to the display of casket at St. Patrick’s Basilica, Montreal, 21 March 2024.

21 March 2024

## **Best and Worst Cities**

Crestfallen is the word that I use to recall my reactions to the results of so-called public opinion polls that are quoted by television personalities, newspaper columnists, and contributors to the Web. I am crestfallen because, read critically, they produce their opposites. Here is one instance of that quirk in the nature of human communications: “One study regularly shows that the world’s best city in which to live and work is Toronto, Canada.” Curiously enough, another study shows that the Canadian city is one of the worst city in which to live and work in the world today.” Curious ... and hence I am left crestfallen.

*22 March 2024*

## **Niagara Falls**

I remember that when I was very young I accompanied my parents in our Pontiac as we drove across one of the bridges that spans the Niagara River *en route* from Kitchener in the Province of Ontario to New York City in the State of New York. I looked down and beheld in the Niagara Gorge the awesome structures that to this day line the water’s edge.

I looked down and asked my father, “What’s in those buildings down there?”

He replied, “Turbins.”

That sounded odd, as I still recall visualizing hundreds of colourful turbins wound around the heads of hundreds of pale, life-size manikins. They seemed out of place.

I said nothing at the time. But a week or two later, on the return trip across the bridge, I said to my father, “I know what’s down there.”

“What?” he said.

“Turbins,” I said.

My father replied, “They’re not ‘turbins.’ They are called turbines.”

Immediately I visualized huge metal electrical structures and whirling cog-wheels. That cleared up the picture!

*23 March 2024*

## **Philip Glass**

There are innumerable reasons why I admire the composer Philip Glass and his innumerable compositions. I admire him as a man, as a cultured human being, as an inventive composer, and as a contemporary artist and performer. Indeed, so much do I admire him that at times I even wish I was PG rather than JRC!

He is a year younger than I am. Unfair, I say! In the 1970s, he summered with family and friends on Cape Breton Island where he found he could relax and work and where his living expenses were less than those in Manhattan. At other times he spent considerable time visiting ashrams in India and he helped to found the Dalai Lama's official residence, Tibet House, in New York City.

He is a prolific composer of operas and musical events, including influential ones that seek to appreciate the magic and mystery of the lives of Einstein, Gandhi, and Akhnaten, thereby drawing attention to their contributions in the seemingly disparate fields of science, politics, and religion. It might be said he extended the word "opera" to include "musical theatre." He created compositions out of rhythms. He has also caught the sound of "the music of the night" with his sound-track for the original movie *Dracula*. The first performance of his blockbuster *Akhnaten* was held by the Stuttgart Symphony on March 24, 1984, his birthday – as well as mine.

All this is incidental or at least secondary to the thrill that I first felt on accidentally hearing the repetitious chords of his characteristic composition for the unstructured documentary film *Koyaanisquatsi: Life Out of Balance* (1982). Here is, was, etc., an unexpected aesthetic connection with modern life and all the sounds of space and time. I never really recovered from those chords, so much more individually expressive than the sounds of the Theremin or the Moog Synthesizer.

I am sure you, the reader, the listener, will agree that there are innumerable reasons, many more than these, but the primary one is that I was, am, and will be moved by his compositions.

*24 March 2024*

## **Birthday**

I am eighty-eight years old today. That is, I am in my eighty-ninth year. I am ancient, and hence near death's door. Not anxious about dying ... but distressed at leaving a mess behind.

*24 March 2024*

## **Cicada**

In a famous haiku the great Japanese poet Matsuo Basho expressed uncertainly about the significance of the cry of the cicada. The strident noise that the tiny but noisy insect makes seems to signal something or other. But what? The haiku in translation goes like this:

The cry of the cicada  
Gives us no sign  
That presently it will die.

That was probably quite true, at least to Basho, but it is more likely that the cicada is making an effort to signal that it is still alive and presumably quite well, a vital difference.

*24 March 2024*

### **Three-Body Problem**

Gore Language Nudity Smoking Suicide Violence

Warnings on Movie Ratings, Netflix, for the series *Three-Body Problem*,  
Rating TV-MA [Television-Mature Audience]

*24 March 2024*

### **Prized Books**

I am keyboarding this entry at 9:30 a.m., having had a phone call from Dwight Whalen that he and his helper will be on the road in the van they rented to load two of my book collections and remove them permanently from my quarters. He lives in Niagara Falls, Ont. I hate to part with these books, all the titles written by Sax Rohmer and a multitude of books written by various hands about the Fourth Way, which he also offered to take off my hands. There are about thirty cartons to be filled. I expect Dwight and his helper to arrive between ten-thirty and eleven o'clock this morning. Ruth said, "You must feel at a loss." The truth is that I do. The Rohmer titles are reading copies but the collection is complete and includes a holograph letter from Rohmer (addressed to me) and much miscellany. The Work titles comprise a varied lot, though all the mainstay publications are here. My shelves will be lighter than they were before ... perhaps to collect even more dust than formerly.

*25 March 2024*

### **Memory Test**

Yesterday afternoon a woman who books people for placement in care facilities was here to ask me questions. At the beginning of the interview, to test my short-term



memory, she asked me to remember three words and then repeat them when prompted to recall them in the given order at the end of the interview. These are the words: courage, ocean, blue. I fixed them in my memory by recalling them mentally every few minutes during the rest of the interview – which otherwise I would not have bothered to do – and now (the next morning) I cannot forget them. As it happens she herself forgot to ask me to recall them at the end of the interview.

*25 March 2024*

### **Turtle Island**

We live on what the indigenous people know as Turtle Island. Catchy notion. Imaginative and hard to forget, if otherwise meaningless. I keep thinking “Tur Island” would be a more appropriate a moniker for what we, the non-indigenous people, have made of our lands and seas.

*26 March 2024*

### **Some Hope for Humanity**

There is some hope for humanity. The word “ineffable” is more familiar than the word “effable,” though things would be better still if the most familiar word of all was “affable.”

*26 March 2024*

### **Writing**

I try to write a few words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs each and every day. These days the poems that come arrive few and far between, but accidents of word-choices seem plentiful enough. Casual acts seem to me to be of more interest and relevance these days than deliberate constructions.

*27 March 2024*

### **Common Senses**

The familiar expression “common sense” has the built-ins weakness that it presents as singular a formulation that is not singular but plural. The senses themselves are

plural and the knowledge that they offer may be both “common” and “uncommon,” both sensical and nonsensical and hence both common and uncommon. Like all other expressions, they need to be examined critically.

*28 March 2024*

### **Borrowed Time**

I feel I am living on borrowed time. I feel I will soon be facing unexpected difficulties and untold disappointments. Indeed, both of us will. Ruth’s birthday is celebrated on March 29, which happens this year to coincide with the Christian holy day of Good Friday. A coincidence of ... negligible ... importance. Nonetheless ... Happy Birthday, Ruth!

*29 March 2024*

### **For Ruth, a Poem of Sorts**

*On Her 88<sup>th</sup> Birthday, 29 March 2024*

A few rhymes, as in youthful times.  
Able and formal, yet remorseful.  
Girl, woman, wife, mother, all together.  
Helpful and sly, frequently asking why.  
Love and loving, much simple caring.  
Style and beauty, never *off*-, ever *on*-duty.  
Wise, and quite helpful, with advice.  
Wit and wisdom, a virtual solar system.

*29 March 2024*

### **The Stars Et Cetera**

The stars upon the seas of the heavens  
The heavens among the orbits of the stars  
The suns amid the rings of their planets  
The planets around the circles of the suns  
The earths beneath our feet within our lungs  
The notions of time and place and rhyme and space

Projections of our imaginativeness

30 March 2024

## **There is a Land that is Lost**

*Based on the first line of a poem by Paul Celan*

It was there once but no longer is it there, the Land that is Lost. It is the Land that Time Forgot. It survives no longer. Once it once was there, but no longer is it there. Where it is, where and when it may be, is not now. No longer may it be found. Anywhere. continents and island may be displaced in time. Gone from time to time or what is mistakenly known as forever. Misplaced in time or clime or place or space. Yet traces may be left, rites, rumours, rhymes, relics of animals, remains of quasi-human beings of one sort or another or even their arts and crafts. Even the architectural remains, Colossi of Memnon, *aka* Vocal Memnon, to sing their tales in the sunrise on the desert. Where is the land that time forgot, civilizations that are lost, ones that are now displaced?

Paul Celan, who asks questions like these, has no answers for them. I am moved by his curiosity and conviction, by the concept, but have no idea about what is up or what is down. I know nothing, or hardly anything. Nobody seems to know very much at all. No one seems to care. Much is missing, much may yet be found in the ground. I would ask Celan except that he drowned more than half a century ago. I am referring to the poet and translator, born Paul Antschel, a Romanian, who wrote in the German language. He was the life's partner of the Austrian poet Ingeborg Bachmann.

But no such luck. Archaeologists of the aether are in short supply. So lacking is the land. No longer there, like the poet, though evidence remains of his existence, his presence, not yet a personality with knowledge that is totally lost ... like the Land that is Lost.

30 March 2024

## **Letters Received from Some Notable People**

Sax Rohmer, Ray Bradbury, Heitor Villa-Lobos, F.R. Scott, Robert Bly, Ezra Pound.

31 March 2024

## **Thirty-four Multi-faceted Loves**

*Recalling Raymond Queneau*

sabbath of loving sabbaticals of love sabotage of love sacrament of love sacrifices of love sadism of love safeguards of love saga of love saints of love salmagundi of love salvations of love salpetre of love saliva of love saltires of love salvages of love salvations of love sanctions of love sanctimoniousnesses of love sanctities of love sanctum of love sanctus of love sang-froid of love sanguinity of love sarcophagi of love satiety of love satires of love satisfactions of love saturnalia of love sauces of love saurians of love sausages of love savannahs of love saviours of love savouries of loving

*31 March 2024*

## **The Saddest Street of Toronto**

Raymond Queneau began a short poem with the title “Among the Saddest Streets of Paris.” One of the streets that he “celebrated” in this way was rue Villiers-de-l’Isle-Adam. But no sooner did he write it than he composed another poem, a happy one this time, about the Rue Galilée, which he regarded as among the most beautiful in this City of Beautiful Rues. This is the way the French poet kept his sense of balance. Balance not being my forte, here is my single contribution.

“The Saddest Street of Toronto” might well be Yonge Street, named after Sir George Yonge, a British authority on ancient roads. It has been ranked as one of the saddest because for more than a century it had been characterized as “the longest so-called street in the world.” It was considered to “connect” Lake Ontario with Rainy River in Ontario and then to points in Manitoba – 1,896 kilometres in all – and sections of it have been depicted as decrepit if not desolate, especially that stretch of it as it passed (and still passes) through downtown Toronto!

Too bad Queneau was not “inspired” to write about this Canadian spectacle.

*1 April 2024*

## **The Alphabet**

The alphabet serves as our supreme source of sound and sight and sense. At least some semi or pseudo alphabets or scripts like *abugidas* and *syllabaries* also offer such functions – but the subject is a complex one, and to complicate matters further

it is not lacking Native Canadian components which include Inuktitut and Cree Syllabics. Yet most writers and poets and songwriters in this country, when they ponder the alphabet for word-choice, have in mind the English and the French alphabets which share the same twenty-six letters, though the pronunciations of some of their letters are decidedly different. It is simple to affirm (more or less) that every poem written these days in either of these languages makes use of a number of these so-called letters. Thus the alphabet may be lightly considered to be an arsenal of power. There is also grammar to contend with. We all learned years ago that “woe is me” is ungrammatical and that it should be “woe is I.” Choosing letters of the alphabet seemingly at random to form pseudo words is a habit worth cultivating as various letters may detonate and form powerful combinations!

*E.g., ejoty, dhlptx, cfilorux; these three instances sound like new names for patent medicines being advertised on television, All they need are capital letters.*

*2 April 2024*

## **Easter**

The Holy Day of Easter this year passed us by with scarcely a nod. Instead of the celebration of the Resurrection this year, much of the population of North America is awaiting with expectation and interest the darkness that will be cast by the Moon passing between the Sun and the Earth – the path of solar totality sweeping across parts of North America: Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It will take place at given times during the afternoon of April 8, 2024: a sight to remember for decades to come. More later!

*3 April 2024*

## **Giuseppe Ungaretti**

Every once in a while I try my hand at a translation or an adaptation of a poem that for one reason or another I find intriguing. I admire “Soldati,” or “Soldiers,” an exceptionally short poem by the great Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti. He was moved to compose it by the military action that he witnessed near Reims, France, July 1918. The Italian original is intriguingly laconic but I have taken the liberty of adding a line to his four-line verse which includes an extra pun, in this instance the reference to autumn in addition to that of fall, assuming this wordplay is extraneous to the Italian language.

## **Soldiers**

We are like  
the leaves  
from the trees  
as they fall  
in autumn.

*Courton Forest, July 1918*

*4 April 2024*

## **Poem or Quote?**

In addition to translating very brief poems by other poets, I enjoy collecting short quotations from their lines and comments. Here are some lines from the writings of the Polish poet Ryszard Krynicki, author of *Magnetic Point: Selected Poems 1968-2014* (New Directions, 2017) as translated by Clare Cavanagh.

\*

Nothing ... looks through me with the non-gaze of the boy I was, am not, won't be.

\*

How to write? To write so that a hungry man might think it's bread? First feed the hungry man, then write so that his hunger is not in vain.

\*

I outstripped my sole life long ago. The world and I take leave each evening.

\*

Only some dreams come true.

\*

I've grown superstitious, I've stopped talking about dreams and hopes out loud, I'd scare them off, I avoid pronouncing words that may take vengeance, I cut them from my old poems (others do this too), I'll be frank, though, sometimes I forget to take precautions.

*4 April 2024*

## **These Days**

I am finding these days to be particularly difficult ones. There seems to be no end to the tasks that need to be completed in and about the house. I won't go into these details here and now, except that whenever I turn the computer on, instead of diversions to be seen, there are tasks in abundance to which to attend – cancelled or

changed appointments, invoices, notices of non-delivery of emails, monies to be transferred from one account to another, threatening notices that are mainly scams, etc. One instance: I have had a long-standing appointment to complete my senior's driver's licence on this coming Monday afternoon, the very day that corresponds to the long-awaited Solar Eclipse! It was cancelled and although nobody was informed about it, the dire date for the appointment was shifted by one month ahead. Another set of dates to fit into my calendar pad. Yesterday afternoon (the third of the month) at Sunnybrook Hospital, Ruth was diagnosed as suffering from diabetes. It seems many of her problems are caused by irregular levels of blood sugars. We will have two rather complicated blood tests to perform each morning, once we are certain we are able to perform them correctly. This entails more phone calls. And on it goes until it doesn't any more.

*5 April 2024*

## **Giuseppe Ungaretti**

### *Morning*

Illuminating me is immensity.

*Note 1:* Someone somewhere may have composed a shorter poem than this one, but if there is one, it is hardly as deeply moving as this great one by Giuseppe Ungaretti which here is translated as "Morning."

### *Mattina*

*M'illumino d'immenso.*

*Note 2:* The original, said to be the shortest Italian poem ever written, consists of only 24 letters, including the title. My translation consists of only five words with title! "Mattina" was composed in 1917 and the fine Italian poet included it two years later in his collection *L'Allegria di naufragi* ("Merriness of Shipwrecks"). Ungaretti once observed, "Poetry is poetry when it carries within it a secret."

*6 April 2024*

## **Mid-afternoon Saturday Emergency**

The nurse arrives to check Ruth's blood sugar level and announces that she is summoning an ambulance to transport her to Sunnybrook Hospital for tests and treatments. We protest a bit and then agree that Ruth's responses – drowsiness, garbled speech, lack of co-operation, etc. – signal that no diabetic shots are going to help her. Indeed, administered by the visiting nurse, they may have created an over-reaction. Before we know it, two male attendants arrive in their vehicle and check various levels of functions, heartbeat, etc. I join Ruth inside the vehicle and after a bouncy ride we approach the Emergency entrance (where twice I have been before, as a patient). Two hours later I leave the Emerg, certain that Ruth is committed for the evening and for tests on Sunday morning (later today). Jonathan arrives shortly after I leave. Ruth is quite combative. Wearily I take a taxi home and hastily I eat a prepared meal and shower and crawl into bed at the usual time. The night that I spend resembles those nights I spent with Ruth for the last year – repeatedly being wakened – but the difference this time is that all I do is roll over and fall back to sleep. The next morning I rise at 8:00 a.m. and have a hasty breakfast. It is now 10:00 a.m. and I will pack a bag and join Ruth at the hospital about 11:00 a.m. It looks as if she will be assigned a permanent room later today. Poor Ruth, such suffering. What happens with insulin injections when she comes home? Tomorrow afternoon is the eclipse of the sun in its totality. The present afternoon will be our totality.

*26 April 2024*

### **Longest Trail Network**

The world's longest trail network is the Trans Canada Trail which connects more than 15,000 communities over 28,000 km of Canadian landscape stretching from the Atlantic to the Arctic and Pacific oceans. It was officially opened in its entirety in 2017 and it remains a community-based undertaking. Trans Canada Trail is the only national organization dedicated to stewarding an accessible nationwide system of connected urban and rural trails.

*7 April 2024*

### **Four Poems**

These are original poems and not translations that were inspired by the reading at random over some months of great many of the excellent translations that appear in the "Poetry Travels" sections of the series called "The Riveter" of *The European Literature Network* on the Web. So the three poems here are not translations but



original compositions, some of the themes of which were suggested by a word or a phrase or a line of a few of these translations by leading European poets and translators.

*Prophecies, Prognostications, Vaticinations*

I inhale the fumes and behold the shapes of past and future.  
I decipher black letters and learn a little about evil times.  
I listen to prophetic words and foreknow my fortune.  
I glare into the heavy crystal ball and see versions of visions.  
I sit in front of a television set and behold lies as they come true.  
I kneel before the altar to feel my heart beat all the faster.  
I caress each of your breasts and sense that I am a great lover.  
I die, and as I expire, I am aware of how little ... then of no more.

*How I Love You*

I love you with my fingertips  
I love you with my tongue  
I love you with my torso  
I love you with my limbs  
I love you with my lips  
I love you with my words  
I love you with my whispers  
I love you with my thoughts  
I love you with my imagination  
I love you with my heart  
It seems all of me loves all of you  
Doing so is hard work indeed

*What We Don't Want*

Lord, God of Hosts,  
Overlords of Whatever:

We don't want to experience  
Yet another war,  
Yet another plague,  
Yet another earthquake,

Yet another instance  
Of whatever it is that is  
Lying ahead for us,  
Grateful or ungrateful,  
As we always are.

We have experienced  
Enough of *that* and *those*.  
Keep them away from us,  
As *farther* and *further*  
Distant from us as possible.

Send instead a little liking,  
Preferably a little loving,  
Too. It would sensibly make  
A great deal of difference  
To us and even, to hazard  
A guess, to You, Lord God,  
To the Two of Us.

### *Foolscape*

I want to fold this sheet of paper into a paper ship and sail away on it.  
I want to turn this sheet of paper into an airplane and fly about on it.  
I want to treat this sheet of paper as the treasure map that it is intended.  
I want to scrawl on this sheet of paper a poem to inspire one and all.  
But I do none of these things as I find I lack such talents and abilities.  
I crumple it up and toss the sheet of paper into the waste-paper basket.  
That I do like the expert that I am with decades of experience doing it.

8 April 2024

### **Day of the Sun's Total Eclipse**

It will finally arrive today in the mid-afternoon. Unfortunately it turns out to be a busy day for me and an emotional one for Ruth and for me too. There were six peremptory phone calls from my wife last night between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., complaining about the hospital's services, when not demanding more attention in an unexpectedly firm voice that reminded me of my Grandmother Nicholson's. I felt

outraged but sympathetic, as there was nothing I could do, and when I tried to reason with her, she would hang up. My sleep was interrupted as many times as she would interrupt it for services when she was sleeping here rather than in Sunnybrook Hospital.

*8 April 2024*

## **Eclipse**

The day did darken around three o'clock in the afternoon so it looked like nighttime with the streetlights on and virtually no automobile or pedestrian traffic. I thought of the streets of London during the Blitz or during the Nineteenth Century. No corona effect was visible over Dell Park which is two houses to the west of our residence. Instead there was the din of three gardeners across the street going about their work using noisy and putrid hedging machines! Nothing is sacred. If an eclipse means darkness, it was suddenly dark and then abruptly light again. Now it is five o'clock and the sky is ... guess what ... blue rather than gray. The CBC-TV's coverage was a lot of nonsense. From my perspective it was a bust of an eclipse, yet one of the few international occurrences that was anything but a man-made event involving disease or warfare.

*8 April 2024*

## **A Quirk**

I have been taking Beck taxis to and from Dell Park and Sunnybrook Hospital for a number of days now. It is expensive but I do not trust my driving and I do not like driving around in search of parking spots. On the way there, I had a European-born taxi driver who asked me if I was being admitted. He did so because he wanted to know which of two entries, Emergency or Main, he should head for. I opted this time for the Main entrance and he asked me if I was visiting someone. I told him in elliptical terms about my wife. He said, "I hope you find her better."

Two and a half hours later, Dr. Dave Gotlib, bless his soul, accompanied me out, taking a different path to the Main entrance than I have been using. I stepped into the Beck taxi that pulled up and I noticed a slight crack on the side window and concluded this was the same vehicle I had been in earlier. The driver's first words to me were, "Did you find your wife better?" I had to say no to him, but it was a slight but courteous acknowledgment of my concerns.

9 April 2024

## For the Record

For the record, I was born in the second-largest country in the world so I suppose it is only reasonable to assume (quite rightly) that I am still living in the country that is the second-largest in the world. Thus we may conclude that I am not a wanderer, a migrant or an emigrant, or an ill-contented wanderer. I am a national. I take this Canada, this Dominion, so much for granted that I have often thought I know it too well and might well have arranged to have spent longer periods of time than I have in other lands under other skies of stars and constellations so I may appreciate it more than I do, especially at the present time. But that did not happen and now it is too late.

\*

Looking ahead, but not all that far ahead, I suppose my corpse or cadaver or body (but not my coffin or casket) will be combusted and its ashes will be allowed to take to the air and drift away to far-off lands with year-round scenery of sun and surf. It is not heaven or perdition I have in mind but the places blessed with the natural estates of the graces of the planet Earth. Yes. A bit wordy, but yes.

\*

For the record, the phrase I recall that has given me the most pleasure is the following: *he came into his own*. Not *unto his own*. It is not the King James Version or the American Standard Version that I am quoting, but the old-fashioned record album *Tarzan of the Apes* that celebrates how the Ape Man (once King of the Kerchaks) was enabled to assume his rightful place in the social hierarchy of the Civilized World as John Clayton II, Viscount Greystoke. Thus *he came into his own*. What a fabulous phrase!

10 April 2024

## List of Twelve Words

Be mindful

Change your mind

Keep in mind

Mindfulness

Mindlessness

Mind one's own business

Never mind

Pay no mind

Remind  
Reminder  
Reminding  
Time out of mind

*11 April 2024*

### **Thirteenth Word**

*Feuillage*, a word in French that is employed in English to refer to greenery, especially a leafy verdure. I like the term. It has a fine feel to it. French is a language that languishes and luxuriates in *champs* and *jardins* of fine words and phrases.

*11 April 2014*

### **Untitled Poem**

What is so upsetting about the non-title of this poem? Why is it untitled if it is being offered publication? Is the title so inappropriate that it had to be suppressed? Did the poet forget to name it? Is this a new vogue for short poems? It is possible that all of these explanations – as well as many more besides – apply? Who knows? Certainly not me, despite having written it, *title-less-ly on purpose*. But for what purpose? Is it an orphan? I am unsure except even I find it odd if not eerie for a short work to remain unnamed, so I do hope it does attract the occasional reader who feels the same way, and perhaps that person is you. Perhaps you may even wish to offer an appropriate title, the way readers of *The New Yorker* are invited to submit their own captions for the caption-less cartoons that the editors publish each week. In the meantime, this writing remains a literary orphan: ideally an enigma.

*12 April 2024*

### **Petits Poèmes**

If, then ....

\*

Then, if ....

\*

When, then ....

\*

Then, when ....

\*

Know, no ....

\*

Now, know ....

*13 April 2024*

## **Music**

“Music is a place.” (Philip Glass, comparing music to a place and at one point with the “Pure Land” of Buddhism)

\*

“Music for the Arrival of the Dalai Lama.” (Short title)

\*

A Composition Played to Celebrate the Arrival of the Dalai Lama at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, 1979.” (Long title)

\*

The piano solo known as “Mad Rush” was composed on the organ of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City on the occasion of the Dalai Lama’s first public address in North America in 1979. In this first advance track for the full album release, Glass returned to St. John the Divine to record the lively composition live. (Interview on the Web with Philip Glass)

*14 April 2024*

## **Passage of Time**

There is no today tomorrow, only yesterday tomorrow.

That is a line of verse that I composed for a song lyric. I feel the sentiment is as true today as it was way back then in 1970 when the text was written. It was set to music by the Hungarian-Canadian composer Tibor Polgar who performed it on the piano for a number of concerts held in Toronto.

*15 April 2024*

## **Another Passage of Time**

Where I come from nobody knows;

And where I'm going everything goes.  
The wind blows,  
The sea flows,  
And nobody knows.

This mysterious lyric is the leitmotif of the romantic novel *Portrait of Jennie* (1940) written by Robert Nathan and in 1948 filmed by producer David O. Selznick. It was directed by William Dieterle and it starred Jennifer Jones and Joseph Cotten. Despite the fact that the lyric's form resembles that of the light-hearted limerick, the sentiment is deeply wondrous and mysterious.

*16 April 2024*

### **Musical Exercises**

It is assumed that there are two classes of musical exercises: obligatories and voluntaries. Yet in reality there are three classes: obligatories, voluntaries, and involuntaries.

*17 April 2024*

### **Illness and Sickness unto Death**

The day that Ruth dies will be the sole day for which there appears in these essays a blank entry, with no text at all, not even a dateline. Thus null and void will be that day to me. Only today did I realize how appropriate this form of acknowledgment could be.

*P.S.* As I was completing this direful and baleful notice or notification, the phone rang at 3:40 p.m. and it was Ruth phoning from the ICU ward at Sunnybrook Hospital where five hours earlier Dr. Dave and I had visited her for a wordless thirty-five minutes. What I noted was that Ruth was truly rested rather than anxiously restless and that she could talk not only at length but also in some depth about her plight. I could not help but recall the number of intensive critical care devices (larger than hand-held iPhones) that were fastened to the support poles on either side of her hospital bed. They looked like fir trees decorated with electronic ornaments. It was a semi-festive Christmas scene (silver in colour instead of the seasonal red and green colours) and it reminded me of illustrations drawn by the Portuguese-born artist, illustrator, and photographer Jorge Colombo for the covers of issues of *The New Yorker*. (As *Time Magazine* used to say, "No kin.")

18 April 2024

## **Books Abroad**

For a long time I was intrigued with the unique title of the literary journal that was published six times a year by the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. Issues were dedicated in the main to translations of fiction and poetry composed by foreign authors with reviews and review articles and essays contributed by recognized academic authorities often from here and there. I felt the title *Books Abroad* had a certain sense of class to it: not every notion needs to be laboriously spelled out. That indeed was its title from 1927 to 2019; then it was abruptly renamed *World Literature Today*. I met its then-current editor and complained to him about the abrupt loss of an excellent title. This conversation took place at a literary conference devoted to quality publications that was held in Washington, D.C. He was very annoyed. I am not naming him here because I found him to be arrogantly defensive about the name change. I suspect other subscribers and readers before me had complained about the imposition of this ponderous and pretentious title: *World Literature Today*. Indeed, he began to lecture me, observing, “Today’s literature comes in forms other than in books,” a point that seemed self-evident but hardly relevant. I had long wondered why issues of the journal were so dutiful and dull. Now I knew why. It was the editor who was dutiful and dull. I assume it was this editor who chose the journal’s advertising motto: “Your Passport to Great Reading.” Jejeune.

18 April 2024

## **Name of Journal Editor**

For many years I have remotely marveled at the full name of the respected editor of the literary journal titled *Poetry London: A Bi-Monthly of Modern Verse and Criticism*. This leading periodical was issued intermittently between 1939 and 1951. Its founding publisher and editor was Meary James Thurairajah Tambimuttu, who though based in London was Ceylon-born and commonly known by his last name: Tambimuttu, or Tambi for short. His vital years were 1915 and 1983. Over a period of forty or these years, he created a unique position for himself and his featured poets and critics in the world of letters by, in 1939, launching *Poetry London*, which was an illustrated journal that exerted a strong influence on modern but not modernistic verse, though more so in Britain than in the United States or Canada. Come to think of it, the only Canadian who ever mentioned Tambimuttu’s name to me was Robert



Skelton. Though born in Yorkshire Robin moved to Vancouver Island and he had his finely crafted poems published in *Poetry London*. Tambimuttu also published short stories and novels and he is the publisher of record of Elizabeth Smart's poetic novel *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*. About 1975, I was brave enough to submit some poems to *Poetry London*, but I held out no hope of their acceptance, if only because the editor was always complaining about his backlog of poems. Indeed, I received a polite, printed "thank you" note with his initials added to it. A memento and accolade almost on the level of an acceptance!

*19 April 2024*

### **Eleven Triplets**

Conscience, consciousness, cognizance.  
Death, unrest.  
Head, heart, hand.  
In, out, shout!  
Internal, external, eternal.  
I, Thou, Thee.  
I, you, me.  
Spirit, mind, matter.  
Star, black hole, event horizon.  
Treble, double, single.  
Yet, met, professed.

*20 April 2024*

### **Recognition**

I recognize many things – details, discussions, dimensions, delusions, delights (among the d's alone) – that I never knew, way back then, would be a rich part of my earlier life, "earlier" meaning some time ago, not the present time, now that earlier times seem irrelevant. Confusing, is it not? I call it ....

*21 April 2024*

### **Your Call**

"Your call is important to us."

How often have you heard that remark after repeatedly trying and repeatedly failing to reach the number that you are phoning? The larger the corporation, the longer you will wait for your connection, at least until you give up and hang up in disgust verging on despair. The notion of “importance” is unfortunately a relative term. Whenever I hear the five unfortunate words that appear above, I recall “The Dead March” from George Frideric Handel’s great oratorio “Saul.” Is this an over-reaction?

22 April 2024

## Memory

Later this morning I will visit Ruth at Sunnybrook’s ICU and then I will have my “cognitive assessment” at Sunnybrook’s Family Practice. In the meantime, no newspapers arrived, the slat-fence between our house and the neighbour’s has collapsed again, and I am having trouble finding the file for “house care.”

*P.S.* Later in the morning I spent over two hours with Ruth who was intermittently awake and semi-aware at best. I miss her so much, as we used to discuss everything. Then, having yet to eat lunch, I bought a cookie at the awful (but also awfully busy) cafeteria at Sunnybrook while desultorily paging through some *New Yorkers* amid all the noise. I arrived at Family Practice and did the same for another half hour before I was seen by one junior doctor and one semi-senior doctor, both perceptive people. The fact that I was going to relinquish the car attracted the attention of the semi-senior. She then maintained she had a duty to report the situation to the Ontario drivers’ licence board to cancel the licence (which has about five days of life left to it). An hour later, back at home, while I was preparing my first meal of the day, following breakfast, she phoned to say she was going to do so, though. I thought she had already done so. I think she felt guilty about doing this, though I told her I understood her responsibility in the matter. I felt I was exemplary in other ways, though suffering some depression! My blood pressure is ideal but I do have a slight heart murmur (long known). I said, “I understand the requirement of the law. More paper work for me.” What sticks is when I say, “I would hate to see a newspaper headline that reads “Driver of 88 runs over child of 8.” She thought I was quoting an actual newspaper article. Totally fictitious of course.

*P.P.S.* Almost forgot to mention the two newspapers *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* did not arrive for no known reason. (We had finally cancelled our subscription to the once-signal newspaper *The Toronto Star* but it continued to arrive now and then for the next two weeks.) The neighbourly fence in the backyard has collapsed; I am still searching my file on the payment for it though it showed up later.

22 April 2024

### **A Favourite Word of Mine**

“Orion” is a favourite word of mine. (One of a few or fewer.) Some time I will write about this word in such a way as to share the significance that it has for me and then perhaps for thee.

23 April 2024

### **Words in Reserve**

I keep some words in reserve, earmarked for future use in a script of one sort or another. Here are two such words: “White-wash.” “Paper-work.”

They might come in handy. At least I hope they will ... much sooner rather than a little later.

23 April 2024

### **More Rain**

The skies are overcast once again. It seems that it might rain yet again later today. A promise not of cleansing but of what the press has recently been describing as producing conditions that result in “brain fog.” Not only is it difficult to find the time to do something, such as relax or cat-nap or clear the clutter on the top of one’s desk, but to give some thought to the present and the future. In a few minutes Cathie and I will depart for Sunnybrook to see Ruth. Dr. Dave and I were unable to see her yesterday as she was being moved from one theatre of operation to another. I assume she will be worse off for the wear and tear.

*Addendum:* The sun came out, the skies are blue (rather than gray and grim) again, but Ruth uttered not one word in over two hours.

24 April 2024

### **Fonts of Type**

There is a phrase that I like that I recently learned was used in a poem composed by the highly ingenious and inventive Portuguese poet named Fernando Pessoa. The

phrase is “smiling in *italics*.” To recall it is enough to warrant me to amuse myself and perhaps any readers of this feuilleton with the notion of dramatizing fonts of type to suggest a few variations on the idea.

smiling in *italics*

**bold** like Godzilla

dressed as a **serif** or a **sans-serif** undressed

carved in **Roman** letters

underlining we will go

neither SMALL CAPS nor LARGE CAPS look appropriate

her **gothic-like** appearance

**BLACK LETTER** – the larger the worser

imagine: **futura** comes in Extra Bold Condensed Oblique

*Note:* The phrase that is mentioned above appears in this line: “It’s fine, I’ll stay here dreaming poems and smiling in italics.” It comes from “A Poem by Álvaro de Campos,” translated by Margaret Jull Costa and Patricio Ferrari, published in *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 2023. Álvaro de Campos is one of innumerable personalities assumed by Fernando Pessoa.

*25 April 2024*

## **Day With No Entry**

8:00 p.m., 26 April 2024

## **Explanation**

There is no text at all for the previous entry for Friday, 26 April 2024, because that is the day that Ruth took her final breath. Theo arrived from Montreal at Sunnybrook Hospital in time to observe and record with his camera the last breaths at 8:00 p.m., 26 April 2024. Even sixteen hours later, as it is now, I am unable to add anything to this toll of the life of my loved one.

*27 April 2024*

## Orion

Orion, one of the eighty-eight modern constellations, is one of the most easily recognized of nebulae in the night sky. It lies on the celestial equator and is that part of our Milky Way Galaxy that includes our sun and its planets. Orion's so-called "belt" is one of the most easily recognized "formations" in the night sky.

The name *Orion* (according to information gathered on the Web) is of uncertain derivation, possibly from the Greek *horion* (meaning limit, boundary) or *ouron*. The personal name Orion was borne in Greek mythology by a giant hunter. Following his death, Zeus placed him in the sky as the constellation of Orion.

*Orion* identified a number of British naval vessels. HMS *Orion* was the lead ship of her class of four dreadnought battleships built for the Royal Navy in the early 1910s. HMS *Orion* was a Leander-class light cruiser which served with distinction in the Royal Navy during World War II. *Orion* is the name of the jet fighter plane designed and built by Lockheed Martin in the 1950s to serve as a naval patrol plane. The turbo-prop plane served as a submarine surveillance plane.

The *Orion* Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle (*Orion* MPCV) is a partially reusable crewed spacecraft devised by NASA's Artemis program for the American human lunar spaceflight program that was established in 2071.

John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, as well as the outstanding author of innumerable best-selling histories and adventures, died in Montreal in 1940. His ashes were conveyed to Great Britain aboard the cruiser HMS *Orion* for burial at Elsfield, Oxfordshire, England.

28 April 2024

## Questions

What is the meaning of the idiom "an ending in itself"?

\*

What is the difference between these two verbs: "to stimulate" and "to simulate"?

\*

What is the indistinguishability of these two nouns: "synonym" and "synonymy"?

28 April 2024

## Sight and Insight

It was William Blake who wrote in "Auguries of Innocence" that one can see "a

World in a Grain of Sand.” But nobody known to me has written “Innocences of Augury” that asserts that one can see “a Grain of Sand in a World.”

*29 April 2024*

### **How Much Land**

“How Much Land Does a Man Need?” is the title of one of the most moving short stories ever written. It asks a great and ever-present question and answers it in a manner that is straight-forward and at the same time defiant and deafening. It was written in 1886 by Leo Tolstoy about a land-avaricious peasant farmer, and it convinces the reader that there is no other answer than the one that the Russian author offers as its final answer: “Six feet from head to foot.” I love the short story, which has the air of a folk tale, one that even provides for an appearance of the Devil. Even so, a man needs more than the extent of the land required for his grave. He needs a parcel of land to work, perhaps a home, or if not a home at least a house, or if not a house at least a place to lay his head and meet a young woman and raise the children. He needs food, respect, peace, a system of beliefs, a reasonably long life, and a modicum of social and self-respect. Friendly neighbours certainly help. These qualities should be supplied by the world of mankind. In turn the world of nature should supply what *it* has to offer: a forest or a park, clement weather, sun and shade, rain and wind, soil and food, moon and stars. As for the nebulae, they are so far away all that they can do is inspire him – and he needs a modicum of inspiration. Tolstoy’s peasant, a greedy man named Pahom, was indeed avaricious. He was not inspired; he was driven. Pahom is an odd name (at least it is in English) but is a suitable one for such a driven person.

*30 April 2024*

### **To Smite or to Slay God**

I know what I would do if I encountered the Almighty God in either a dark alleyway or a resplendent church aisle. I would smite the Almighty for requiring my wife to suffer so much before she finally expired. Rhetoric to one side, I would slay him for subjecting her to so much suffering before she reached such an ignoble end. God is indeed Almighty; almighty is awful indeed.

*30 April 2024*

## **The God of War**

The deity (to give the divinity yet another innocent designation) has had a lot of experience slaying men and women and children. Though I have not had innumerable occasions to observe such actions, I do take particular exception to those whose fates I have had to face. The innocent and the guiltless alike are the ones who suffer most of all in the grip of this God of both Life and Death and Disease and Destruction in between.

*30 April 2024*

## **Difference**

Quick: Define the differences among these three words: perspicacious, percipient, precocious.

*30 April 2024*

## **Rondeau**

LOST & FOUND AGAIN  
FOUND & LOST AGAIN

LOST AGAIN & FOUND  
FOUND AGAIN & LOST

AGAIN LOST & FOUND  
AGAIN FOUND & LOST

AGAIN LOST &  
AGAIN FOUND &

& AGAIN LOST  
& AGAIN FOUND

*30 April 2024*

## **No More Sharing**

What I find dismays me so unexpectedly at times throughout these long days and nights is wanting to inform Ruth of something that had happened to me or was just now to happen or would soon happen that she would have enjoyed hearing about. For instance, on Sunday morning I would read to her three or more of the social and political newspaper columns contributed by noted journalists and columnists for the pages of the “Sunday Opinion” section of *The New York Times*. Due to the rapacity of her death, there is no one now with whom to share this experience, so it idles there in the mind, brain, and body.

*30 April 2024*

### **Distinctions**

Is there a reader of this calendar of oddities and oddments who can define or at least distinguish these eight literary terms? Autobiography, autofiction, biography, life story, life writing, memoir, memorial, metafiction? (By now, there must be some new terms to add.)

*1 May 2024*

### **Documents**

It is amazing the number of documents and forms that must be filled out with care to claim the benefits and payments the various levels of governments offer to Canadians whether they are citizens or not. They range from the old “baby bonus” to the modern “child care allowance,” etc. Theo and Cathie were with me here and they spent the morning filling out forms, many of them multi-paged. I am lucky that Dr. Dave visited us and oversaw the problem with HostPapa – it seems everything was working but not every instruction or command was in its proper place. Some emails were not being delivered at all. What an awful time for this to happen. It seemed an objectification of my ennui and sorrow. Things have marginally improved this morning with Cathie (still here) and Dave (who dropped in to authorize documents) and we phoned the representative at Briton House Retirement Home to agree to lease Suite 100, known as Mercer House – about which more in the future – should it still be available. [P.S. It was still available. I am scheduled to move in on the third of next month.]

*2 May 2024*



## **Body Politic**

*Thanks to Richard Kostelanetz*

State of Liberty  
Statement of Liberty  
Statue of Liberty  
Stature of Liberty  
Status of Liberty  
Statute of Liberty

*2 May 2024*

## **New Words for Love**

Attraction  
Devotion  
Fascination  
Happiness  
Longing  
Passion  
Rapture  
Respect  
Responsibility  
Veneration

*3 May 2024*

## **What I Pray For**

For my wife, my children, and myself, let there be health;  
For my neighbours, let there be health care;  
As for everybody else, let there be  
A community and a commonwealth of caring.

*4 May 2024*

## **Fully Undressed Male**

For you and you alone  
I remove my Stansfield hat  
My bright polo shirt  
Then my white undershirt  
Whereupon my slim trousers  
Followed by my boxer briefs  
Then both merino socks  
And last my Ferragamo sandals  
Which leaves me standing here  
Bare naked just like you

*5 May 2024*

### **Communion of Saints**

The early Christian notion of the Communion of Saints, associated with St. Paul, has collapsed into what Marshall McLuhan may well have called the Communication of Saints.

*6 May 2024*

### **Solaris**

One of my favourite novels is *Solaris* which is an outstanding work written by the stellar Polish science-fiction author Stanislaw Lem. The English translation (from the French rather than the Polish language, oddly, by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox) was published in 1970.

In the final chapter, astronaut and scientist Kris Kelvin comes to the following conclusion after encountering the powers of the “sentient ocean” on the extra-solar planet Solaris.

... I am a murderer unawares. Man has gone out to explore other worlds and other civilizations without having explored his own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers, and without finding what lies behind doorways that he himself has sealed.

The final sentence sounds a semi-religious chord with these words:

I knew nothing, and I persisted in the faith that the time of cruel miracles was

not past.

P.S. “Cruel miracles” – what a concept, what a phrase!

7 May 2024

## **Agilus**

The word *agilus* is now principally encountered in the Old Testament. It is Greek in origin, *aeggelos*, and it refers to a messenger who is sent by God to proclaim a message to Man. The messenger may be either human or angelic. These days the term is not much in use.

8 May 2024

## **Difficulties**

I find it difficult to remember the meaning of the word “inconsiderable” except in combination with the word “not inconsiderable.”

\*

I also find it difficult to remember the name Briton House as well as the name of the street it faces, Soudan Avenue. These are instances of the withholding of information that has haunted me for most of my life. Memory fails to connect with the modest demands made upon it. I have had this problem of the brain withholding information from the mind since I was a youngster who was reduced to searching for synonyms and paraphrases to disguise the “common knowledge” that was being withheld. Perhaps this imitation led me to prize above other books “word hoards” like dictionaries and thesauri.

9 May 2024

## **Norman Bethune**

A good many years ago, in the early 1960s, in a used bookstore that for many years served impecunious readers and resolute collectors in Toronto’s east end, I came across a used copy of a short, lesser-known work by Oswald Spengler called *Man and Technics*. Knowing nothing about this text but being interested in its author, I picked it up and discovered there was a bookplate glued inside and that it had a printed message on it. The message read: “This book belongs to Norman Bethune and His

Friends.” Then and there I decided to purchase it for the pencilled price of three dollars, a fairly steep price for a slim book by Spengler but one that suited my budget at the time.

That evening, back at home, I admired the bookplate glued to the obverse side of the half-title page. I chuckled at its message. I thought, “Too bad Norman Bethune did not actually sign this copy of his book.” Then I made a discovery: some handwriting in ink could be dimly seen through both the page and the bookplate! I thought, “There’s writing here.” With the utmost care, with a letter opener, I lifted the bookplate and exposed the entire page. There was the signature, there, in ink, in the handwriting of the volume’s previous owner: It was the signature in black ink of the book’s author, Norman Bethune, its previous owner!

*9 May 2024*

### **Please**

Until now it never occurred to me that the word *pleasure* contains the letters of the word *please*. Neat.

*10 May 2024*

### **Popular Fiction**

The words “dead man writing” creeps into mind whenever I catch a glimpse of the books of low-grade popular fiction that are displayed on the paperback racks of supermarkets and chain bookstores of our cities these days.

*10 May 2024*

### **Anniversary**

May the Eleventh is the anniversary of the day of our wedding which took place days following the graduation ceremonies of University College, University of Toronto. Ruth always insisted that the occasion be observed over the years since 1959. We marked it in mainly modest ways until the current year. She died in Sunnybrook Hospital fifteen days before what would have been our sixty-fifth wedding anniversary.

We were married (joined together in matrimony) in one of the wainscoted legal chambers of Toronto’s Old City Hall by Magistrate Wolfe, as I recall, accompanied

by two witnesses, also new graduates, Ruth's college friends, the future Margaret Adelman and the future Janice Trechokis. Afterwards we dined at the erroneously named Lord Simcoe Hotel on University Avenue, as John Graves Simcoe was a prominent military governor of Upper Canada but never an English noble. Yet it was a lively occasion with the weather ranging back and forth between blinding sunshine and cloudy drizzle. The honeymoon was held later that day in the flat that we had rented in the third floor of the ample-sized attic of a large house (then owned by a widow Mrs. Brody) on Dale Avenue in Toronto's Rosedale district. To this day the house remains standing and is in good condition.

We were happy there for at least two or maybe three years. It was a furnished flat as we had hardly any furniture of our own, but among the items that we did possess was a small Adana hand-operated printing press. I recall vividly the visit of the two senior poets to our attic flat who examined the apartment and the press in some detail: A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, both heroes of mine. Memories remained in place; two decades later, in Montreal, Frank Scott asked me, "Are you still living in that garret?" I assured him that we now occupied a full-sized house in Toronto but that we still had the Adana printing press, the one that had impressed him and Art Smith.

Today, for the first time, the anniversary has not been marked in any special way, except by myself and our three children of that union: Jonathan, Cathie, Theodore. (As it happens, tomorrow, May the Twelfth, is Mother's Day.)

*11 May 2024*

## **Benign and Benighted**

No one is *benign* without having been *benighted* at least once.

*12 May 2024*

## **What Used to Be**

It used to be true that ....

At one time weather was more predictable than it is these days.

Principled people used to be attracted to public service.

Local initiative and private enterprise were encouraged.

Justice was actually administered and not just seemingly done.

Laws and legislators favoured families and not fraudsters.

Neighbours were considered to be family members.  
Limits were imposed on the ownership of firearms.  
Healthy and healthful foods were once favoured over substitutes.  
Arts and crafts had once been encouraged over kitsch.  
“Really and truly” and “ready and steady” were catch-phrases.  
But those times are now long in the past, lamentably so.

*12 May 2024*

## **Miraculous Times Indeed**

Everything is working the way it should work, neither too fast nor too slow, at least at the present time. That does not mean that everything is working as well as it could work, or as well as it should work, for so great is the difference between the verb “should” and the verb “could” that the language itself has to be modified to express such subtle differences as these.

What, for instance, is “a near miracle”? What is the meaning of “no miracle occurred” despite the fact that one or non was expected and even predicted to occur not to occur? We should know that miracles are what we desire, contrary to everyday reality and familiar fact, but expecting one or more of them to occur allows us the opportunity to doubt that none of them will occur or has ever occurred.

It is only our imagination – our ever-hopeful expectation of what life will bring or our residual fear that it will not bring about a desirable condition – that interprets history and reality for us in these ways. By now we should know that we live in miraculous times in the sense that the presence of a miracle like the absence of a miracle is a matter of expectation and definition, not the absence of the action we elect to experience.

These are indeed miraculous times because we are living through them and experiencing them, with or without any miracles at all.

*12 May 2024*

## **Shopping**

I have seldom if ever gone shopping for clothing. Today Jonathan and his daughter Julia drove me to a shopping centre in the East End. I have been to Don Mills Plaza in the past but it is no favourite place because I have always found it to be too fancy for my taste, except that the architecture is fine and there is both street and parkade parking available, a novel feature. We dined in Joey, a restaurant where the food was

outstandingly well prepared though the service understandably slow (as it was Mother's Day). My sole complaint was how the noise – how loud it was! I should have removed my hearing devices. Afterwards we went to L.L. Bean where we tried out three trousers for me, as the corduroy trousers that I have been wearing for decades are finally in need of patches. They would fall to my knees as my waist measures thirty-six inches following my weight loss occasioned three years ago. I will need some decent clothes if I am to live outside the house, which it seems I will be doing in the foreseeable future. Jonathan is being ideally helpful, as are Cathie and Theo. Julia is a law student at U of T and increasingly a pleasure to be with.

*13 May 2024*

### **Home Alone**

Right now I am home alone until Jonathan arrives to drive me to Sunnybrook to see Dr. Young. I will be alone for the next week or so, following the days over the weekend with Cathie and Theo who worked like Trojans packing away books and clearing up the rooms that are still full of messes. Yesterday, Sunday, Dave arrived to chat (Jane is in Britain on a walking tour of gardens) and Jonathan arrived (with hamburgers for lunch). The exchanges were lively but I mostly ate slowly, finding chatting somewhat difficult. The result is that today, Monday, the house seems to be a morgue, empty of everyone except me. Except me, that is, and the sense that Ruth *should* be here but isn't. In plain language I am haunted by her non-presence. Oh, to be able to chat with her, to have her back, to continue living as before her so-difficult death. Even her dead body is gone, no "mortal coil" at all, as it was cremated and the ashes were scattered about a week ago. We opted not to attend the service. I have been to the Crematorium at St. James's Cemetery in the past (to attend services for Arnold Rockman and Alexander Watt) and found it very trying. That human life should end like this. Cruel life, cruel death.

*13 May 2024*

### **Parlous State of Poetry Publishing**

Checking the websites of a number of publishers this year, I was surprised to happen upon the paragraph that appears below. It comes from the website of a small publisher of volumes of serious poetry composed by serious if peripherally known poets. It causes my heart to beat at twice its normal rate. Reading it I recognize the realities of what today's book publishers are up against; I also recognize the realities that face

the poets who are eager for book publication. The truth is there exists a “readership” but no “real market” for these works. What should be done? The “commercial model” should be jettisoned, but is there a “non-commercial model” that should or could replace it? I wish I knew the answer to questions like these. What I do know is that a way should be found to bypass the regular way to reach the readership and then accept that way as the “reality.” What follows is the depressing yet honourably written paragraph that elicited such thoughts and forebodings.

We are a small team and we receive approximately 500+ manuscripts for consideration each year. We publish approximately 16-20 carefully chosen books each year in a variety of genres. We do our very best to give your manuscript the proper attention and strive to respond to your submission within 6-8 months of receipt. We appreciate your patience and ask that you not call or email us to check on the status of your proposal.

*14 May 2024*

## **Unhaunted**

In the morning I opened the front door of the house. It had not been locked the night before. I was happy at that time and I swear I had shut it and locked it the previous night. But I may have carelessly left it unlocked or even ajar all night long, for I found it partly open that way early the next morning. I looked around the porch but saw nothing was amiss. Yet the house felt cold, even clammy. The hallway was dim and wraith-like, though there were no wraiths to be seen or sensed, though I did hear distinct murmurs and muffled scratching sounds. I had no doubt that as a spirit had escaped the four walls of the home, a spectre had invaded the house. So now the structure, the one-time home of a wife and a husband and three lively children, the *home* was now suddenly a *house*, without a spirit, unhaunted by a ghost or spirit but invaded by its sounds and my stray sensations. It stands there erect on a grassy knoll, and I wander from room to room hoping for a distraction of one sort or another, finding little at all to detain me. Cold, even clammy – not unlike the weather, the climate, around it and around me and my days ahead ... long hours, perhaps short years ... for me alone.

*15 May 2024*

## **An Acrostic for Danica and Bill Andersen**

D elightful and devoted couple



A rtful and artistic couple  
N eat and nice couple  
I nsightful and interesting couple  
C olourful and courteous couple  
A ble and abiding couple  
&  
B rilliant and beloved couple  
I mpressive and insightful couple  
L ogical and learned couple  
L ucky and lively couple

*Wednesday, 15 May 2024*

### **The Three Worries**

Q. Whatever are the worries that bother humankind the most?

A. Mankind is affected by the following matters, from the most to the last: By those matters that are internal, by those matters that are external, and by those matters that are eternal.

*16 May 2024*

### **Catching Up**

I wrote the following text about three weeks ago. I should describe in detail what happened but I seem to be inundated by work at the moment and I am still quite upset by the incident.

The last two days and nights were characterized by ennui and dread at the loss of the use of my computer and the possible destruction of my files as I fell into the clutches of a fraudster who convinced me that my email was hopeless compromised, that he was working on behalf of a famed computer manufacturer, that my system was responsible for infecting parts of the Web, and that unless I subscribed to a special service (one year, US \$250) I would lose control of my computer. I immediately worried about the loss of the texts that I had been writing from January to May of the current year, a host of poems and effects, the MS of my latest but yet-unpublished quote collection, and my mammoth compilation of texts of Canadian humour, among other sites.

In retrospect it is obvious that I was a fool to succumb to this stranger calling and assuming control of my website. Yet he did not phone out of the blue for his call

followed my conversation with the host of my website about a long-standing problem that I was having with the delivery of emails. A suspicious timing to be sure. Anyway, through the help of friends and a computer specialist, I was able to avoid dealing with the deep-voiced fraudster with no loss of files and no payment to him, though I did have to hire the specialist who worked wonders at half the above cost, and then changed a number of passwords, etc. A good lesson not to trust or be bullied by total strangers with designs of their own.

As the saying goes, "Everything good now."

*17 May 2024*

## **Birthday Poem**

Yesterday, rummaging through a pile of print-outs of emails, etc., I came across these four paragraphs that I wrote for Ruth to mark an earlier birthday. It had long been my custom to compose a poem of sorts and dedicate it to her on "special days." This one was written five years ago. I am rereading it with much deeper feeling today than I did then.

*For Ruth on Her Birthday, March 29, 2019*

The years grow short, the months shorter still, the weeks shortest of all. Soon all that will be left to us will be but a couple of handfuls of days hardly worth the wait because of the pain, the concern, the apprehension, and the anguish and despair.

Long were the months of our childhood, the seasons of the years of our youth, the few months of our maturity, and the leftover hangover of old age. Life: Brief. Briefer. Briefest.

When things were good or good enough; when things were good one day, not so good the next day; when things were darkly seen, and then with eye-strain ... such days and nights are replaced by the no of now: one long wait in the hospital-like corridors of a life, of a one-time life of semi-abundance.

Yet, all in all, the chance to share these days with you, day in and day out, is an uncalled for benefit, a single grace note amid all the noise of gravitas, wrestled from the trap of death ... by life itself: abrupt, brusque, curt, unappeasable, unavoidable, unforgiving.

*18 May 2024*

## **An Acrostic for Shayona Panth**

S haking a leg is legendary  
H old a candle to, attempt to  
A- OK, for certain

Y ou and the night and the music  
O nce in a Blue Room  
N ever the twain shall depart  
*A priori* and *a posteriori* simultaneously

P olite and yet *prêt-à-porter*  
A- list, absolutely  
N ot for nothing but for an incredible lot  
*T ête-à-tête* means face-to-face  
H ave a soft spot for her

19 May 2024

## Word Order

Word order is important. By reversing the order of two words, I am able to draw attention to an equivalency that would not otherwise be apparent. To illustrate the importance or the unimportance of word order, two words appear here, once in one order, once in another order.

Spy Chief ... Chief Spy.  
God Almighty ... Almighty God.  
Jesus Christ ... Christ Jesus.  
Discreet ... Discrete

20 May 2024

## Between

This is the seventeenth time that I have used the word “between” in these pages up to this point in the text. No doubt I will use it many more times before I reach the last of these pages. It is an innocent enough word. Yet I shudder when I recall the use of the word I once read in a text about the world’s greatest battles. Here is how it was used by a witness, a survivor: “Between the two wars .... ” The words are innocent enough except that the statement implies that the speaker knows the past and perhaps even the future, or that in his past he lived through two well-known wars, perhaps “world wars” as they were once called. It is a four-word phrase that will no doubt be correctly applied in the future as it has been in the past.

21 May 2024

## **Invisible Love**

My love is invisible and on this page. It is invisible because it has been written on this paper using a special sort of ink. It is the sort of ink that we have known about since we were youngsters and it even bears a childish name. We know it as “lemon juice ink” because the words are written not with coloured ink but with only the juice of lemons so when the words dry the page appears devoid of words. All it takes is a little heat to warm the page and then the words of love, affection, and longing, previously invisible, become visible. The words and sentences and sentiments appear brown on the page. To summarize: My love is on paper, invisible; it is expressed in words using “lemon juice ink”; and it is invisible to all eyes, until there is the application of heat (a candle or a lightbulb may supply it), whereupon it is rendered visible to your eyes and my eyes forever.

22 May 2024

## **Murdering the Minutes**

“Who murdered the minutes?” is the title of a militant yet moving song composed and sung by Joan Baez and included on her album *Baptism: A Journey through Our Time* (1968). It is also the first line of her three-verse lyric, for the folk-singer extends the metaphor from minutes to hours to years. Whenever I hear the song or recall the lyrics, I am deeply moved and I try to answer the rhetorical question in my own words.

Yes, our lives are an accumulation of minutes (as well as hours and years) and the minutes proceed at a pace that increases without our permission from slow to medium to fast ... until all of it is past. It might be said that the pace is in the past. Now nobody knows what if anything lies in the future. So the song asks a question about “the bright, golden minutes” that it does not – because it cannot – attempt to supply an answer.

23 May 2024

## **Morning, Mourning**

The sun rose this morning, as it does every morning, though this morning there is no cloud cover so the world before me is b-r-i-g-h-t. That means the day will be hot, or at least the morning will be warm, so the upstairs windows should be raised or swung

open, which has happened. The house will be airy and warm for the morning is now sunny rather than dreary. It will also be a day of mourning, but that is another matter entirely. There are no windows to open or close to mark the next twenty-four hours of mourning.

23 May 2024

## **Limerence**

What is limerence? The word looks and sounds like a noun that seems familiar but it is unlikely to be familiar. It was coined in 1999 by the American psychologist Dorothy Tennov in *Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love* to refer to the state of obsession that resembles the state of love but differs from that latter state because unlike love, which aims to be reciprocal, limerence fails to take into account the needs of the subject of that would-be fixation. In short, it is compulsive thought, feeling, and desire, a selfish and romanticized form of a one-sided obsession with another person.

24 May 2024

## **What has DABDA to do with grief?**

The five capital letters refer to the so-called “Five Stages of Grief” as described by the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her influential study titled *On Death and Dying* (1969). Here are the five stages:

1. Denial. 2. Anger. 3. Bargaining. 4. Depression. 5. Acceptance.

It is important to note that such emotional and physiological states are not necessarily experienced equally or in this order, but that they are a guide to what has been found to occur when one is faced with “death and dying.”

The acronym DABDA is meaningless on its own.

25 May 2024

## **Room for Death**

When I came upon this line, “I’ve made room for death in my life,” I was stopped in my tracks, for that is what I have had to do, too.

The line comes from the poem titled “Translation” that was composed by the poet Justyna Bargielska as translated from the Polish by Maria Jastrzębska. (If these

writers are new to you, bear in mind that they are new and news to me too.) I encountered the poem on the web in a site devoted to contemporary European prose and poetry. I assume the two women will not mind me using that arresting line of theirs here to introduce my own English-language poem which I have called “Room for Death.” What follows is my prose poem:

I opened my hands and my head and my heart to disclose that part of me that has enough room for death. I did not know I had the bodily cavity within me, but I guess I now know that it is there, where that “where” is and what that “where” does. It is located in the region where the ribs join and there is a lot of room there for the spirits of demise and death to riot and then rot.

It is a veritable cemetery, a necropolis for the deceased and the former mortals who lurk between the ribs of life and the ribs of death and who have been doing so for some time now, for so many years in some cases as to constitute most of a single lifetime. That thought is so disagreeable to entertain until it is realized that it must be recognized for what it is and what it is not.

The truism is that to make room for death it is as necessary to make room for life. The two go well together and forever will continue in tandem.

*26 May 2024*

### **One Awful Month**

It has been one month, one awful, slow-moving month, since the death of Ruth at Sunnybrook Hospital, surrounded as she was by members of the close family and numerous attendants. Since then April 26, 8:00 p.m., is for me and our children and friends a marked date and a slurred time, hard to recall without tears welling up in the well-springs of the eyes.

*27 May 2024*

### **Organs of My Body**

I use the various organs of my body as amplifiers so I am able to influence the world beyond my body. To wit:

With my two eyes, I see what is far away, until I close them. Then what I have seen disappears.

With my two ears, I hear what is some distance away, until I ignore those sounds. Then they alert or alarm me no longer.

With my two nostrils, I sniff the odours in the atmosphere, until I pay no more attention. Then the smells dissipate.

With my single tongue, I taste the air, the atmosphere, until I tire of doing so. Then no taste or distaste is anywhere to be detected.

With one mind and one brain, working singly or together, I think about what is there, within and without me. One day or night, one afternoon or evening, there will be nothing there at all.

With ... without. Nothing any where any more.

28 May 2024

### **Crônica, Proem**

There are two nouns that I have yet to employ in my writings. One day I hope to make use of either one of these words or of both of them, perhaps together. Indeed, today could be that very day!

The two nouns are *crônica* and *proem* and they have next to nothing in common. Indeed, *crônica* is not an English word at all but a Spanish word. (In Portuguese it is differently accented and pronounced: *crônica*.) In both languages it describes a “chronicle” or a “column” like one published in a newspaper or a cultural magazine. It is personal without being intimate, individual, digressive, somewhat factual, somewhat fictional, and amusing. Such chronicles or columns are highly individual and very popular with educated readers in Latin America. In the way they are like the writings of *flâneurs*, that is, strollers, rather than *badauds*, that is, gawkers.

The other word is *proem* and it appears – or in the past it appeared – in literary works in lieu of a preface, preamble, prelude, etc. A proem is contributed by the author of the literary work in order to introduce its theme. It is generally short and not as formal as a foreword or an afterword (both of which are contributed by someone other than the author of the work itself). Because it is a literary word it would not appear in a chronicle or column which is not really literary although it is highly personal and amusing, disporting, and diverting.

There! I have done it, I’ve made use of the two of them in a brief essay!

29 May 2024

### **Your Face, Your Clock**

Your beautiful face brings to my mind the face of a clock, or to be precise, the face

of The Clock of the Mind. What follows is a list of sixteen clocks, each with its own distinctive face. Choose the clock-face that appeals to you. Each clock possesses a beauty and an identity and even an era of its own. Choose the one that best expresses your own appearance. Do other people agree with you? Do take your time.

alarm, analogue, audio, battery, cuckoo, Dick Tracy Wrist Radio, digital, electronic, grandfather, maritime, Mickey Mouse, pocket, radio, wall, wind-up, wrist watch

*30 May 2024*

### **Where is there the image of Judas Iscariot?**

In most Roman Catholic Churches in the world today, the devout worshiper or inquisitive visitor will find an image of Judas Iscariot. One of the twelve apostles of Jesus of Nazareth, Judas served as the group's treasurer. He was the sole follower who betrayed its leader to the members of the Sanhedrin for execution. Mounted along the two long walls of a church's interior are the Stations of the Cross. They are fourteen in number and it is common for the second Station to bear the image of an angry man, Judas Iscariot, in the very act of turning Jesus over to the authorities. In history is there any other villain with such wide-spread exposure?

*31 May 2024*

### **Many Sins**

As I grow older I realize that there are different degrees and even different kinds of sins and sinning. The list of the varieties is not limited to the two standard ones we learned about as youngsters, these being venial sin and mortal sin, the first being a minor infraction, the second being a major infraction.

St. Thomas Aquinas recognized seven serious sins: (1) vainglory or pride, (2) greed or covetousness, (3) lust or inordinate or illicit sexual desire, (4) envy, (5) gluttony which is usually understood to include drunkenness, (6) wrath or anger, and (7) sloth. As awful as these are, it seems that each of these may, the sinner being willing, be overcome with an appeal to one or more of the seven heavenly virtues. These virtues are as follows: (1) humility, (2) charity, (3) chastity, (4) gratitude, (5) temperance, (6) patience, and (7) diligence.

Such is Christian theology. Then there are what are called "little white lies," a coy term that refers to the habit that we as human beings and sometimes as humane



beings have of avoiding the telling of “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” The reason we do so is to avoid hurting the beliefs or feelings of other people. Is this really sinning? Society finds it acceptable. Does misleading others in this way lead to the telling of outright lies? Who knows?

I could go on like this except that I find I am ever amazed and even amused that people toy with sins and sinning for their own benefit, even if they rationalize the situation by arguing that it is for the benefit of the feelings of other people. Instead of doing so, permit me to suggest that the distinction of venial and mortal holds forth over the centuries but that there are other types or kinds of sins to be noted.

Here is what I have in mind, using my own terminology. In addition to the standard two, a venial sin and a mortal sin, there are three more by my reckoning. Here they are: (1) a moral sin, (2) an amoral sin, and (3) an immoral sin. I should think this reckoning is enough for any one man, any one civilization, to deal with!

*31 May 2024*

## **Two Italian Translations**

### *Then Suddenly It's Evening*

Each of us stands alone upon earth's heart,  
Transfixed by the sunlight's rays:  
Then suddenly it's evening.

*Version of the poem “Then Suddenly It's Evening” composed by Salvatore Quasimodo*

### *I Arrived There, Giving You My Arm*

I have stepped down, giving you my arm, on at least one million stairs, and now that you are gone, there is emptiness on every step. Even so, your long journey was brief. Mine is still lasting, but I need no more connections, reservations, snares, or the scorn of those who think that reality is only what is seen. I have stepped down a million stairs, at the very least, arm and arm with you, not because with four eyes we see better than we do with two. With you, I descended the stairs because I knew, between the two of us, the only real eyes, though very blurred ones, alone belonged to you.

*Prose version of the poem “I Arrived There, Giving You My Arm” composed by Eugenio Montale.*

1 June 2024

## Imagination

*Imagination* is the antonym of *fantasy* but not of *illusion*. Where *phantasy* fits in, I am uncertain. Oddly enough, uncertainty is one characteristic that is common to all three words or psychical functions: *imagination*, *fantasy*, and *illusion*.

2 June 2024

## He Was Called

*“Si chiamava” was composed in Italian in 1915 by Giuseppe Ungaretti. The text here, translated by A.S. Kline, includes the addition of some changes introduced by the present editor.*

He was called  
Moammed Sceab  
descended  
from emirs from nomads  
suicidal  
because he no longer had  
a country

He loved France  
and changed his name

He was Marcel  
but not French  
and no longer knew  
how to live  
far from that tent of his  
where you heard the chant  
of the Koran  
as you drank coffee

And did not know how  
to utter

the song  
of his exile

I accompanied him  
with the woman who owned the hotel  
where he lived  
in Paris  
from number 5 Rue des Carmes  
down the shrunken alleyway

He rests  
in the cemetery of Ivry  
a suburb that always  
seems  
frozen on the day  
that a fair  
has been dismantled

And perhaps I alone  
still know  
that he lived

*3 June 2024*

### **Anthony Frisch**

I wonder if I am the only person in the country to remember Anthony Frisch, an immigrant from Germany who wrote poems in three languages: German, French, and English. At one point in the 1960s he left Toronto and returned to Austria and (as far as I know) was heard from no longer. I tried to locate him, but no luck. There are references to him in Wikipedia and he has a Ryerson Poetry Chap-Book, titled *Poems*, published in 1954, to his credit. I always recall one poem from that collection titled, "Umbrellas," with these lines: "There are all kinds of umbrellas; / There fall all kinds of rain."

*3 June 2024*

### **Imagine a Verb**

Let's see now. The word that is the subject of this short essay is a verb: "I imagine, you imagine, he/she imagines; we imagine, you (plural) imagine." There is nothing at all imaginative about the word itself, so workaday is it, so little does it scintillate or irradiate, spark or inspire, in the sense of "enliven" or "enlighten." It takes work even labour "to imagine."

One thinks of the words and melody of John Lennon's "Imagine" (which dates from 1971) with its workaday chorus: "You may say I'm a dreamer / But I'm not the only one / I hope someday you'll join us / And the world will be as one." It seems that the word "hope," as either noun or verb, is the basis of the Beatles' view of the act of imagination. The listener has to join them!

Although the Beatles' lyrics may be tentative, the melodic line, once heard, is memorable, close to unforgettable. Yet it as far as "imagination" is concerned, it is no "Hallelujah Chorus," composed in 1741 by F.G. Handel for his oratorio *The Messiah*. Today what composer and performer is able to match *The Messiah*'s multiple repetitions of the lyrical line "And He shall reign forever and ever"?

Now *that* is pure imagination!

4 June 2024

## **Today's the Day**

Yesterday afternoon is when I moved into Briton House. For days and nights ahead, I felt fear and apprehension that Suite 100 would prove to be too small, too dark, too menacing to my system and expectations. My fears were proven to be otherwise by Cathie and Theo as well as by Jane and Dave, all of whom were gracious and interested and hard-working. Jonathan was on a business trip in Singapore and phoned every day but distance precluded any help from him aside from good wishes. Dave ensured that the cell phone, the telephone, the television, and its networks all worked the ways they should. Trying to master the temperature proved to be a little harder. I tried to share the experiences that I was having with Ruth, but for the first time in my life I felt she was beyond it all, on an excursion of her own. I could not share tidbits of information that I knew would have delighted her, had she been among the living rather than among the ashes of her former body and existence. Awkwardly expressed, perhaps, but my first thoughts on "my new life" (to quote the words of the title of a famous literary work). Cathie and Theo decorated the rooms that I have – somewhat largish living-room, smallish bathroom, galley kitchen (of sorts), and medium-sized bedroom. It resembles a hotel suite on Soudan Avenue in Briton House. (Cathie once owned a house on Soudan Avenue, a longish block from where I am now living.) By the way the word "Soudan" comes from the Japanese

language and apparently means “to give advice.” It’s now 8:02 p.m. of a busy day that began (for me) at 6:30 a.m.

*5 June 2024*

### **Working Wrongly**

Babyishly childishly adolescently alcoholically immaturely unwisely strangely weirdly inhumanly psychotically deadly

*6 June 2024*

### **Prehension vs. Comprehension**

An inventory or at least an index of the contents of the act of prehension is required before there exists an inventory or an index of the features that comprise the act of comprehension. The reason for this is the exceptional power of the act of prehension over that of the relatively weak power of the act of comprehension.

*7 June 2024*

### **Job’s Wife**

Most people are familiar with “The Book of Job” in the Old Testament and with the extraordinary patience of both Job and his wife. Perhaps I should place the reference to the wife’s name in quotation marks like this “Job’s wife” because in the text there is but one single reference to this long-suffering wife and mother and that reference fails to mention the woman’s name. So she is destined to be forever known as the woman Job married – his wife.

Few readers or even scholars of biblical lore seem to wonder why she seems so agreeable to having her ten children slain and then being replaced by more and better daughters. A learned scholar of the Old Testament once assured me, “There is no psychology in these books, so nobody need look for psychological insights in these texts. But there are insights of equivalent or greater value to be found in this text. Look not for psychological interpretations but for greater depth than that.”

*8 June 2024*

### **Plan B**

One day it dawned on me that the dawn of the new day would bring no new remedy for our malaise, no new solution to our problems, no act of magic, black or white, or sorcery or ritual or rite or charm or prayer or policy or position paper that could redirect our fate and turn it into our destiny. Priests and prophets, politicians and pontificators, will blather on, but nothing will be done because in the circumstances nothing could be done.

In other words, Plan A did not work out, and there was no Plan B at all. I like to think that the human condition resembled a reference to a 78-inch recording of the third movement of Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, popularly known as the “Funeral March” by Frederic Chopin. There is only Side A, no Side B at all, imaginatively speaking!

Now that Plan A is *kaput*, and Plan B is non-existent, the reader should consider Side X, which derives its name from *ex-gay*, for those on Side X often see sexual orientation change as the ideal solution for those who experience attraction to the same sex, as the wording has it. In this regard, all is well and good but the advice applies to those in the LGBTQ set who only question and never try to answer a question. For the record, as these designations fade with the seasons, LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning).

Let me safely add that there is nothing in this formulation, with these initialisms, or any others known to me, that will forestall the apocalypse or foreclose on our future. Yet there are rumours that there is a Planet X approaching Earth that will veer into our orbit and offer us an escape to a Wholly New World. But, to be frank, I doubt it that this is so.

All this brings to mind – all that it does is “bring to mind” – is the classic line quoted by Isaac Asimov to accompany his classic science-fiction story “Nightfall” (1941). It comes from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “Nature” (1836). It reads:

“If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God?”

9 June 2024

## **Fears**

By and large the fears that have worried me the most during my life so far are the ones that have failed to materialize. Instead of them, the fears that did materialize were at the time entirely unknown, unexpected, or unimaginable. These were notable and the ones that took their toll.

10 June 2024

## Word Order

*Written for Richard Kostelanetz*

Word order is important. By reversing the order of everyday words, I am able to draw attention to their equivalency that would not otherwise be apparent. To illustrate the importance or the unimportance of word order, its relevance or its irrelevance, each line offers two somewhat different meanings generated by two sets of words, once in one order, once in another order.

When I showed this display to master wordsmith Richard Kostelanetz, he dubbed these words “switches.” Then he supplied me with a number of them that appear here; indeed, many more than are needed to demonstrate this curious verbal effect.

Thanks, R.K.!

Spy chief ... Chief spy.  
God Almighty ... Almighty God.  
Jesus Christ ... Christ Jesus.  
Overturn ... Turnover.  
Home run ... Run home.  
Overtake ... Takeover.  
Gunshot ... Shotgun.  
Houseboat ... Boathouse.  
Watch dog ... Dog watch.  
Fish bait ... Bait fish.  
Fool you ... You fool.  
Downfall ... Fall down.  
Nail polish ... Polish nail.  
Rest stop ... Stop resting.  
Like war ... War like.  
Good feel ... Feel good.  
Tired dog ... Dog tired.

11 June 2024

## Switches

For the meaning of the word “switches,” cast your eyes on “Word Order,” the entry that is immediately above this one.

Now the entry that you are currently reading explains that some words have not one single meaning but have double meanings, two different ones anyway. From its context one may tell the meaning of the word that applies and prevails. A number of such words appear here – twenty-two words in all; in all, forty-four meanings.

bolt bound buckle consult dust enjoin fast finished garnish handicap hold-up  
left model off oversight peruse refrain rock sanction screen transparent variety

Thanks again, R.K.!

*12 June 2024*

## **Prehistoria**

Today I received an email about the Prehistoria Museum in Toronto. The information was all news to me. It seems that various European cities have such museums – free educational displays devoted to prehistoric subjects and objects as well as information about the availability of such objects through specialized sales outlets.

The European “museums” are going “great guns” but the Toronto “museum,” which was opened some months ago, is currently moving to new quarters near Dundas Square and Yonge Street in downtown Toronto, so it is closed, though it may be opened soon. (Sounds like an authentic definition of “Canadian prehistory” to me.) Check later in the year for a possible follow-up. I owe this information to David Clink of the Canadian Science Fiction & Fantasy Association Hall of Fame, 12 June 2024.

I took my own advice and checked and, sure enough, Prehistoria Museum is open for exhibition and business in Yonge-Dundas Square, Toronto.

*13 June 2024*

## **Seventh Heaven**

What is the significance of the idiom “Seventh Heaven”?

The idiom is employed in the English language to refer to a psychological state of supreme joy and complete satisfaction, not really to any physical or spiritual place or space in the solar system, in outer space, or somewhere else in the cosmos. Attempts to equate the descriptions with states like Eden and Heaven that are described in sacred scriptures or depicted in the early cosmologies of the Abrahamic



religions (Hebrew, Christian, Islamic) are unconvincing. “Seventh Heaven” seems to be an entirely human conception though the number “seven” is often earmarked to be of special religious or spiritual significance.

14 June 2024

## **John Newlove**

These days the so-called “precious bane” of my existence is being asked questions about literary and cultural matters by busy people who are otherwise unknown to me. It seems it is easier to email someone old enough to be able to answer the correspondent’s query than it is to undertake one’s own research. My policy has always been to explain to my unknown-to-me correspondent that I will assist him or her if I am able to do so without leaving the keyboard of my computer. If I have to check reference works, too much time is devoted to the task with no direct or even indirect benefit to me. A well, when I go to a lot of trouble, I seldom receive an acknowledgment for my labour, even if I have been able to answer the query, whether simple or complex. Another trouble is that once the original question has been asked and answered, there is usually a supplementary question that is asked and left unanswered.

Out of the blue, as I like to repeat, came the query from a scholar unknown to me who has collected the correspondence of the poet John Newlove for an edition of letters called *The Weather and the Words: The Selected Letters of John Newlove* scheduled to be published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press in Waterloo in 2025. I first met Newlove in Vancouver in the early 1960s and then knew him again in Toronto in the late 1960s. Thereafter I lost all contact with him. He died in Montreal in 2003. Here is what I wrote to his courteous, would-be biographer, to be used in this publication.

I have not kept abreast of John Newlove's achievement or reputation, so nothing I may add will enhance or diminish it.

I like to think I “discovered” him for a national audience, and I did so in a marked fashion when I compiled *Poetry 64*, co-published by Les Editions du Jour and The Ryerson Press and co-edited with Jacques Godbout, the anthology that also “discovered” a whole host of French-language poets and compatriots of Quebec.

As far as I am concerned, it also “discovered” for a national readership three more fine talents – by design I selected for inclusion the same number of poems by Newlove as by Atwood and MacEwen and Bowering, as I now recall; fewer by the other contributors.

When I knew him, I found John to be somewhat “passive” as a personality and somewhat “full of himself.” For instance, it was not enough to drive him to the subway station; it was expected I would drive him to his final destination, which was an indulgence, with no acknowledgment given at the time when I lived in Toronto’s west-end Swansea district. In discussion about anything at all, he was inclined to make pronouncements – “That’s bullshit!” – offering no argument. So I found him somewhat defensive. He lacked an advanced education, of course, but he made up for it, as one must, with his own native talent and industry.

Good luck with your book.

JR

These are my feelings about John Newlove to this day. Good poet, something of a pain as a person!

*15 June 2024*

## **One Dozen Lines**

*More than One Dozen Lines from About as Many Poems  
Composed by the French Poet Paul Eluard  
(or to call him by his rightful name, Eugene Grindel)  
as translated by various hands and then they made their way  
all the way to the Internet and then into this collage or montage*

The poet is he who inspires, rather than he who is inspired.

She has every willingness.

Adieux tristesse Bonjour tristesse.

The earth is blue like an orange.

The night is never complete.

On the crowded places I write your name.

On envy’s walls I write your name.

I speak to you of eternity.

Make me speak without having anything to say.

The night is never complete.

Speak when I have nothing to say.

Love is man unfinished.

Love of the bodies that are loveable.

Make me speak without having anything to say.

The poet is he who inspires, rather than he who is inspired.

16 June 2024

## **A Musing**

The Dream and I are on great terms, intimate terms, I should say. I am visited while soundly asleep so I know nothing at all about dreams and dreaming, whether lucid or pellucid, calming or alarming, automatic or autonomic, should such distinctions as these be regarded as valid distinctions! So I have capitalized the word Dream and turned my back on it, leaving myself temporarily intestate, so to speak, briskly though retreating from the test or challenge of defining it. Cowardly me!

17 June 2024

## **Observation**

André Breton composed poems that are generally long, very long, so long in fact that the reader (or at least this reader) forgets how they began, where they are headed, and when they will end (if end they will).

Breton was a leading French poet and the founder of the Surrealism movement. He once noted, “Those who make signs to me are separated by stars.” That line comes from his (long) poem “The Spectral Attitudes.” What it means is anyone’s guess, but it sounds wonderful!

17 June 2024

## **Musings**

We *exist*; we know that. We *exit*; we know that too. But the notion of *existence* is tricky, as the words *expire* and *exeunt* are tricky too. To appreciate their meanings, try them out for size as well, and then do the same for the two words that follow: *relevancy* and *irrelevancy*.

18 June 2024

## **Ruth Florence Colombo**

She has been many women in one and one woman in many. (If that sounds odd, it is odd; a little, though not by much.) Here are the vital dates: Sunday, March 29, 1936

– Friday, April 26, 2024. (Also for the record, here are my own vital dates: Tuesday, March 24, 1936 – Yet to be determined.)

Ruth's breathing ceased about 8:00 p.m. on that stormy Friday evening at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto. (I am five days older than Ruth.)

Please note that nobody ever called her "Florence;" it was "Ruth," occasionally "Ruthie." (As a child I was known as "Johnnie." In my thirties, I opted for "John Robert," and then in my Sixties I diminished the moniker to "JR.")

Their lives together began on April 11, 1959, following a late morning ceremony conducted by Magistrate Wolfe in Toronto's Old City Hall.

Most people agree that Ruth and John made a good and sturdy couple. Their lives – their single, entwined life together, really – was blessed with the births of three healthy children (boy, girl, boy). Sixty-five years of wedlock. Fifty-five years of life turned their principal house, a bungalow at 42 Dell Park Avenue, Toronto M6B 2T6, Ontario, into a warm home.

It had to come to an end and it did when a number of Ruth's bodily functions ceased to operate as well as they should and she succumbed after days marked by long hours of heavy sleeping and by few hours of genuine wakefulness. After close to three weeks of tests in Sunnybrook Hospital, she succumbed, concluding eighty-eight years of growing, learning, caring, loving, rearing, teaching, reading, writing, and friendships.

Her many friends regarded her as bright, intelligent, thoughtful, helpful, knowledgeable, and appreciating. She could also be entertaining. I held her in the same light, though I knew she worked hard and often to the bone to contribute to help raise a trio of thoughtful, responsible children, and she always extended caution to her husband (the author of this account) to be reasonable.

Her parents, Sylvia and Joe Brown, as well as their other daughter Diane, saw her as a renegade, or a thoughtless person, if "thoughtless" is the word, though the word is not the right one to use in the circumstances, regarding her birthright of Judaism which she saw with uncommon clarity in a world fraught with incredible difficulties. More than Jewish, she saw herself as a Zionist.

Pale cheeks, brown eyes, a dark head of hair (until the near end at least) and something of a hypochondriac, she was extremely sensitive to words and feelings, putting her husband to shame in this regard. She composed five volumes of quite unusual poetry which identified and praised the muses of our unamusing years of plague and discourtesies.

To return to the beginning: She was many women in one. To wit: she had the insights of the poet, the foreknowledge of the prophets, the social critiques of today's society, the work ethic of its teachers and homemakers and mothers. She was one woman in many. To wit: she wore contact lenses and then glasses, so until vision

itself began to pale, she was able to “see through” other people, preternaturally knowing them inside-out – or perhaps I should say insight-out.

*19 June 2024*

## **Laurence Olivier**

West End / Broadway / Wardour Street / Hollywood / Old Vic / National Theatre / Laurence Olivier / Sir Laurence Olivier / Laurence Kerr Olivier, Baron Olivier of Brighton, OM / Consummate Actor of Stage and Screen / Consummate Man of the Theatre / A Legend in His Day and for a Century to Come

*19 June 2024*

## **William Shakespeare**

I have often wondered about the accent and the sound of the voice of William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. In my fancy I imagined that he sounded or resounded with the voice of Sir Laurence Olivier, but I have no doubt that I am wrong about that, as I realize that the playwright’s accent would be a modified version of that of the district of his birth. And what was that? Linguists argue that Shakespeare’s Received Speech was Early Modern English with characteristics of the Irish, the Yorkshire, and the West Country sounds spoken more quickly than is today’s English. (How they determined the latter, I do not know.) Yes, I cast my vote for Sir Lawrence as the authentic voice of William Shakespeare.

*20 June 2024*

## **The Truth about Life**

There is no disclosure at the beginning of life any more than there is a revelation at the end of life. Right now, at this very moment, what we possess is all and everything that life has to offer, and often perhaps a little less, on the daily basis of one’s inevitable decline with age. There is no more to come yet, there is some more to go. The notion that there is a St. Peter at the Pearly Gates of Heaven is a version of the whimsey that there is a Satan who prevails at the dreary Gate of Hell. Too bad, if only because the admissions of the dastardly Satan would be more revealing than the revelations of the saintly St. Peter!

21 June 2024

### **A Poem with Three Lines from Paul Eluard's "In a New Night"**

*Woman I've lived with*  
*Woman I live with*  
*Woman I'll live with*

Given my mini-math, that makes three women in all  
Of the billions of the world's nubile women.  
Eight billion human beings are born each year,  
Half of them male, half of them female, so finding more,  
Between the ages say of eighteen and eighty,  
Should be easy enough, even if I am not Paul Eluard.

*Women I've lived with*  
*Women I live with*  
*Women I'll live with*

22 June 2024

### **Beautiful Things**

*A Version of a Poem by Paul Eluard*

There are so many beautiful things that I sacrifice.  
Instead of offering examples, I will grant instances.  
(A poetaster would proffer an *example*, a poet an *instance*.)  
The differences are innumerable so I hope you will recognize them ....

The marvelous intelligence of women with dark circles under their eyes.  
The moisture that wells up in the eyes of infirm yet thoughtful men.  
The horrible fearfulness of artists of talent and achievement.  
The dangerous fearlessness of fools and of clever but insensitive people.  
The deft movements of surgeons in well-lit operating rooms.  
The surprised look on the face of the infant that burps for the first time.  
The words of simple encouragement offered by friends and strangers.  
The absolute certainty of the speaker who begins his lecture by declaring that he has  
nothing more to say and that when he finally ends it he proves that this is so.

A way with words that is insightful without being belaboured.

23 June 2024

## **My Pleasures**

*A Version of a Poem by Paul Eluard*

My pleasures  
As regular as the fall of rain drops  
My pleasures  
As righteous as a twelve-inch ruler  
My pleasures  
As habitual as spasms of pain  
My pleasures  
As customary as the passage of time  
My pleasures  
As acceptable as reasonable bylaws  
My pleasures  
As inevitable as rhymes  
My pleasures  
As brightness without limit  
My pleasures  
Are these and those  
As regular  
As all of that  
With yet more  
That are  
Yet to come

24 June 2024

## **Helpless Love**

*In Memoriam R.C.*

The lost hands of here and now  
The lost lips of now and then  
The lost breasts of lick and love

The lost hips of show and tell  
The lost legs of long and longing  
The lost lap of collapse and relapse  
The lost kiss of skin and sin  
The lost navel of true absence  
The lost body of want and desire  
The lost woman and the lost man  
The loss is further and forever more  
The recovery without convalescence  
The loss that will never unloss  
*She is still alive unless she died*

24 June 2024

## **General Charles de Gaulle**

Last night I not only watched attentively but I also listened closely to a three-hour television documentary produced in France and in French but with English subtitles on the life of General Charles de Gaulle. (The subtitling mechanism frequently malfunctioned and, as an instance of artificial intelligence at work, it was an outright failure based on “translating” words based on their sound rather than on their sense.) Nevertheless, I made a note of many details about the man, his life, his work, and his fellow country men.

Two observations struck me with great force. The first observation was the fact that the Second World War hero proclaimed himself to be a “General,” yet he never attained that rank, though he obviously earned that status. But this is a matter-of-fact observation of no real consequence. The second observation was the fact that throughout his professional life he distinguished between two concepts. He held in the highest regard his country: *la France*. The Republic inspired him. He did not hold in the highest regard *le français*, his fellow citizenry. In fact, he found that on the whole the history of his country, the Republic, was admirable and indeed “great,” but the inhabitants of the country were contemptible as they favoured political parties over people and instead of the Republic.

On the first page of the book of memoirs that he wrote at the end of his life, the reader will find the following assertion, the following affirmation: “All my life I have had a certain idea of France.” It’s a highly suggestive remark. In fact, it is said that when the reviewer of the book for the *Parti Communiste Français* began to read it, he could never advance beyond that statement, balking over the words “certain idea” – so heartily did he disagree with this the General and with this “idea.” How quaint



that he was motivated by “a certain idea”! How ... great.

25 June 2024

## Various Life Spans

*How long do the following species live?*

Bacterium – 100,000 years

Oak tree – 150 years

Whale – 110 years

Elephant – 60 years

Human being – 53.68 years to 85.83 years\*

Gorilla – 40 years

Jaguar – 20 years

Salamander – 20 years

Rattle snake – 19 years

Beaver – 19 years

Bat – 12 years

Canary – 10 years to 15 years

Dog – 10 years to 15 years

Angelfish – 10 years to 12 years

Toad – 10 years to 12 years

Garter snake – 8 years to 10 years

Grass – 4 years to 7 years

Humming Bird – 4 years

Fish – 1 year to 200 years

Bees – 2 weeks to 6 years

Butterflies – 15 days to 25 days

Mosquitos – 10 days to 2 months

Viruses – 24 hours

*\*Based on close study.*

26 June 2024

## What Death Does

At dusk I turn into a *flâneur*, one half a man in one half a city, its night side. Also at dusk, you turn into a *flâneuse*, one half a woman in one half a city, its night side too.

The two halves of a husband and a wife do not make for one whole mortal being, or even one whole city, for nothing is entire of itself, but are like spirits that flit and dart and flutter and wander from structure to structure, structures that are there forever ... yet are not there. That is what death does to mortals, to structures.

27 June 2024

### **Thoughts on “Solioonensis”**

A good number of years ago I came across a neologism that was introduced into the literature if not the vocabulary of The Work, that is, the Fourth Way, by its founder, George Gurdjieff, who did not so much account for it as offer its origin as based on the vocabulary of the so-called Whirling Dervishes, for what that is worth. That word is *solioonensis*.

I mentioned this unique word in an email to a friend in Paris with a long history of involvement in the Work in France. What follows is what I wrote to him on June 25, 2024:

I find interesting that Mr. G’s terminology, off-putting as it often is when first encountered, seems to refer to something that is non-existent, yet in time the term turns out to be pointedly meaningful and indeed useful. Thus *solioonensis* takes on great interpretive or descriptive power in our days of dire natural events and extraordinary human actions and experiences. It also brings to mind, to my mind at least, Isaac Asimov’s immensely powerful short story “Nightfall” about the effect of the appearance of the stars in the heavens one night in a thousand years, etc. The story is available on the web but is often confused with the novel based on it which is not at all powerful. I urge anyone interested in neologisms and unique words to consider adopting *solioonensis* and giving the term a wider currency than it currently enjoys or employs.

My faraway friend has yet to reply to my suggestion but had he done so I suspect he would have agreed with me.

27 June 2024

### **On the Rues of Paris**

*For Bill Andersen*

Ambler Boulevardier *Flâneur Flâneuse* Cruiser Loiterer Passer-by Perambulator  
Rambler Saunterer Stalker Stroller Walker

*28 June 2024*

### **Before I Was Interrupted**

What was I saying, when I was interrupted?  
What was I saying, just before I was interrupted?  
What was I saying, well before I was interrupted?

What was it I was saying, or was trying to say, when I was interrupted?  
What was it I was unaware of that should be said, before I was interrupted?  
What was it I was not doing and not saying, well before I was interrupted?

If only I could remember, I would say so and it now.  
Yet now I cannot remember.  
It is only the interruption itself that I now recall ....

*28 June 2024*

### **Death**

The death of no man thrills or excites me, yet the death of one woman has pretty well paralyzed me.

*29 June 2024*

### **Invisible Things**

There are some things that are more visible than other things. As well, there are some things that are less visible than other things. What seems most likely is that it is the things-in-themselves that are invisible. Their unseeable selves parade and promenade before our naked eyes and yet remain unseen and even unsuspected by the great majority of human beings. Another possible mystery.

*30 June 2024*

### **Dominion Day**

Some “rare words” appear on a list of unusual words on a site on the Web that may be described as evoking aspects of Canadian life. It is suitable to note the existence of some of these words on the National Holiday that is currently called Canada Day, but which was once known (and should once again be known) as Dominion Day. Here are some of those words.

Agathism: The philosophical view that while evil does appear from time to time, it will disappear in the end.

Irredentist: Someone who urges a return of native land or territory, a characteristic of the country’s aboriginal people.

Nostomania: Intense homesickness, a feature of Canadians who live abroad – that is, outside the country.

Ubeity: The condition of being in a particular place rather than “all over the map.”

Apricity: The state of being warmed by the sun in winter, especially desirable during the snowy and icy days of February and March.

30 June 2024

## **Is Canada Selcouth?**

Sir Walter Scott uses at least one antiquated word from time to time that to my eyes and ears characterizes the essence of Canada these days. That word is *selcouth*. It is or once was meaningful to the speaker of Scots and Old English but not to speakers of other languages. Sir Walter’s *auld* term means “strange,” “unusual,” or “uncommon.” (*Sel* is “rarely” and *couth* is “known.”) Certainly these terms apply to the anomaly of Canada in today’s world, a country rich in materials but poor in spirituals. Canada, we hardly know you.

1 July 2024

## **Isaiah Berlin**

The first book-length biography of Oxford historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin was written by Michael Ignatieff of Toronto. It was called *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (1991). Berlin has nothing in common with the capital of Germany, as he was of Latvian-birth, but it turns out one of his distant cousins was Menachem Mendel Schneerson, rabbi and leader of Chabad in Brooklyn, known and respected for decades as the “Lubavitcher Rebbe” of the Hasidic dynasty. His followers felt he was a messiah. At the time of his

death in 1994, Schneerson's portrait was featured on a gigantic billboard above the intersection of Bathurst and Lawrence in North York, Ontario. In an intelligent world there would be a gigantic billboard overlooking that same intersection dedicated to Sir Isaiah Berlin.

2 July 2024

### **Like a Chemist from Canada**

A few days ago I came across references on the Internet to a short play with an eye-catching title. The title explains little: *Like a Chemist from Canada*. The subtitle explains even less: *When Isaiah Met DSCH*. These references are to Isaiah Berlin, the historian of ideas at Oxford University, and to DSCH, as well as to the journals devoted to the music of Russian composer Dimitri Shostakovich. The playwright of record is another Oxford professor, Lewis Owens, and the director is identified as Victor Sobchak. The text of the short play (essentially a playlet with accompaniment by pianist Alan Stone) was devised by Alan Mercer who based it on correspondence and official records about Shostakovich's visit to Oxford to receive an Honourary Doctorate in 1958. The Latvian-born philosopher Isaiah Berlin was Shostakovich's host for the three-day visit. *DSCH* is the title of the journal published by Owens and other scholars to celebrate the Russian composer. There was other visitor and he was French composer and pianist Francis Poulenc. The director of the play was Alan Mercer. It seems the play or playlet had three professional performances: at the Lilian Bayliss Studio, Sadlers Wells Theatre, London, late June; at The Dukes Hall, Royal Academy of Music, London, also late June; and early July at the The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. I am trying to locate a copy of this theatrical/musical/academic oddity. "The life of Isaiah Berlin contained several episodes that cry out for theatrical treatment, and Lewis Owens here dramatises one of them, co-starring Shostakovich, with intelligence and flair." So wrote Henry Hardy, Isaiah Berlin's editor, Wolfson College, Oxford. I assume the curious title (which caught my eye) is a round-about way of disguising the news, *i.e.*, "Like a Composer from Russia." More incendiary at the time than "Composer" and "Canada." What else?

3 July 2024

### **Independence Day**

The Fourth of July is Independence Day in the U.S.A. But nowhere elsewhere in the world is that day so celebrated. With the appearance of Donald J. Trump on the scene,

Americans have been acknowledging (when not celebrating) their *Indepense* Days.

*4 July 2024*

## **Table of Contents**

There is a table of contents for every language. This table of contents lists the contents of the main categories of the elements of the English language.

Nouns. These are words that identify persons, places, and things.

Pronouns: These are words that represent things.

Verbs: These are words that describe actions or states of being.

Adjectives: These are words that modify nouns or pronouns.

Adverbs: These are words that modify verbs.

Prepositions: These are words that refer to place or position.

Conjunctions: These are words that connect words, phrases, clauses, etc.

Interjections: These are words or sometimes exclamations that reveal the state of mind of the speaker.

Other parts of speech include phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.

What is notable (though seldom in fact noted at all) about the above categories is that they may be put to use to describe either existent or non-existent things.

*5 July 2024*

## **A Neologism for the Night**

Tonight-mare

*6 July 2024*

## **Feasts**

It used to be crumbs, then it was crusts, then it was chunks, then it was slices, then it was sandwiches, then it was half-loafs, then it was full-loafs, then it was bagels with cream cheese, onion, chives, tomato, lettuce, etc. Then it was crumbs again ....

*7 July 2024*

## **Weather, Whether**

I used to complain about the weather but there has been no reason to complain about it these days as aside from some cloudy skies the weather has been warm when it is not torrid! I wake up around six o'clock and lie in bed half ruminating about conditions until the alarm on the iPad goes off at 7:45 a.m. Thereabouts I wash and dress and tidy up my desk. Breakfast shared with Noel Samahin, the retired anaesthesiologist who is my "desk-mate," is at 8:45 a.m. Then (unfortunately) I have to leave and miss the thirty-minute exercise session here and be taken by Beck Taxi to 42 Dell Park Avenue to review cartons of memorabilia and books. Yesterday Dr. Dave was already in the basement at work putting printed books in order so that selections of all the titles can be saved, with the rest, the not-so-grand excesses, being earmarked for the city dump. I can withstand two hours of this and then I return to Briton House for lunch at 12:40 p.m. and then I lie in bed for some time or sit out on the balcony near the swimming pool which I have yet to use. I receive two newspapers, the *Globe* and the *National Post*, having some time ago cancelled the *Star* which has fallen on hard times, at least news-wise. Sundays, like today, I receive only the *NY Times*, which is elastic in the sense that an issue may consume a lot of time or a little time, depend on my state of mind – rather really my "state of nerves" – followed by a short nap in the mid-afternoon as I must "recover" from dealing with what I have been examining with all their memories and then casting away. Dinner is at 5:45 p.m. Cathie is staying at the house, so is there and Dr. Dave is labouring away, but he leaves with Jane in a day or so on vacation. Cathie returns to Montreal, where Theo lives; Jonathan has returned from the family vacation in Portugal. I am on my alert to neither trip nor fall or I may break a bone! Thereafter, in the evening, I clear up current mail and shave and shower and prepare for bed. First, though, I sip a "we dram" of Scotch (as Cyril would express it, bless his soul) and munch on some oatmeal cookies. I watch documentaries about the rise of Nazism to learn who (as I like to express it) won the Second World War. That ends a typical day. I must end this, as it is now 8:28 a.m. and I need to head down to the Atrium for breakfast again and then to Dell Park again. Such is my early morning.

8 July 2024

### **It's Rare When**

It's rare when walking along a stylish street that a stylishly dressed woman strolling past you smiles at you. *It's rarer when you think fast enough to smile back at her.*

It's rare when walking along a residential street that a youngster acknowledges your presence. *It's rarer when you react fast enough to acknowledge the youngster and his*

*or her parent or guardian.*

It's rare when reaching an intersection that you spot two twenty-five cent pieces ahead of you lying on the sidewalk. *It's even rarer when you ask yourself if you should stop and stoop to pick them up.*

It's rare when you take a walk and look overhead and see lowering clouds and feel the first rain drops begin to fall. *It's much rarer that you had remembered to bring your umbrella along with you.*

It's even rarer still when walking along a semi-stylish street that a semi-stylishly dressed man your own age smiles at you as he walks by you. *It's rarer that you wonder if you should respond to the invitation, if an invitation it is.*

It's rarer than any rarity I can imagine that as you cross a busy intersection that you see a speeding automobile that is heading for you and about to knock you down. *It's a rara avis, like spotting a flying saucer or being run over by a speeding bicyclist.*

9 July 2024

## **A Soupçon**

*A soupçon of surrealism is surely enough for every one and every body. Here goes ....*

It is late. It is *too* late. It is *trois* late. It is *fore* late. But *no woman* is ever late, never late at all.

Days may be shattered but nights are totaled.

I dream of you ... my source of nightmares temporarily displaced by a lullaby of *incubi*.

Suicide may be the single most memorable form of "omnicide" or "multicide" or "selficide." Instead, let's call it an "*felo-de-se*."

Would that it were so that a reassuring *cosmic background noise* could be overheard by everyone all at once and in all places and at all times.

10 July 2024

## **Wisdoms**

One visit to the dentist's office is certain to be followed in close order by



another visit and then a further series of appointments.

One touch of your body is certain to be followed by a multitude more.

We readily greet each other: “Good morning,” “Good afternoon,” “Good evening,” and “Good night.” Yet nobody I know, except me, says: “Good noontime hour” or “Good midnight hour.” Yet people do say “Good afternoon,” however.

In my right hand, I hold your attention. In my left hand, I hold your contrition. But with any “right” words that are “left” over, I stake my claim on your submission.

I believe it to be true that to divulge is to indulge.

Objects that are “photographed” are “shot” or “taken.” Works of art are “drawn” or “painted” or “sculpted.”

Too frequently for their own good, paintings are described as “Collection of the Artist.” The same might be said for poems.

*11 July 2024*

## **Mendacities**

Mendacities, far from being unattractive and untruthful, may be amenable and agreeable, for they have the power to illustrate the twisted nature of mankind that lies far below its ostensible surface of beauty and truth.

*12 July 2024*

## **I Say ... You Say**

I say A, and you say, “Eh.”

I say E, and you say, “Eeeh.”

I say I, and you say, “Eye.”

I say O, and you say, “Oh?”

I say U, and you say, “You too?”

I say W, and you say, “What?”

I say X, and you say, “Ex it out.”

I say Y, and you say, “Why ever.”

I say Z, and you say, “Zee” or “Zed.”

*13 July 2024*

## **Tilley Endurables**

This is the TILLEY HAT. *It is the best outdoor hat in the world.* It floats, ties on, repels rain and mildew, won't shrink, and will be replaced free if it wears out. (Yes, put it in your will.) Ten-ounce, USA-treated cotton duck, solid British brass hardware. Sewn with Canadian persnickitiness. Read and enjoy the four-page owner's manual and the "Brag Tags." Then phone or write for a catalogue of the world's best travel and adventure clothing. 1-800-Endures, 900 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3C 1V6. Made in Canada. Cotton 100% *coton. Fait au Canada.* Print your name and phone number inside the hat!

This is the wording of the gasconade and guarantee that is part of the world-famous Tilley Hat which was devised, designed, developed, and manufactured by the Toronto-based entrepreneur and outdoorsman Alex Tilley from January 1960 to 1980 and thereafter by successive owners. The motto is a neat one: "Tilley Endurables."

*14 July 2024*

## **Happy Hours**

I find it especially difficult being unable to share with Ruth faithful accounts of the incidents that take place during everyday life, both minor events and major experiences. I would remember them as they occurred and then share them with her during our so-called "happy hours." These were "held" every afternoon during the slack period between four and five o'clock, while dinner was in the oven or on the stove. Relating them is what "made our day," as the expression goes. Since the end of April of the present year, these happy hours are no longer available to either of us. During these afternoons I mostly ponder the mendacity of even happy memories.

*15 July 2024*

## **Histories and Non-histories**

Academic histories have always struck me as chronicles of horrors interspersed with a series of stories of heroics, successes and disasters both. The result is that I am more interested in what might be called "unnatural histories" rather than in "natural non-histories." Unnatural refers to illusions, delusions, deceits, and deceptions: hence they are anti-academic and anti-historical by definition.

*16 July 2024*

## **Two Imps**

Quite well known is the so-called Lincoln Imp, the carved elvish figure of an imp or little devil that glares down at congregants from the choir loft of Lincoln Cathedral in the city of Lincolnshire, England. The Cathedral was consecrated in 1091 though its mischievous-looking imp dates from a much later period than that.

Barely known, even to its clergy these days, is the fact that the Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto, which is dated 1853, though the present structure has a later date than that, is that it is the dwelling place of the Toronto Imp. This is a comparable menacing folkloric figure from the choir loft that glowers down on congregants worshiping in the Cathedral Church, wishing all kinds of mayhem and mischief if not devilry on pious congregant and curious tourist alike.

Lincoln's Imp is internationally known; Toronto's Imp is barely known, even to the historic Toronto church's clergy, if not to the members of its congregation.

*17 July 2024*

## **An Alphabet of Ready-made Cliches for Your Next Poem about Love**

As far as the eye can see. Beyond compare. Can't live without you. Depths of my soul. Eternal love nest. Fair as love may be. Good times and bad. Hearts intertwine. I am close at hand. Jest to one side. Kissing the rose. Light of my life. My heart will ever be true. Never apart. One true love. Peace of mind. Questions my very existence. Restless souls. Shall never be apart. Time is fleeing. Unconditional love. Violets are known to blush. Wish upon a star. X marks the special spot. Young and in love. Zeal with ardour is real.

*17 July 2024*

## **Borders Without Doctors**

"Borders Without Doctors" is my new version of *Médecins sans Frontières*, given the fact that these days warfare is being conducted by bombing hospitals, shooting medical doctors and attendants, and withholding from patients food and water and medical supplies and essential care.

*18 July 2024*

## **Reich**

The German noun *Reich* has numerous meanings that have to do with “state,” “rule,” “realm,” “empire,” “imperium,” etc. Today it is mainly identified with the notion of a greater Germany of the future (to be called Germania) through the agency of the Nazi Party’s description of its own “1,000-year *Reich*.” The Nazi Party itself lasted from January 1933 to May 1945. Germany is official known in English as the Federal Republic of Germany. Today the word *Reich* is avoided.

*19 July 2024*

## **The Middle East**

*The Middle East.* Its problems are innumerable (to use a pleasant enough word) or inestimable (to use a less than pleasant word). Take your choice. Here are some general problems, followed by problems specific to the region in question.

Colonialism Crime Democracy Diseases Drought Exploitation Gangsterism Hunger Ignorance Illiteracy Imperialism Poverty Revolution Schooling Slavery Socialism Terrorism Women’s Repression.

Arab problem Bedouin problem Hebrew problem Iranian problem Islamic problem Israeli problem Jewish problem Judaism problem Muslim problem Middle East problem Palestinian problem United States problem.

*20 July 2024*

## **Sex**

The following piece of cautionary advice is often attributed to the novelist Kurt Vonnegut: “Never have sex with anyone who has more problems than you have.”

*21 July 2024*

## **Nobel Prize in Literature**

When it was announced that the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature would be awarded to Alice Munro, it became apparent if not obvious that it would not likely be awarded in the years ahead to Margaret Atwood who was considered (by Canadians at least) to be “in the running.”

22 July 2024

### **Fourth Way**

The Fourth Way may be regarded as a form of *psychopraxis*.

23 July 2024

### **Plethora of Gods**

I am an atheist or at least an agnostic because there are so many Gods that I have no idea which one – or which ones – to worship or adore forever more.

24 July 2024

### **Problems of the World**

Perhaps all the world's major problems are caused by the fact that there are too many Gods to idolize and they cannot resist thwarting each other's plans and undermining each other's powers. Perhaps it is safer not to take sides – to ignore them all!

25 July 2024

### **Last Will and Testament**

testAMENTary

26 July 2024

### **Living Objects**

I think it is the Iranian poet Iraj Ziayi who specializes in writing poems about objects that from time to time wake up from their spectre-like slumber and take on lives of their own. I feel this way when I drop something and it rolls across the floor and takes refuge beneath the sofa, or when I misplace something nearby and afterwards it turns up elsewhere.

27 July 2024

## Language Insights

In the Farsi language, spoken in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East, always at the end of the line or the sentence the active verb is.

the georgian alphabet has no capital letters, but it does have punctuation.

In Hebrew and English and in a great many languages, the expression “a wise guy” has the decided meaning of “a dumb guy.”

It is popularly said that a good many languages have two distinctly different meanings for the word *man*. One is *a demi-man* and the other is *a real man*. (I am unable to establish that this is indeed a fact for all the world’s languages, but it makes such sense that it should be so for all the world’s languages!)

28 July 2024

## Schindler’s List

The motion picture *Schindler’s List* (1993) was directed by Stephen Spielberg who insisted on shooting it not in colour but in monochrome, or black-and-white – or, as I prefer to characterize it, “in black and black and white.”

29 July 2024

## Children of Nature

The skies have fathered us, the earths have mothered us, and the unseen heavens have inspired us. But that leaves completely of no account no for any functions of the remainder of the planets, the far-off solar systems, and the far-distant galaxies that comprise the cosmos. Their purposes are indeed likely to remain unknown until the advent of an eternity of timelessnesses.

30 July 2024

## Nature of the Name

The name by which I am now known is not my own name or my sole name. It was bestowed upon me in those days when I was malleable and mute, and it was the product of my parents, their provenance, and their culture. That name has a distinct shape and sound and sense, being composed of syllables and insights. In a way it is

merely a materialistic name. For an immaterial or an incorporeal name, one has to seek the one that is meaningfully secret and hermetic. Yet it may soon be forthcoming all on its own, for it is on the tip of my tongue, these days and nights, ready to trill off those surfaces. It should be more defining and enduring than my common name. I am on the verge of outgrowing my orphaned or conferred name, for this secretive name has no known shapes, syllables, sounds, signs, and so forth, for it needs none of them. All on its own it makes immediate and arresting sense. The real name is the one that I have orchestrated for the unknown certainties to be faced for our unforeseen because unforeseeable future.

31 July 2024

### **The Arab Gesture**

“Food was brought to him hurriedly. He tied it up in a dirty cloth, grasped the water jar, and, with never a glance at the Arabs, turned to me. With his hand he touched his brow, his lips, and his breast in salute; then, although tottering with weakness, he made off again with the queer, loping gait.”

This passage comes from the short story “Lord of the Jackals” and features the arrival of a mysterious Arab dweller of the desert in Sax Rohmer’s *Tales of Secret Egypt* (New York: McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, 1917). In many of his stories and novels, Rohmer describes this practice – this Arab or Muslim gesture of thanks – though its use seems to have passed out of practice (within living memory), yet it is depicted as performed by white-jacketed Signor Ferrari (played by actor Sydney Greenstreet) in the film *Casablanca* (1942).

31 July 2024

### **Cathie & Jonathan**

Theo’s birthday is Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>  
Cathie’s birthday is Wednesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>  
Jonathan’s birthday is Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>

Three wonderful and helpful children  
Born to Ruth Florence and John Robert  
Plus by extension, these grandchildren

Alex, Julia; James, Findley; Nicolas, Thomas

Plus their parents, Suzanne, Stuart, Annie  
What may be said of such stellar beings

Only that there are twelve of them  
Duodecimal, the unit of one dozen  
Much brighter than the Orion Galaxy

During these dark and trying times  
Who are more helpful than ever  
Than imagined by any grandparent

Now and on Grandparents Day  
Indeed, there is one scheduled for  
Sunday, September 8, 2024!

*31 July-1 Aug. 2024*

### **Pictorialism**

Pictorialism is the name attached to some art movements in the Western world that preceded Modernism. Pictorialism flourished between the 1880s and the 1920s with special respect to still photography and motion-picture photography. It was artistic, elaborate, poetic, story-telling, and gloomy. In these ways it differed from Modernism, its successor, which popularized the opposite of those characteristics.

*2 Aug. 2024*

### **Hitler Salutes**

*Q.* What does “*sieg*” mean in the expression “*Sieg Heil!*”

*A.* “*Sieg*” is German for “victory” and “*heil*” is German for “hail.” So the greeting means “Hail Victory!” This so-called “Nazi salute” was used in conjunction with the so-called “Hitler salute” which is “*Heil Hitler.*” Both were accompanied by characteristic arm-and-hand gestures.

*3 Aug. 2024*

### **Three Deaths**



Q. Three famous people died on the same day, month, and year: November 22, 1963. Who were they?

A. Aldous Huxley, English novelist: of throat cancer, Los Angeles County, California, U.S.A. C.S. Lewis, Ireland-born essayist: of renal failure, Oxford, England. John F. Kennedy, U.S. President: of assassin's bullets, Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.

4 Aug. 2024

## **Kabbalah or Cabalah or Qabalah**

Spell it as you wish, the ancient Hebrew mystical system known by these and other spellings has influenced many forms of spiritual, religious, and esoteric thought throughout the ages, across cultures, and on many continents. Perhaps it is a mistake to regard it as a single "system" for it has many forms and formulations, in addition to its principle Hebrew formulation, including Christian and Islamic revelations, which have been quite influential in creating the complex known today.

*Personal Note:* Perhaps I may be irritating or inspiring when I add that this subject brings to mind one of those cartoon features drawn by newspaper artist Robert L. Ripley. In his familiar "Believe It or Not!" cartoon called "The Marching Chinese," published in 1928, he depicts a march of Chinese soldiers that encircles the globe. It never ends – since the Chinese birthrate is so high. The same is true for the study of the Kabbalah or Cabalah or Qabalah. It seems it never ends.

5 Aug. 2024

## **Wisdoms**

The Wisdom of the East is none the wiser than the Energy of the West.  
The East may be older than the West, yet the North is older than the rest.

The East, the West, and the South have grown bolder,  
But when it comes to wisdom, none is the wiser.

Wisdom is derived from the Sages, not the Ages.  
Nature herself does age except in stages.

A man may know himself, but only now and then.  
As for otherwise? Where and when?

The more we contemplate the worth of wisdom,  
The less it seems to benefit our limbic system.

We think we know more, yet we are dumb.  
It is no surprise, the world is a place that's glum.

Knowledge is the source of much distress and unrest.  
What do we do about Tibet, Timbuktu, and Trieste?

May we learn more and more about it.  
Now all we know is that we are none the wiser for it.

*6 Aug. 2024*

### **The Loss of the Pin**

I have yet to recover from the loss of that pin, that lapel pin. I admit I am over-reaching for effect because over-reacting like this is required, as otherwise I would not have an incident that occurred in my early life that I recall with great vividness. Otherwise it would be meaningless to me and to everyone else in the world today.

It was wartime and the pin that was lost was in no way exceptional. Soldiers were wearing lapel pins that identified the nature of their military service. Some of these pins were byzantine and unreadable in design; some of them were vivid and eye-catching in the extreme. Air Force pins had the virtue of being particularly attractive as their designers could incorporate spread-out, feather-like wings to suggest flight other than fight.

A friend of my father's visited us and proudly displayed his lapel pin. It had feather-like wings and I could not keep my eyes off it. He was explaining that he had finally found a job – at Fleet Aircraft – and had the right to wear the pin, and it gave him pleasure to do so, though I suppose even secretaries in the office and janitors in the plant at the Fort Erie were entitled to do so too. He had no technical training or aviation experience so I suppose he was part of the plant's janitorial staff.

When he saw my face light up, he motioned to the pin on his lapel and said, "Would you like one of these?"

I was astonished so I bumbled out, "Do I have to work in Fort Erie to have one?"

"No," he said. "I have an extra one. It is for you." With that he reached into his jacket pocket and produced a replica of the pin he was wearing.

Was I proud! I could hardly wait for him to pin it on my sweater.

So far, so good. So far, so happy.

That was on Sunday afternoon. On Monday morning I wore it to school pinned on my sweater. I showed it to my class mates who were impressed but not as much as I was. I ran around a lot, always reaching with my right hand up to my right lapel to check that the pin was in its place and on display. It was, for two days.

The third day disaster struck. It was not on my lapel. I kept feeling my sweater. I checked its pockets. It was no longer there or anywhere else. I kicked around in the leather pieces of the playground. It was not there. I checked the sidewalk back to the school house. It was not there. I checked the seat of my classroom desk. It was not there. I checked the floor beneath the desk. It was not there. It was not on Weber Street along which I walked to my home. It was not anywhere. Nowhere was it. It was lost, I finally determined, amid the pieces of leather that constituted our school's playground.

To this day I miss that winged lapel pin. I am now eighty-eight years old and still smarting from that the first of the losses in my life.

7 Aug. 2024

### **Surrealist Use**

It is hard not to like and admire André Breton for writing the following sentence: "Language has been given to Man so that he can make surrealist use of it." At the same time it is hard not to dislike and disfavour the French poet who wrote that sentence in his *First Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1924. After all, he is so glib, but by glibness (being glib-tongued) he is establishing a point. But what point is that? Is it the expression of a profound wish, an observation, a discovery, or an invention? Is it none of these at all? For what I think it is worth, the fifteen-word sentence as typically Bretonian (a point in his and in its favour) and I think of the sentence as cheap and silly. At the same time it arrests my attention, without detaining it for more than words, one hundred and sixty-nine of them, so that I have to come to terms with it. Or do I? Not that I am aware. I still, despite these cavils, I relish the statement.

8 Aug. 2024

### **Dada's Use**

Thinking about the influence of Surrealism on my compositions, mainly in poetic and not prosaic form, I have come to the conclusion that I have been short-changing the role of the spirit of Dada in the early works as well as the perception of the reading

public for all of those works. I became identified with the label of “found poet” which has stuck in the minds of early readers of those compositions. Indeed, I am identified with that genre of writing, if it is indeed a genre, despite the fact that few readers – and I do mean a few, perhaps a handful at most – could identify the books of my found poems. Let me try, myself, to recall them. There is the first book, *The Mackenzie Poems*, which Raymond Souster is quoted as saying he regards the rebel newspaper publisher W.L. Mackenzie as “the first poet of British North America.” Then there is its “answer” in the volume called *John Toronto*, which turns the writings of the Bishop of Toronto into reactionary thoughts. I concocted a play by combining the found poems found in these two volumes. *Translations from the English* is a collection of “found” works from an array of media. The only collection like it written (or rewritten) by a Canadian is F.R. Scott’s very fine volume called *Trouvailles: Poems from Prose*. My “epic” in this manner is *The Great Cities of Antiquity* which consists of poems in innumerable formats based on descriptions of these cities from the Eleventh Edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911). I also published a collection of my fugitive found works in the QuasiBook format and titled it *Foundlings: Uncollected Found Poetry*. I owe to the late publisher Ivon Owen the appreciation he expressed to me for the phrase “redeemed prose” which he said was quite meaningful to him and infinitely better than “found poetry.” What is “found” is the spirit of the art of poetry and not the artifice of either poetry or prose. It is something else entirely. The use of this approach? It expands its appeal, and so is specially appealing to younger readers and writers. I regard prose as a special variety of poetry rather than the reverse. Other works in my *oeuvre* that are in this vein include *The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire*, *Mostly Monsters*, *Leonard’s Lists*, *Praise Poems*, and *Proverbial Play*.

Thinking about the spirit of Dada .... Writing this remembrance late in the day convinces me that I should dedicate it – or something remarkably better and more memorable – to the late Michel Sanouillet who from 1950 to 1969 taught in the French Department of University College, University of Toronto. He and his wife Anne were friends of Ruth and me and an influence (largely unacknowledged until now) on the latter’s concerns and writings.

9 August 2024

## **Canadians**

Acadians and Barbadians meet and greet in Canada as Canadians.

10 Aug. 2024

## United States and Canada

Canada serves as the United States's front verandah on the world, as Mexico serves as the United States's back verandah on the world. From its front porch Americans may see all the way to the Arctic and then all the way to all of Russia. From its back porch Americans may see all of South America and the Antarctic all the way to all of China.

9 Aug. 2024

## The Time of the Poem

The time of the poem is the time of the day the poem was composed and written. The time of the poem includes also the time of the night the poem was revised and rewritten. The time of the day is the hour or so of inspiration and delight. The time of the night is the many hours or so of fright and fight. So every poem worth its weight in salt (or its luster in gold) consists of both fright and delight.

10 Aug. 2024

## Elegy and Eulogy

I have been pondering the meanings conveyed by two words that are quite easily confused – by me, if not by anyone else! They are both nouns but certainly their meanings are not synonymous.

The first word is *elegy*. The second word is *eulogy*.

An *elegy* is a lament, an expression of grief, as if for a dead person.

A *eulogy* is a paean of praise, as if for a living or a dead person, but usually for the latter and delivered at a funeral or burial service.

The title of a widely read memoir of life in the Appalachia region of the United States is *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (2026) by J.D. Vance. The memoir was filmed (without the subtitle) by Ron Howard in 2020.

The title of one of the great poems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is “Fortinbras’s Elegy.” This moving poem was written about prospects of postwar Europe by the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert in 1961 and it ponders the death of Prince Hamlet as described in the final act of Shakespeare’s play by his successor Prince Fortinbras. Herbert has written an elegy, not a eulogy, as he finds Hamlet to have been less than a man, certainly not “a prince among men.”

11 Aug. 2024

## Time

Over seemingly endless time, this intricate fossil that I hold in my hand turned from a living trilobite into this smooth pebble. It did not do so before my very eyes but during the course of the passage of countless geological ages. Yet in its own way it metamorphosed in my mind too and hence during my time as well.

12 Aug. 2024

## Mankind, No Mind

Our ancestors were born with the Birth of the Gods, as our successors will perish with the Death of the Gods.

\*

Mankind has been misnamed. A man is a *kind* of creature but not basically or inherently or in the least a *kind* being.

\*

Men are beasts at best, women at least.

\*

Our lives are lived amid antic when not amid frantic or manic or titanic struggles ... with ourselves.

\*

Our fates struggle with our destinies, ghouls confront ghosts, shades fight shadows, spirits battle spectres and spooks. Fairies sleep in their own cloudy domains, while darkneses inhabit mine.

\*

The disquiet of our times is based on the quietude of all time.

\*

The trouble with our inwardness is that it turns us into the wards of our introspective powers and disabilities.

\*

To conceal proofs of their beauty, the goddesses of antiquity are both draped and veiled, often at the same time, whereas the gods of antiquity are so posed as to cover the simple evidence of their virility.

\*

I do not believe in ghosts but I do believe in ghost stories.

Fantasies are meant not to be believed but to be beheld.

\*

Scriptures are stories, sometimes supernatural ones, generally mundane ones, so their lessons are international but not universal, racial and cultural but not at all religious.

\*

The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. We should remember that Jehovah handed Moses not two tablets but three tablets, and that in his wrath Moses shattered one of them. Whatever was on that extra tablet? Could it have been a Testament for the Latter Day Saints, the Mormons?

\*

We are beholden in our later years to what we held dear in our earlier years – fears and childish tales.

\*

Events of a celestial nature, of a supernal nature, of a sublunar nature, of a terrestrial nature, of an earthly nature, of an infernal nature are not meant to be taken literally, only matter-of-factly.

*13 Aug. - 17 Aug. 2024*

### **More Aphors**

\*

In any group, the person who has the most to say that is of the least relevance or value is the person with the loudest voice.

\*

Artists ask questions without answering them, whereas politicians contribute to problems without resolving them.

\*

Art will be considered to be a transcript of life only when it is an accurate transcription of real thoughts, emotions, and sensations.

\*

Every dawn is followed by its dusk, and thus is one day closer than it was to our decline into the darkness that is all-embracing.

\*

The artist is in the position of revealing a good many of the truths that are reversed or turned upside-down each day by our society.

\*

A politician will respect his own political party's prized programs or publicized policies by defunding them rather than by defending them.

\*

Belief and truth have remained at loggerheads despite close to three millennia of philosophers, the first of whom is said to be Thales of Miletus.

\*

The greatest of texts have yet to be thought, yet to be composed, yet to be spoken, yet to be written, yet to be published, yet to be translated, and yet to be accepted by anyone.

\*

*Alethic* is a word previously unknown to me, a noun new to me, a word that is likely to be shortly forgotten by me, an ancient word that refers to (in the words of the dictionary) “the philosophy of truth, necessity, contingency, possibility, and probability.” A mouthful! An eye-full too!

28 Aug.- 9 Sept. 2024

### **Sad Truths about Life**

Life’s midpoint is not the point on the line of life that lies half way between birth and death. Life’s actual position is the point that lies on the life-line that is nine-tenths of the way to death.

\*

Death is not part of life at all, not an event in life, but an exit from living, at long last.

\*

In the end, truths come in two forms. Some are sad, some are glad. The sad truths leave their marks, whereas the glad truths simply glide away.

\*

We do not know we also will be subject to demise until we experience a loved one’s death.

\*

We are mortals, not immortals, or at least not yet.

\*

For some obstinate reason or other, we ignore the fact that we are mere mortals and not ever destined to be immemorial.

\*

Someone should endow a College of Death to prepare people like you and me for the intricacies of our graduation exercises and ceremonies from one level of existence to another: that of non-existence, one of life’s cheerless excesses.

9-16 Aug. 2024



## **Trump of the Trump**

*Triumph of the Will* is the English translation of the German title of director Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film, the German of which is *Triumph des Willens*. Had Hitler been Donald Trump, it would have been called *Trump des Willens*.

17 Aug. 2024

## **An Acrostic Poem for Caroline Kiska**

*At long last, a tribute to Caroline Kiska, a friend of all the members of the Colombo family*

*C*aroline  
A greeable  
R obust  
O utlooks  
L ively  
I nteresting  
N icely  
E nergetic

*K*iska  
I ntuitive  
S incere  
K isses galore  
A mazing

18 Aug. 2024

## **Rohmer Fan**

The August, "The White Wolf" issue of F.F.M., was very good, and the October issue was, by my standards, excellent. The cover depicting "The Bat Flies Low" was stunning, probably because it was so different. I did expect a Virgil Finlay illustration for Sax Rohmer's story, but Lawrence did a good job. The Finlay picture of the young boy for Collier's "Thus I Refute Beelzy" more than made up for his absence in the feature story.

Now about the stories themselves. Any by fantasies by John Collier, I found,

are always excellent; so let's have more of him! "The Bat Flies Low" wasn't Rohmer at his best, but it compares favourably with any of your F.F.M. fantasies. I believe Rohmer does better in his short stories, like "Tchériapin," awhile back. (I can still see that striking Finlay illustration picturing that "Mephistopheles-like" face!) In his shorter fantasies, like "Light of Atlantis" and "The Curse of a Thousand Kisses," he seems to abound in more engrossing plots, and better description; let's hope we may see some of these in future issues. Could we also have "Yu'an Hee See Laughs," a very good full-length fantasy classic by Rohmer?

If there are any Rohmer fans in the audience, or any who have a book or so by him, would they please contact me, as I'm trying to start a collection of his books?

John R. Colombo.

114 Pandora Ave.,  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.

P.S. I'm happy to see Robert Howard's "Skull-Face" in F.F.M.; it's really a fantasy classic. Good luck!

This is the unedited text of a fan letter addressed to Mary Gaedinger, editor of the monthly pulp magazine *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, it was carried in its correspondence column (Volume 14, No. 2), February 1953, its final year of publication. (Clipping courtesy of long-time friend and collector Dwight Whalen of Niagara Falls, Ont.) 19 Aug. 2024

## **From Faith to Will**

*Der Sieges des Glaubens* is the title of Leni Riefenstahl's first documentary film produced with Nazi Party assistance. The German title is variously translated as "Victory of Faith," "The Victory of Faith," or "Victory of the Faith." A cinematic record of the events of the Nuremberg Party Rally of 1933, it was released later that year only to be withdrawn from circulation by the Party for internal reasons (having to do with the Night of the Long Knives). Riefenstahl then set to work on her most famous film, *Triumph des Welles* (1935), which records events at the Nuremberg Party Rally of 1934. The title translates *Triumph of the Will*. What is particularly intriguing is the wording of the two titles, with their implied "progress" from "faith" to "will." Next among other films, Riefenstahl went on to produce and direct her celebration of the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936: *Olympia: Part One: Festival of the Nations*; *Olympia: Part Two: Beauty of the Festival*. Her innovations and technical mastery of documentary film-making is unquestionable, ranking her as among the most inventive and accomplished of directors, not to mention the most evasive in avoiding blame as a propagandist for Nazism. She suffered house arrest and other

consequences between 1945 and 1948, but in the end she joined Green Peace and wanted Sharon Stone rather than Jodi Foster to play her part in a planned but never-made Hollywood biopic. In her last years she embraced still photography, especially scuba diving and underwater photography, and took great pride in depicting in art photography the nature of the Nubian people of the Southern Sudan. She died in Bavaria in 2003 at the age of 101.

*20 Aug. 2024*

## **All Religions**

All religions are all the same. Their claims are based on belief rather than on knowledge, on sentiment rather than on experience – for the simple reason that there is simply no evidence for the truth of what they claim: “Only believe ... and it will come to pass” or “it will be added unto you.”

*21 Aug. 2024*

## **The Name Jerry Goodis**

I heard the name “Jerry Goodis” for the first time way back in 1957. The four syllables of his name were uttered by a mutual friend, the late Carl Dair, one of the great type designers. It was Carl who designed and created the first distinctive Canadian typeface, Cartier. It was Carl who set up the Typographical Designers of Canada. It was Carl who sparked the formation of the Guild of Hand Printers.

But this foreword is about Jerry. When I knew Carl he was still a partner in the team of Goodis, Goldberg, and Dair. Whatever happened to Goodis, Goldberg & Dair? According to the Corporations Act, companies are supposed to be immortal. It must have gone the way of all companies that are too small to excite big bankers. All I know is that thereafter the company became Goodis, Goldberg, Soren. In this book we learn about that company. But I never had the chance to ask Carl about his involvement with Jerry. At fifty-five, in the Centennial Year, Carl died of a heart attack.

There was no mystery why Carl spoke well of Jerry. Carl recognized genius when he saw it. As well, Carl was a former printer and like many printers he leaned somewhat to the left. And in those days, and perhaps even in these days, Jerry leaned somewhat to the left. I honestly have no idea how Jerry votes, if he votes at all, but I do know that he was a founding member of The Travellers. This now legendary pioneer folk-song group grew out of Camp New World, a leftist, Jewish trade-

unionist summer camp in Ontario in 1954. I never saw The Travellers perform in concert, but I saw them on television, heard them on radio, and listened to some of their albums. Their signature song was the Canadian version of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." It still makes my heart beat stronger to remember those words about this land being "your land" and this land being "my land" – all the way "from Bonavista to the Queen Charlotte Islands."

So Jerry was a genius to Carl and a legend to me. Over the years I read interviews with him and articles by him; I heard him on radio; I saw him on television; I even watched a one-hour NFB film about him; I read his book *Have I Ever Lied to You Before?* and enjoyed it. Here was a leader in the advertising industry in Canada, an industry that is always interesting to watch, if only as the bell-weather of social change. Jerry was an unabashed Canadian nationalist, a man with a social conscience, an innovator who put creativity foremost, a man willing to speak out and be heard.

In those days, Jerry was Peck's Bad Boy. At industry awards occasions, he excoriated the excesses of his peers and colleagues. He criticized the commission system, preferring instead the fee system. Some members of the industry were critical of Goodis and suggested that he couldn't run a business profitably so why should he know the profitable operations of others. But when he spoke, he made loud sense and the bold headlines. Here was the man who spelled his name on his letterhead with an exclamation mark: "GOOD!S". Here was the guy who gave the English language a new comparative and superlative: "Good ... Gooder ... "Goodis". Jerry's campaigns and penchant for personal publicity were good for the industry. I hope they generated some business for Jerry's agency of the day. I suspected some salvos scared off as many clients as they attracted.

I met Jerry for the first time in 1986 in the office of Avie Bennett, the developer who was then installing himself as the book publisher of McClelland and Stewart. Avie and Jerry, it seemed, were old friends, both being native Torontonians. Suddenly there, in the flesh, was Jerry: this little gnome of a guy, spiffily dressed, deft of movement, exuding energy and awareness, the spitting image of his publicity shots!

It was a luncheon meeting and for the first few minutes it was like Old Home Week. We jabbered about Carl Dair, about typography, about advertising, and about books. At one point Jerry asked me about my ancestry. "Colombo! That's an Italian name. Are you Italian?"

"Not really," I replied. "The name's Italian, of course, but I'm only one-quarter Italian and I don't speak the language."

"What's the other three-quarters?"

Then I replied, not for the first time, "Ethnically, my four grandparents are

Greek, German, Italian, and French Canadian.”

I paused to allow Jerry to murmur some piety about ethnicity or multiculturalism. But he surprised me with an apt and completely original comment. “Funny,” he said, “you don’t look it.”

It was at that point that Avie interrupted us, and we got down to the business of the day, which happened to be the design and promotion of one of M&S’s books. Jerry had no end of inspired ideas about launching the book. My recollection is that none of the concepts was ever put to use.

I suppose that’s a difficulty Jerry faces every day. I wonder if he loses hours of sleep over it. Someone may be an idea and a phrase factory, even the centre of attention, but unless someone else is willing to go to bat for it, the spit of ideas and the polish of phrases go to waste. The words languish in some limbo of lost souls. No doubt Jerry has a memory bank full of spectre-like concepts that were never embodied in campaigns. Yet his success has been phenomenal in bringing concepts of quality to market and in the process endowing everyday products and services with a kind of animistic power.

There are two characteristics of his concepts. First, they are fun. They are enjoyable – not annoying – commercial messages. Second, over the years his concepts have turned into urban folklore. They have wide appeal and application. Jerry is a copywriter of genius, the finest that Canada has produced, certainly one of the best in the world. As well, he is unfailingly quotable. The public knows his words, if not his name. He has worked, sometimes alone, sometimes with other talented people, on the following familiar advertising campaign slogans. Most Canadians will recall them the way they do old friends:

“At Speedy You’re a Somebody” (Speedy Muffler King)

“Buy Canadian. The Rest of the World Does” (Hiram Walker Distillery)

“For 3 Bucks You’re Laughing” (Canadian National Exhibition)

“Get Your Head into Hush Puppies” (Hush Puppies)

“Harvey’s Makes Your Hamburger a Beautiful Thing” (Harvey’s)

“If We Hurry Our Beer, We’d Lose Our Heads” (Formosa Spring Brewery)

“Quick! The Elmer’s Glue” (Elmer’s Glue)

“Salada Tea Picks You Up and Never Lets You Down” (Salada Tea)

“We Care about the Shape You’re In” (Wonderbra)

“Never So Good for So Little” (Swiss Chalet)

I limited myself to quoting ten catchy commercial messages. Many more of his phrases are firmly planted in the Canadian psyche.

And now to the present, and to Jerry’s new book. Again he has chosen a

rhetorical title. He's never lied to us before; he may have told a fib or two, but no outright lies. What can he tell us now? Something new? He can, and does tell us much that is new and interesting. He is particularly informative about advertising, agencies, corporations, businesses, governments, politics, salesmanship, commercials, the media, consumerism, consumer concerns, sexism, stereotyping, discrimination, social conscience, Canada, and people. Above all he tells us what makes Jerry Goodis run.

I think I can epitomize the book and the man's appeal in a single phrase."  
"With Jerry, You're a Somebody" – *and so is he!*

Foreword to *Good!s: Shaking the Canadian Advertising Tree* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1991) co-written with Gene O'Keefe. My copy of the book is autographed: "John Robert: A million thanks for a rather overwhelming and overstated (I love it) foreword. You are a kindred spirit! J.G."

*Fall 1991*

## **The Best of All Possible Worlds**

The statement that we live in "the best of all possible worlds" is attributed to the German philosopher G.W. Leibniz but widely used without reference to his particular usage of those words. For instance his use of the three words "all possible worlds" is taken to describe "all worlds," that is, creation in its entirety, not just the planet Earth or the planets of one of its Solar Systems. Yet how could he possibly argue that the cosmos is good, better, or best – relative, better, or superlative?

At core is the notion that a moral Creator could never countenance an immoral Creation, at least for any length of time. Leibniz was noted for logic but not for imagination. Isaac Asimov, the Russian-born American chemist and science-fiction writer, was asked about his conception of the problem: the contradiction between a moral creator and an immoral creation. An imaginative man, he offered a unique answer. In so many words he explained that the Creator was rushing across the Cosmos to help earthlings and to relieve them of their suffering, but that it had all begun "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away" and that even the Creator was subject to Einstein's law about the speed of light and so he was racing to help us but it was taking aeons of time for him to reach the planet Earth from the Solar System in which he found himself. There might be a "second coming" yet to come, already in the works, so to speak. But it could take thousands and thousands of years! A unique response by Asimov to the riddle of good and evil.

*22 Aug. 2024*

## **The Beatitudes**

(*Matthew 5:3-12*)

Blessed are the poor in spirit:  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven  
*yet poor they shall remain.*

Blessed are they that mourn:  
for they shall be comforted  
*with apples.*

Blessed are the meek:  
for they shall inherit the earth  
*but not before they die.*

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:  
for they shall be filled  
*with anger.*

Blessed are the merciful:  
for they shall obtain mercy  
*though merely a little.*

Blessed are the pure in heart:  
for they shall see God  
*in the far-far distance.*

Blessed are the peacemakers:  
for they shall be called the children of God  
*yet as children will they remain.*

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven  
*following yet more persecution.*

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,  
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake  
*for you will hardly benefit when belittled.*

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:  
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you  
*and how was that of any benefit to them or you at all?*

23 Aug. 2024

## **The Way**

To be sure, there are innumerable Ways, but there is no one Way that is solely a Way,  
that is never too far a Way, and that must be so forever a Way.

24 Aug. 2024

## **End of Time**

Should there be an end to time it would necessarily be the end of eternity as well.

25 Aug. 2024

## **Umm Kulthum**

I cannot but hear and recall the voice of the woman singer and the orchestra of two dozen male musicians as silently I alone compose these words on my keyboard to appear on the screen of this computer. The voice of Umm Kulthum, imperious if not imperial, rings in my ears, with its repetitions and recitals and revivals and revelations, reinterpreted meanings meaningless to me, but not for the two dozen musicians dressed in black-tie playing ouds and other traditional instruments as well as the all-male audience in the opera house all dressed in black and all enraptured and held captive by the voice (I should say “voices”) of the performing *artiste* known as “The Star of the East.” What she sings about is unknown to me except that it is inevitably about love, either absolute or aborted, realized then unrealized then realized again, in words of defiance, aggression, with confessions of weaknesses and waverings, all too human. Who wrote the lyrics, who composed the melodies, I will never know. Who here and now cares? Should this translation from Arabic into English be accurate, I still hear this woman declare:

I see you holding back the tears, your habit is patience  
Is love inhibition for you or is it a must  
Yes, I miss you with a burning desire



But someone like me doesn't spread (the words)  
When the night illuminates me, I extend the hand of passion  
And I'll be humiliated by the tears for her greatness  
It ignites the fire between my wings  
When she inflames the warmth of my desire and thoughts  
Explained by, and connected by, death without her

Confusion reigns but conviction rules, as may be added. The heart, the applause, the tears, the memories. Life enlarged ... as once it was ... alive.

*26 Aug. 2024*

## **Prophecies**

I have always found one of the most thrilling lines in the New Testament to be that of the Virgin Mary who proclaims as follows: "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The exclamation appears in the Gospel of Luke (1:48) and as a prediction it is quite remarkable for its accuracy.

In the same way, the spread of geography as well as the passage of time is covered by the utterance of none other than "the Lord of Hosts" with respect to Mary. This prediction is recorded in Malachi (3:34), the last of the Old Testament prophets: "And all nations shall call you blessed." This is another prophecy that has been true for more than two thousand years.

*27 Aug. 2024*

## **Craving**

"The craving for absence is not the absence of craving."

I found this aphorism in one of the innumerable websites included in the jumbo site on the Web called "Poetry in Translation: A.S. Kline's Open Access Poetry Archive." A graduate in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, Kline is a tireless translator of the world's most familiar poems, seemingly regardless of their original languages, not to mention a prolific deviser of aphorisms on an immense range of subjects. I could go on ....

I am taken with his aphorism about "craving" not because it is memorably expressed but, quite the contrary, because it is so plainly stated. This is true of his many translations. I urge readers to explore his poems and prose on his site which is open access ... as well as a literary education in itself.

28 Aug. 2024

## **“The Poles Are Within Us”**

“The Poles are within us,” wrote Paul Celan, German poet, referring not to any of the people of Poland, past or present or future, but to the planet’s two Geographical Poles, that is, the North Pole and the South Pole.

But being Celan, as we know him so well, he undoubtedly had in mind those oft-times neglected “other poles.” These too are two in number: the East Pole and the West Pole.

But first, let us surmise about the real North Pole. This is the original abode of the human species, Shamballah, the source of sentient life on the planet Earth. But second, let us conjecture about the real South Pole. This is the decisive terminus of the human species, the primal Hellespont, the Sea of Helle, the last demesne of mankind.

Yet being Celan, we have no doubt that he thought in terms of the Third Pole and the Fourth Pole. He felt strongly about the East Pole and the West Pole. They are here and elsewhere.

Third, the East Pole, the Asian and European Poles of Settlements. Here is where there began the flourishing of the arts, the sciences, the prejudices, and the promises of the *Reichs* of man’s so-called cultures and civilizations.

Fourth, the West Pole, the foretelling of the vast Americas, the Continents of the Experiences of the Spirits of Men of Many Colours, the Plains of the Promises of the Human Species.

These are the Poles – First and Second and Third and Fourth. So wrote Paul Celan about the poles “within us.”

29 Aug. 2024

## **Signs of a Sonnet**

H  
E  
R  
E

W  
A  
S

A  
S  
O  
N  
N  
E  
T

*30 Aug. 2024*

### **Trieste**

The Italian poet Umberto Saba wrote in his poem “*Testo*” (Text) with great insight that “*Trieste he una scontrosa / grazia.*” It means, quite truthfully, “Trieste has a sullen / grace.” This I have found to be true.

*31 Aug. 2024*

### **Return of the Dead**

How do we account for the fact that the dead do not return to us? Here are three suggestions. 1. They cannot remember how to return. 2. They never learned how to return. 3. They sense that *we* have no wish for them to return from the dead.

*31 Aug. 2024*

### **Death of My Wife**

With your death I learned that the hardest part of continuing to live is being deprived of your company.

*1 Sept. 2024*

### **Too Much of a Bad Thing**

So many “bad things” occurred on the date of April 26 that it is hard for me to do other than to list but three of them.

The German secret police force known as the Gestapo (abbreviation of

*Geheime Staatspolizei*) was formed in Berlin on that date in 1933.

The nuclear accident at the Chernobyl (“wormwood” in English) nuclear power plant in Ukraine took place on that date in 1986.

The death of the present writer’s wife Ruth Florence Colombo came to pass on that same date in 2024.

*2 Sept. 2024*

## **Modernity and Illusion**

Modernity is always found guilty of fragmenting our appreciation of the reality of the world and leaving us with instead of this supposed world of unity and wholeness a world of nothing but bits and pieces. The truth is that modernity has revealed the world’s unity and wholeness to be a whole heap of bits and pieces.

*3 Sept. 2024*

## **Midwest, Prairie Provinces**

*Excerpt from an email sent to Richard Kostelanetz who asked about “the Alberta background” of Marshall McLuhan and Jordan Peterson.*

Decades ago my seat-mate on a flight from Winnipeg to Toronto was the historian and correspondent Harrison Salisbury. I told him I admired his book on the 900-day Siege of Leningrad and how I had given my copy of the paperback edition, which I happened to have in the pocket of my raincoat while in the Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery in Leningrad, to a Russian student who was overjoyed to have it. We chatted lightly as we were both returning from a writers’ conference in Manitoba. I asked him why he had taken time from a busy schedule to venture into semi-rural Manitoba. He replied, “I regard this part of the world, the Prairie Provinces and the Midwest, as productive of the most interesting and most active people in the world. I pay particular attention to the men and women it produces.” He spoke with particular emphasis and conviction. A worthy answer from a busy and productive journalist and historian.

*4 Sept. 2024*

## **Writer and Publisher**

“Could I write a book?” The question was asked of me by a fellow I met more by chance than anything else who was moderately irritated because after all he thought I had written dozens of them.

“No,” I replied, more in sorrow than in anger.

“Why not?” he asked, now somewhat surprised and disappointed.

“There is a simple reason why you cannot write a book. Nobody can write a book. What is written is a text, a manuscript. Once it is published, it is turned into a book proper. Besides, writers write articles, authors write not books, but texts – once the texts are published between covers.”

5 Sept. 2024

### **A Favourite Verse**

Do what thy manhood bids thee do,  
from none but self expect applause;  
He noblest lives and noblest dies  
who makes and keeps his self-made laws.

I memorized this verse half a century ago and it has remained embedded in my memory for half a hundred years. (I reproduced it here by memory, but I did check its punctuation before keyboarding it here.)

The verse (VII.37) was composed by the British explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton and it comes from his own work known as *The Kasîdah of Hâjî abdû el-yezdî* (1880) which he composed, inspired as he was by the famous *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1870) translated by Edward FitzGerald. What I like about the quatrain is that it has some of the quickening spirit of Aleister Crowley in it, notably his injunction: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. Love under law, love under will.” Burton was a grander poet than Crowley. The writings of both men are seriously overlooked these days.

6 Sept. 2024

### **Old Nicknames**

I had various nicknames as a baby, as a youngster, as an editor, and as a literary person. Among them were Bupshkin (as an infant; of German derivation, whatever the meaning and however spelled), Rolly, Johnnie, Big Guy, Dagonet (a name in magick circles), man-of-letters, editor-at-large, “the Canadian Bartlett” (also John “Bartlett” Colombo), not to mention “Master Gatherer.” I owe the latter epithetical

description to Robin Skelton, warlock and wordsmith. (In point of fact, Robin described me in print as “a Master Gatherer,” to be truthful about it.)

7 Sept. 2024

## **Strange Movie**

Here’s a question only a film enthusiast – one who is Canadian with an interest in queer theory to boot – could answer.

*Question:* What’s the name of the Canadian feature film that features Sir Richard Francis Burton as having found the “Fountain of Youth” and is still alive at the age of 170 and is now working as a taxidermist at the “Museum of Natural History in Toronto”?

*Answer:* The movie’s title is *Zero Patience* and to make matters worse the movie is a satiric gay musical, though a redeeming feature may be that among other things it debunks the hypothesis that AIDS was spread throughout the Western world by a Montreal flight attendant known for some time as “Patient Zero.”

The movie was written and directed by John Greyson and the role of Burton was played by John Robinson. What Burton scholar James Gifford noted is that “the film has that odd innocent earnestness so much a hallmark of Canadian film and television. (Charitably, it could be called a lack of the cynicism so ingrained in U.S. media; a meaner take might be that it’s sheer *naïveté*.) ”

*Source:* Website, “The Sir Richard Francis Burton Project,” as of 16 Oct. 2024.

8 Sept. 2024

## **Vested Interests**

Our human interests are vested at birth and the sooner that we recognize this for a fact the luckier we will be.

9 Sept. 2024

## **Epitaph for a Non-existent Headstone**

Hereabouts lie the earthly remains of John Robert Colombo ruthless and alone.

10 Sept. 2024

## **God and Bad**

The words “Good and Bad” go together with the words “Good and Evil,” but the words “God and Bad” do not go together with the words “God and Evil.” The human species finds it difficult to distinguish between a force of nature and the imagination of mankind.

*11 Sept. 2024*

## **Scriptures and Religions**

Nobody knows whether there are more scriptures than there are religions, or more religions than there are scriptures. Yet it seems over time every scripture generates its own religion.

*12 Sept. 2024*

## **On the Other Side**

*for Richard Kostelanetz*

On the other side of the argument  
On the other side of the battlefield  
On the other side of the canvas  
On the other side of the city  
On the other side of the curtain  
On the other side of the dance  
On the other side of the Earth  
On the other side of the equation  
On the other side of the galaxy  
On the other side of the moon  
On the other side of the page  
On the other side of the poem  
On the other side of the promised land  
On the other side of the score  
On the other side of the story  
On the other side of the street  
On the other side of the weather  
On the other side of the world

13 Sept. 2024

## **Rack and Support**

From a distance I have found it difficult to distinguish between a hymn board and a billiard wall cue rack. The former is attached to the wall of a church near the altar and shows the numbers of the hymns to sing with reference to the church's hymnal. The latter is attached to the pool-room's wall near the pool-table and it supplies upright support for the billiard cues when not in use. The board and the rack are made of stained wood and share the general shape.

14 Sept. 2024

## **Love**

Love does not require knowledge or common sense but marriage does.

15 Sept. 2024

## **Cosmology**

She takes refuge among the Stars.  
He lies under the ground of Earth.  
Meanwhile the Moon takes note.

16 Sept. 2024

## **Diction**

I find myself increasingly appreciative of the tiny distinctions of diction to observe that are seldom observed. My favourite is *between two, among three or more*.

17 Sept. 2024

## **What a Poet Needs**

A poet needs a Muse or, if none is available, an amusement.

18 Sept. 2024



## **What a Book Needs**

What a book needs is seven people. To wit, the author, the editor, the designer, the typesetter, the printer, the bookseller, and the reader.

*19 Sept. 2024*

## **Constituents of the Book**

Spine, front-and-back covers, end-sheets, preliminary pages, colophon, title page, copyright page, contents page, text pages, signatures or folios, index.

*20 Sept. 2024*

## **Good Events, April 26**

An earlier entry identifies three “bad events” that occurred on April 26. This entry draws attention to three “good events” that occurred on that date.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, was born in Rome, Italy, on the day in question, A.D. 121.

“The Bard of Avon,” William Shakespeare, was baptized at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England, on this exact day, 1564.

The debut of Ice Hockey at the Olympic Games in Antwerp, Belgium, took place on the same day, 1920. (Canada 12, Sweden 1)

*21 Sept. 2024*

## **Foregone Conclusions**

It holds true that the future of the past is the present.

It seems apparent that the present is the past of the future.

It happens that the past was once a part of the present.

It occurs that parts of the present will be particles of the future.

*22 Sept. 2024*

## **Time the Word**

Time is a tricky word. Indeed, the title above should perhaps be “Time: the Word.”

For instance, What is the meaning of these following three words: “the time being”?

Is “time” a “the” or is time an “a”?

Is “time” a “being” rather than a “concept,” or is it the other way round?

Is “being” *an* essential or *the* essential characteristic of “time” itself?

Why is it easier for me to ask questions like these than try to answer them all by myself?

There is not enough time left to spare to even consider whether they could ever be answered.

*23 Sept. 2024*

## **Ukraine**

The bird high in the sky that I watch as it heads for my home turns out to be a drone.

*24 Sept. 2024*

## **Russia**

Is there a single arm or agency of the Russian Federation that has yet to be Putinized – that is, Rasputinized?

*25 Sept. 2024*

## **Iran**

This ancient civilization, this old land, this new country, this new national state is known now as the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was once called the Imperial State of Persia, and before that it was acknowledged by numerous names and various epithets, all daunting.

*26 Sept. 2024*

## **Informer**

The informer is a danger because to inform is to reform the part but in no way the whole.

28 Sept. 2024

## Source of the Id

It is obvious where Sigmund Freud found the source of the *id*. It is a two-sixth part of the *libido*.

29 Sept. 2024

## Nature's Human Zoo

*Crazy talk about parting, dating from the 1940s or earlier:*

*"See you later, alligator."*

*"In a while, crocodile."*

*Source: Hit song by Bill Haley and the Comets in 1954.*

*Inane yet german observation:*

*Of the myriapods, the centipedes are the millionaires, while the millipedes are the billionaires.*

*Source: Distinction within the subphylum of arthropods called myriapoda. In Greek, myriapoda means "countless feet." Based on "Live Science" on the Web, 22 Aug. 2024.*

ape, to go / badger me, don't / bat, bat-wing, Batman / bear, it is unbearable / beavering away / bird-brained / boar, to bore / buffalo, to / bull's-eye / camel's-hair coat / chimp, don't be a / chimpanzee, chimp / cow-like / cat-o'-nine-tails / deer, John Deere farm equipment / dogged by steps / donkey serenade / dove, turtledove, lover / elephantine steps / fish, fishy / fox, foxy / frog, frog-march / goat, got my / gorilla sized / hawk, war-hawk, chicken-hawk / horse faced / hogging / hyena, jackass / jaguar, automobile / kangaroo court / kittenish / leach, to leech / lionizing / monkey, monkey around / ox, oxtail soup / panda, andy / piggish / porcupine, hedgehog / rabbit-breed, like a / rat-faced / rhinoceros, rhinoplasty / shark, loan shark / sheepish / snail-mail / sloth-like / snake skin / squirrel away / tiger woman / toady, to bootlick / wolf, in sheep's clothing, / womanizer / wren, member, Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service / zebra crossing

30 Sept. 2024

## Sounds that Animals Make

alarm / baa / bah-gawk / bark / bay / bell / bellow / bleat / bloat / blow / bray / buck

/ bugle / buzz / cah / call / caw / caterwaul / cha-caw / chatter / chirp / chirrup / chuckle / clang / click / clip-clop (hoof-beats) / cluck / coo / cough / creak / croak / cronk / crow / cry / dook / eek / gecker / glub / gobble / growl / grumble / grunt / hee-haw / hiccup / hiss / honk / hoot / howl / hum / laugh / low / maa / meh / meow / mew / moo / neigh / nicker / oink / orgle / pile / purr / quack / rattle / ribbit / roar / scream / screech / sing / snarl / snore / snort / squawk / squeak / swish / talk / trill / trumpet / tweet / tweet-two / twitter / warble / wheek / whine / whinny / whistle / whoop / yep

1 Oct. 2024

## Essences

e  
ex  
exit  
exist  
exists  
existence  
beingness  
*beinglessness*  
beginning  
beingless  
beings  
being  
been  
be  
e

2 Oct. 2024

## Battles

These letters – *aaeiillssx* – represent the aftermath of the battle between good and evil – *allies* vs. *axis*.

3 Oct. 2024

## A Close Reading

In no way will “a close reading” expose the text’s “asinine falsehoods,” but a series of such readings will make them in time more agreeable to the reader than they initially were.

4 Oct. 2024

## **Divine**

It is said that the divine engenders the numinous, whereas the sub-divine generates the luminous. The former is luxurious, whereas the latter is merely lustrous.

5 Oct. 2024

## **Picasso and Cocteau**

For the exuberant pleasure of doing so, Pablo Picasso famously painted on the far side of a sheet of plexiglass in white paint the outlines of flowers and female bodies. A camera on the near side caught the addition of every single brush stroke.

For the mischievous delight in doing so, Jean Cocteau infamously removed all the strokes of white paint that he had earlier added to the far side of a sheet of plexiglass to depict flowers and female bodies. A camera on the near side caught every brush stroke of elimination on his own sheet of plexiglass.

6 Oct. 2024

## **Duino and Trieste**

*In memory of Jan Morris*

*Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic Orders?*

Who among us, these days, would even recognize the source of those one dozen words?

A clue: The words open the first of the *Duino Elegies* composed in Castle Duino, north of Trieste, by the great German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

At nightfall, we are seated in the *Caffe degli Specchi*, and we do hear these words. Seated with us, in the aptly named “cafe of mirrors” on Trieste’s Piazza Unità d’Italia, opened in 1839, is world traveller Jan Morris. He is not literally beside us, alas, but figuratively he is. Jan had earlier extolled this caffè’s merits to us and went on to write a book-length history of the city of Trieste, “the city of melancholia.” We

are among its readers.

Now we are seated at one of the Caffè's numerous oval tables, my wife and I, and we inscribe the following message on the back of a common postcard. It will be mailed the following day to Jan's home in Wales. "Aren't you envious of the two of us, dining in your favourite restaurant?"

Many messages as well as many postcards go astray, but this card with its message reached him, as his acknowledgement of it from Wales reached us. A week or so later, when we returned to our home in Toronto and found the time to check our accumulated mail, Jan's reply was there.

He did envy us!

Trieste is the city of the amazingly discreet Revoltella Museum and north of it the seaside Duino Castle, where we chatted with the *Principessa* of the House of Thurn und Taxis. Long has the contested city been identified with tobacco and contraband and wartime intrigue, as well as it is with Sir Richard Francis Burton, James Joyce, and Italo Svevo. We even met, in passing, the *Principessa* of the House of Thurn und Taxis. (I will now halt while I am ahead!)

Who among us will recall these final lines of the tenth and the last of the *Duino Elegies*?

*And we, who think of ascending joy, would feel the emotion, that almost dismays us, when a joyful thing falls.*

The joyful things have fallen, though the Fall is a season the regularity of which is assured.

Who among us ... ? With sorrow we recognize these lines which conclude the tenth and final of the *Duino Elegies*.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Jan Again**

When the Welsh-born travel writer was in Toronto, we joked about the fact that I had been in Bulgaria on five occasions, whereas Jan Morris had yet to visit Bulgaria even once. Something seemed lopsided. Then a year later, we received a note from Jan informing us that her friendly greetings were being addressed and mailed from Sophia, the capital of Bulgaria. Not for nothing was there a book that collected birthday greetings for Jan. It was titled *Around the World in Eighty Years*.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Different Diseases**

Quick now! How does one distinguish between a contagious disease and an infectious disease?

*8 Oct. 2024*

### **Some Thoughts**

There are some artists who ask questions as well as some artists who answer questions. There I no telling which is the “real” artist, though all artists are “real,” except for those artists who “steal.” “Questioning” is important and so is “answering.” In the main, there is no escaping what is being said, except that we owe it to one another to keep an open mind about it all!

*9 Oct. 2024*

### **Definition of Love**

If I wanted a definition of love, would I ask a woman to define the experience or would I ask a man to define the experience? I suppose the most reasonable answer to this question is who is doing the asking, a woman or a man? There is a difference after all.

*10 Oct. 2024*

### **What did Canada lose after February 4, 2013?**

The Royal Canadian Mint stopped producing and distributing pennies in Canada as of February 4, 2013, due to rising costs relative to face value and the significant handling costs of the penny for retailers, financial institutions, and the economy in general. Americans always seem surprised to learn that their northern neighbour no longer honours the penny at anywhere near its face value which once was 1/100 of a Canadian dollar. For many years Americans failed to recognize the Canadian two-dollar bill, as the U.S. Treasury did not produce them.

*11 Oct. 2024*

### **The Voice**

I have no idea why it is that the ugliest woman in the dining room who has the loudest

and most raucous voice of all the diners is the one who insists on arguing with the waiters and waitresses and repeating her statements: “You understand me! Do you really understand me! Are you listening to me?” The truth is the waiters and waitresses are unable to make any reply that does not render the situation more dire and noisy than it already is.

*12 Oct. 2024*

### **Questions to Ask!**

If I see the stars, do the stars see me?  
If stars do see me, do I see these same stars?

What about the constellations?  
If I see them, do they observe me?

So much so, may be so, for now.  
For long enough, at least for now.

*12 Oct. 2024*

### **Most Popular Painter?**

It always takes me by surprise when I turn the pages of any of the current issues of *The New Yorker* to find the amount of exposure (a quarter page here, a half page there, a full page somewhere else) being devoted to display reproductions of the canvases of Mitchell Johnson. His artworks are self-described in many issues as “paintings from Europe, New England, Newfoundland, California, and New York.” They may also be described as the work of an American colourist, attracted by beach scenes, concerned with architectural catch-as-catch-can images, irregular in outline, etc. They catch the attention, but they make me wonder: “Are these feature articles or are they featured advertisements?” It occurs to me that they are the latter. Mitchell Johnson is certainly not lacking in talent but is he all *that* talented? The editors of *The New Yorker* do not say one way or the other! All I know is that I enjoy issues of the magazine and would certainly miss Mitchell Johnson’s works if they were not in these pages.

*13 Oct. 2024*

### **What’s Remarkable**



What's remarkable is that over short periods of time one's views of other people are quite often changed and enriched over short periods of time. A recent email from Donna Dunlop reminded me of how poet and editor Fraser Sutherland, despite his own meager resources and relatively poor health at the time, took into his modest home in Toronto, two of the most obnoxious people I ever knew, both writers alas!

The one was Edward A. Lacey; the other was Scott Symons. Both were poets, Lacey with his elegant verbal forms; Symons with his unholy pretensions that he was a genius. I could never figure out what motivated Fraser and his wife Alison, aside from the fact that the two of these hosts were very agreeable persons and practising Christian rather than merely believing Christians. From these acts he and his wife Alison gained nothing that I could see except the Christian virtues one hears about more often than one witnesses.

Pondering these matters brought me to the conclusion that Fraser and Alison were no fools, though Lacey and Symons were. The hosts benefitted from this Christian virtue and action, whereas the two "guests" merely abused ... and over-used other people, in this instance, two friendly and talented people. That's "what's remarkable" here.

*14 Oct. 2024*

## **Literary Devices**

American writer Sean Glatch contributed a list of literary devices to a website called "Writer's Com." The devices are ear-marked for prose but since so much of contemporary poetry resembles prose these days, more than it does poetry, the devices are easily adaptable to and applicable to the creation of innovative poetry. Here are ten such devices, in no special order:

Parallelism. Foil Characters. Diction. Mood. Foreshadowing. In Media Res. Dramatic Irony. Vignette. Flashback. Soliloquy.

Stuck for a way to start, or a way to conclude? Let these ten devices be of assistance to you as you compose your masterpiece!

Thanks, Sean!

*15 Oct. 2024*

## **Dada and Dadaists**

Dada was a literary movement (or non-movement) that appeared in Europe just prior to the literary and artistic movement known as Surrealism.

Are you able to name five leading poets who wrote poems influenced by Dada?  
Here are the “top five.”

Hugo Ball (1886-1927) was a German poet. He is often considered to be the founder of the Dada movement in general. One of his greatest contributions is that he was a pioneer in sound poetry, which involves the use of nonsense words and phrases to create a musical quality.

Walter Serner (1889-1942) was a German writer of Czech-Jewish background who was best known for writing in 1919 *Letzte Lockerung* (“Last Loosening”), which is both a manifesto and the integral founding document of the Dada movement as a whole. He became an important artistic figure and editor in the movement but disappeared during the Holocaust.

Max Ernst (1891-1976), a German-American artist and poet, was an immensely productive person and important mover and shaker of the poetry of both Dada and Surrealism. Some of his most important artistic innovations included the development of frottage and grattage.

Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) was a Romanian poet and performance artist. He would later go on to become a critic, film director, and composer. He was considered to be one of the leaders of the Dada movement and he made notable connections between Cubism and Futurism.

Louis Aragon (1897-1982) was a popular French poet. At first a Dadaist, he would subsequently become an important founding member of the Surrealist movement. While he had been a part of Dadaism, it was his later lyrical writing that would bring him his fame.

End of a list of some of the personnel essential to the development of Dada.

*16 Oct. 2024*

## **Surrealism and Surrealists**

Surrealism refers to an influential and popular literary and artistic movement that appeared in Europe and then elsewhere, following the collapse of Dada which itself was less a pictorial movement than Surrealism.

Are you able to name five leading artists who worked in the Surrealist manner or vein? Here are the “top five.”

Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) was a prolific, inventive, ingenious, and outrageous Spanish-born painter. His work sought to probe the unconscious, often through the theories of Freud and Jung.

René Magritte (1898-1967) was a popular and influential painter largely of portraits that display sight distortions. He was one of Belgium’s leading portrait

painters.

André Breton (1896-1966) was an influential French theorist who did much to establish what Surrealism was and was not.

Max Ernst (1891-1976) was of German, American and French background and was widely noted for his ingenious ideas about Surrealism, almost as much as for his influence as a painter.

Jean Miró (1893-1983), a Catalan Spanish painter, ceramicist, and sculptor, had a wide following for his expressive and lyrical style.

End of brief list of artists identified as Surrealists, though the spirit of Surrealism continues to this day in a great many parts of the world.

*17 Oct. 2024*

### **Star Turn**

Everyone who has ever lived, who has ever died, and who will ever be born deserves his or her own *Star Turn* upon the Earth, whether below the clouds, beneath the Sun, underneath the Heavens, or among the Constellations of his or her own choice ... and deserves that experience sooner rather than later.

*18 Oct. 2024*

### **Grief and Regret**

I wonder if there is to be one morning that I wake up without obsessing about the pressing thought that today is the day that I will die. That I must die. That I feel I am so compromised physically and psychologically that it ought to all come to an end ... not later but sooner.

*19 Oct. 2024*

### **Japanese Anagram**

I made this discovery of an anagram of interest, if not of significance: Tokyo Kyoto.

To my dismay, I typed it into the Web and found it there staring back at me. It was there before me. Anyway, I regard it as my “independent rediscovery.”

On my travels I discovered the two principle cities of Japan were extraordinarily engaging but had little in common aside from five English letters.

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **Tales of the Dentist**

The dentist tells me that as adult human beings we have thirty-two teeth, sixteen on the upper jaw and sixteen on the lower jaw. Yet there were, at one time four additional teeth, called oddly “wisdom teeth,” making thirty-six teeth in all, but the “wisdom teeth” have long gone from the jaws of adult human beings, presumably taking any “wisdom” they temporarily added with them! I wish I could add to this item any special significance of the number thirty-two, but common sense halts me in my tracks.

*21 Oct. 2024*

## **Shock**

Shock is the state of insufficient blood flow to the tissues of the body as a result of problems with the circulatory system. There are four main types of shock, notably distributive shock, cardiogenic shock, hypovolemic shock, and obstructive shock. There are also subclassifications, causes, and symptoms. Enough of this shocking business. I have to leave it to the specialists.

*22 Oct. 2024*

## **Souvenirs**

When I was a child, I had a little carved totem pole, a replica of a real totem pole with carved masque-heads, a wide wing-span, and a base to support it.

When I was youngster, I was presented with an Eskimo sculpture, a small stone, cut and partly polished in the shape of a black bear, stalking its prey.

When I was young man, I was handed an air pistol that shot pellets into the air and was powerful enough to topple over the totem pole and knock the black bear off balance.

When ... because there was no draft in Canada, and when there was no more gift-giving, there was peace ... otherwise the next “gift” could have been a handgun to shoot a Native or to put to death a real animal like a black bear.

*23 Oct. 2024*

## **There's No Need to Worry**

*"There's No Need to Worry," Modern Poetry in Translation , No. 32.*

So wrote the Austrian poet Jutta Schutting, as translated by the Austro-American poet Herbert Kuhner, there being no calamities around the corner.

"There's No Need to Worry" because, it seems, "stars have brittle nails," "tulips have difficulty dreaming in moonlight," "weakness is chased across the meadow by my pulse," and "plaits of roses come apart."

*24 Oct. 2024*

## **The Gods Have Many Names**

Not just many, but a great many. They keep dying off, whether it is the Gods or the Names that keep expiring, we are uncertain. There seem to be fewer and fewer valid names that are current, or current ones that work. Certainly the names do outnumber the Gods, but there may be Gods that have yet to be bespoke and named. So it is best to be prepared and to focus on the combination of One God and One Name – one each, at least on the Planet Earth at This Time, *i.e.*, Between the World Wars.

*25 Oct. 2024*

## **Russian Poets and Writers Abroad**

I sometimes think that during the second half of the Twentieth Century there were more poets and fiction writers in the United States who wrote in Russian than there were poets and fiction writers who wrote in languages other than English and Spanish.

*26 Oct. 2024*

## **Vignettes**

There is a portrait of me that was painted by Barker Fairley that dates from the 1960s when he and his wife Margaret Fairley lived in the Annex. He showed it to me in his studio living-room. I hesitated and then admitted to him, "I do not see myself in this oil painting at all." Indeed, I did not, and never have.

All the while he was expecting this reaction and had worked out his response to my opinion: "That is because I had to paint you six times before I got what I

wanted. The only other person who gave me so much trouble was Northrop Frye. Yes, six times. You see, the man I have painted is not you, the editor, but you the author of your poems.” I have long puzzled over his response.

The last time I saw him I stood on his porch on a windy day in the fall of 1986 to deliver some manuscripts a mutual friend had asked me to return to him. “You know,” he said, mischievously, but also with much confusion, as he was now whispering in my ear, “Let me tell you. It is a secret between us. Tell no one. Tom Thomson has died. He is dead.”

His eyes radiated disarray, mine dismay.

Thomson had died on July 8, 1917. Barker died on Oct. 11, 1986.

*27 Oct. 2024*

## **Early Memories Maybe**

My earliest memories are the briefest memories that I have, yet these are the most vivid images that I possess, etched into my brain or mind and not to be neutered or altered one iota by time or association. While that is true, it is not one hundred percent true, if only for the reason that my father had a series of movie cameras. The first one was an eight millimetre camera, the second one was a sixteen millimetre camera, and he enjoyed recording the visits of friends and the actions of relatives. I have vivid memories, if that is what they are, of sitting in a tub of cold water on a hot summer's day on the front lawn of our Chestnut Street home in Kitchener, screaming my head off because the rough kid from across the street had availed himself of the opportunity of pee into the tub and hence on me! Then there is my foot race towards the brink of Niagara Falls, caught up in the magnetic wonder of the Mighty Cataract, almost faster than my Mother and Father who were chasing after me before I could reach the edge of the mighty cataract. Could those be memories pure and simple? Or were they movies? I have come reluctantly to conclude that in these two instances I have mechanical memories wrought on by technology rather than the sheer sense of wonder. I can think of little more to add.

*28 Oct. 2024*

## **Deserts**

The Black Forest of Germany.

The Bering Tundra of Russia.

The Badlands of the United States.

The Amazon Jungle of Brazil.  
The Cloud Forest of Costa Rica.  
The Congo Basin of Central Africa.  
The Arctic Ice of Northern Canada.  
The ... etc., etc. *Is any one of them  
Worse than the Desert within  
The Heart and the Head of Man?*

28 Oct. 2024

### **When I Thought of You**

When I thought of you, I stopped thinking almost entirely. Yet what inundated my mind were thoughts of you and you alone. You were unaccompanied by thoughts of riches or wealth, money or jewelry, stocks or bonds, estates or lands, dividends or investments, yet you seemed to me to be wealthy beyond any measure, or let me put it like this: wealthy beyond treasure. I suspect I was not alone in thinking of you like this, as others had already done so and would do so again and again. Until grinding to a halt ... it all ended ... in the ending ... in the end ... with the sense of permanent and unpredicted loss.

29 Oct. 2024

### **Horoscope**

The Zodiac is up there in the Starry Heavens; the horoscope is down here on the Planet Earth; but their features dwell in the Heads, Hearts, and Bodies of every man and all women. Or so astrologers and astrologists have maintained throughout the ages.

Here is a compact horoscope: one word for each of the dozen assumed “characteristic characteristics” and the traditional names of the “traditional houses.” Make of them what you will – or what you won’t.

Activities – Aries  
Pleasures – Taurus  
Probings – Gemini  
Homelife – Cancer  
Creativity – Leo  
Criticals – Virgo

Partnerships – Libra  
Transformations – Scorpio  
Questioning – Sagittarius  
Status – Capricorn  
Hopes – Aquarius  
Endings – Pisces

30 Oct. 2024

### **Would-be Wonders**

Without my help, never will you ever behold all Seven Wonders of the World, those of the Past, the Present, and the Future. Nor will you experience the Six Joyful, the Six Sorrowful, and the Six Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. All the same, should you care to learn about the Five Fingers of Death, I have some gifts for you. I will connive to acquaint you with the Four Rivers of the Garden of Eden, with the three Great Pyramids erected on the Giza Plain, then with both of the Colossal Statues of Gog and Magog, wherever they may be. That leaves time and energy for the elusive Number One, the first and smallest positive integer of the infinite sequence of natural numbers. *Fair enough?*

30 Oct. 2024

### **Berlin: Some Impressions**

A city of cities, a commons divorced from conventionality, yet not lacking a nasty nationality entirely its own, still larger than life itself, with futuristic scenes and scenarios that anticipated the clockwork slavery of not just any *Metropolis* but of the minds of men with the mechanisms of machines.

\*

The Brandenburg Gate is the historic neo-classical monument that has stood since the Eighteenth Century in Berlin to mark the way from the German capital to Brandenburg an der Havel, the former capital of the Margraviate of Brandenburg. Despite the fact that the six-pillared gate looks smaller than similar monuments elsewhere in Europe, it displays an agreeable grace and has been surmounted by a commanding quadriga. Numerous flags have flown from it height and it was much damaged during the last World War. It seems strangely non-threatening and even friendly, at least these days. Not many years ago, when we walked under it, on the way eyeing the luxury Hotel Adlon Kempinski, the U.S. Military was present,



stamping and distributing mock, free-passage permits to tourists like ourselves.

\*

This scene is set in a semi-*déclassé* district in a now-nameless sidewalk café not far from the oddly named department store KaDeWe.

We sat either opposite each other, outdoors, as the sun started its daily decline, the two of us in the city of Berlin for the first and such as it is only time: the two of us discussing literature and art, notably the writings of Hannah Arendt and the photographs of Edward Burtynsky.

By chance the photography gallery next to us was featuring the “earth art” of “our” Burtynsky, and when I looked up, if you can imagine, I saw we had been sitting under the street sign that read simply “Hannah Arendt Strasse.” A strange concurrence at least for us, so far from home but so close to the dome of the restored Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, a grotesque sight to behold. A wound, as if wound around by many coloured bandages.

The scene with its oblique coincidences remains riveted in my memory and perhaps in my wife’s (though it is too late to know not for certain but at all if this is so). Certainly the sun was beginning to set, and by the time we left, it had set yet once again.

30 Oct. 2024

## **Flâneur and Flâneuse**

The French language has words that have been introduced into the English language to refer to behaviours that seem more characteristic of the social practices of the French than of the English. The two words above are good instances of this matter and are identified with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century poet Charles Baudelaire who so referred to a person – more often a man than a woman – who strolls or saunters along the streets and arcades of a city at dusk, observing sights and noting peoples’ behaviours.

The French words *flâneur* and *flâneuse* date from the 1850s, the English version, *flaneur*, somewhat later. They were introduced into modern use by the German philosopher Walter Benjamin who explored the existence and expressiveness of social forms in urban settings in his highly evocative unfinished grand work known as *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940). Susan Sontag made use of the terms in general to refer to the work of still photographers and gave it a lot of currency.

29 Oct. 2024

## **A Rousing Speech**

I cannot resist the temptation to quote here from the rousing speech that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote for his great creation Sherlock Holmes in the short story that describes his last adventure. The final adventure is called “His Last Bow” and it appeared in *Some Later Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes* (1917).

Holmes of course was most notably played on radio and the screen by the English actor Basil Rathbone who intones the following words, in character, in the movie *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942).

Watson: It’s a lovely morning, Holmes.

Holmes: There’s an east wind coming, Watson.

Watson: I don’t think so. Looks like another warm day.

Holmes: Good old Watson. The one fixed point in a changing age. There’s an east wind coming all the same. Such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it’s God’s own wind none the less. And a greener, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm is cleared.

Scholars may note that the passage appears in a slightly different form in “His Last Bow” which itself appears in *Some Later Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes* (1917). The two passages deliver the same message. It is likely that the Biblical reference to “an east wind ... God’s own wind none the less” will be lost on contemporary readers who may forget that Doyle knew about such references in the Old and New Testaments and their prophecies and believed in the efficacy of prayer.

30 Sept. 2024

## **Inventory**

I would write about and celebrate the seven continents of this planet, the six deserts of the earth, the five mountain ranges of the globe, the four cardinal directions of the orb, the three regions of its atmospheres, the two halves of its lightness and its darkness, and its single and unique satellite the Moon ... if only I could ... if only it were truly meaningful!

30 Sept. 2024

## **What hath God Wrought!**

The following rhetorical question occurs in Numbers 23:23. “According to this time

it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” What is being expressed is the sense of wonder at the fulfillment of God’s plan. That was then and maybe so. Since these days there have been various inversions of the words: “What rot hath God wrought!” or “What rot hath God brought!”

It seems a shame to belittle the beauty of the initial expression, a disgrace to demean the Acts of God and the admiration and the appreciation of those Acts, yet these days the words “God’s plan” in the sense of “What hath God wrought!” take on an ironic edge, given the actions and inactions of man and the present state of nature and life on this planet.

The Canadian rap composer and performer known as Drake is identified with the two words “God’s Plan,” the title of his composition released on January 19, 2018, as the first single from Drake’s second EP titled *Scary Hours*. The song is also the first single from Drake’s fifth studio album *Scorpion*. What plan, one asks?

30 Sept. 2024

## **42 Dell Park Avenue**

That’s the street address in North York – a part of the City of Toronto, located in a suburban district in Southern Ontario, Canada – of the house or home in which Ruth and John lived from 1969 to 2024. That is a long period of time in one bungalow. Here they raised their three children, Jonathan, Cathie, and Theo ... that is, until the death of Ruth on April 26, 2024, brought all of this to a crashing end.

Three months later the well-used home (now just a house) had new owners, as their children had homes and families of their own in Toronto and Montreal. They helped John to find a “retirement centre” some miles away, and writing these lines, wondering what it was all about ... what it had been all about ... together for so many minutes, hours, days, months, years, decades, etc.

It was not his sole place alone. In Toronto as a student, he lived in Sir Daniel Wilson Residence of University College on the campus and upon graduation married to Ruth they lived in an attic apartment on Dale Avenue in the Toronto suburb of Rosedale, then in a flat on Millwood Road, then in another flat on Burnside Drive south of St. Clair and Bathurst, then in a house on Ellis Park Road in the city’s west end, opposite Grenadier Pond, and finally the North York residence named above. An odyssey around a city that during this period like Tarzan he “came into his own” ... intellectually and culturally ... for about two decades, until civil inertia and uncivil immigrants from impoverished countries who may have tried but hardly knew what to do to live in large cities of too-tolerant a people.

Anyway ... that is another story.

30 Sept. 2024

## **Choice in Life**

Given the choice between a life of bestiality and a life if banality, I hope I have the sense to choose banality over bestiality, like the majority of mortal beings.

1 Oct. 2024

## **Gods**

Right here and right now allow me to quote a simple and straight-forward line from a verse composed by Sybren Poet, the noted Dutch poet. Do not assume I necessarily recall any other lines written by him! The line that I like and that stays with me in English goes like this: “I appear in the guise of a god.”

1 Oct. 2024

## **Natural Openings**

How many external orifices or “natural openings” has the female body? How many does the male body possess?

The female body has twelve “natural openings.” The male body has three fewer; that is, it has nine “natural openings.”

Here is a list of the total number of the orifices of the human body: 2 ears, 2 eyes, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth, 2 nipples, 1 anal opening, 1 vaginal opening, 1 urethral opening. The female body possesses all twelve of these natural openings, unlike the male body which has only nine natural openings. The following are the orifices unique to the female body that are absent from the male body: 2 nipples, 1 vaginal opening.

1 Oct. 2024

## **Gender Differences**

### *Part One*

There was a minute there when I wondered what it would be like to be a female of the

species rather than a male of the species. So many body parts to examine, so little time. Then it occurred to me. There are numerous ways to examine!

### *Part Two*

You have twelve openings, I have but nine.  
So I am curious about the three that I am “missing,”  
But not anxious enough to want to own them!

*1 Oct. 2024*

### **What the Novice Poet Does**

In the beginning, he writes some verse, but by the end most of which he is composing is adverse.

\*

He finds himself reading widely in ephemeral publications to purloin the idioms and imagery used by lesser known or obscure poets rather than for honourable reasons.

\*

He dances attendance on editors and publishers who might be interested in accepting his manuscripts for publication.

\*

He avoids reading leading periodicals (like *Poetry Chicago*) and has yet to determine the methodology of any of the classical works (*Odyssey, Iliad*).

\*

He seldom has a good word for his contemporaries, particularly those whose writings are especially skilled and attractive to the public.

\*

He alludes vaguely to “writing for publication” and to “being commissioned to write for a publisher” but all of this is hot air.

He denounces the academicization of the Muse, yet justifies all the obscurities in his own work.

\*

After a couple of years he begs for an academic position – teaching contemporary poetry.

*1 Oct. 2024*

## **A Word of Appreciation**

What the title above is saying in a round-about way is simply that I appreciate a particular word. That word is *parlando*.

It is a musical term, from the Italian, the gerundial form of the verb “to speak.”

I have never used it in a conversation or in a composition. To quote one Web entry on this word (which I take to be of Italian origin) it refers to “a piece of music, or part of a piece of music, that is performed in a way that is like speaking, or this style of performing: *parlando* ... its plaintive *parlando* style conveys a mood of pending uncertainty.” I like those last two words, as well.

Another Web entry refers to the performing style as effecting a union of speech and singing ... of music, or part of a piece of music, that is performed in a way that is like speaking, or this style of performing ... its plaintive *parlando* style conveys a mood of pending uncertainty.”

It dates from the mid-19th century, and a comparable form, which dates from the mid-twentieth century, is *Sprechstimme*, (German: “speech-voice”), in music, a cross between speaking and singing in which the tone quality of speech is heightened and lowered in pitch along melodic contours indicated in the musical notation. *Sprechstimme* (German: “speech-voice”), in music, is a cross between speaking and singing in which the tone quality of speech is heightened and lowered in pitch along melodic contours indicated in the musical notation. *Sprechstimme* is frequently encountered in late 20th-century neo-classical compositions.

*1 Oct. 2024*

## **Anasyrma**

For the naked human body to be of particular visual or sexual interest to the viewer, there must be a deliberate distortion or a calculated withholding of one body part or another. That is known as *anasyrma*.

*2 Oct. 2024*

## **Love Making**

I tickle your armpits. Your *axillae*.

I kiss your lips. On the mouth.

I fondle your nipple. A *mamilla*.

I touch one of your legs. One limb.

I touch your other leg. Another limb.  
I titillate your navel. Your *umbilicus*.  
I caress your vagina. Your pussy.  
I lick your nethermost region. Your clitoris.  
I stroke your *derrière*. Your ass.

3 Oct. 2024

## **Eight Types of Nipples**

Protruding  
Flat  
Inverted  
Puffy  
Unilateral-  
-Inverted  
Bumpy  
Hairy  
Super-  
-Numerary

3 Oct. 2024

## **Confessional**

I used to think of my own death, maybe the agony of slowly dying, perhaps the sense of the loss of everything in one fell swoop, or perchance enduring an extended period of sustained suffering. Now I think of *your own* death, *not my own*, because all of these occurred at one and the same time. That's the worst.

4 Oct. 2024

## **Less than a Lyric**

Blood and bone,  
Skin and stone;  
Body and mind,  
Brain and rhymed.

4 Oct. 2024

### **Words within Words**

The word *prose* includes the word *rose*.

It also includes these words: *pores, poser, ropes, spore*.

The word *poetry* includes the word *port*.

It also includes these words: *or type, prey to, pyre to*.

And probably some more.

4 Oct. 2024

### **Zoo's You**

Inside you, there is a lively black cat, as well as a well-used cat-o'-nine tails.

Within me, there is a restless dog, with a collar and a depressed doggone air.

In fact, inside both of us will be found a menagerie of semi-domesticated animals,  
A veritable "zoo's who," one that includes vampires, mummies, gnats, and golems,

Not to mention a hyena, a boa-constrictor, a bird of prey, a wolverine, and a carcajou.  
So much for the jungles within our two beautiful bodies.

5 Oct. 2024

### **Bereavement**

Now the bells are ringing  
Not "for me and my gal"  
But for whoever has died  
Leaving the bereaved  
Amid all the melancholy  
For the unrest of their lives.

5 Oct. 2024

### **Meanwhile ...**

In the sky the clouds fit in place like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle.



In the fields the well-to-do enjoy games of golf or croquet.  
In the city's streets the children fight like cowboys and Indians.  
In the residences the scholars concentrate on chess.  
In the school rooms the students played checkers, these days computers.  
In the hospitals the infants and the seniors daily defy death.  
In the bedrooms our teenagers are learning to make out.  
In the cemeteries there are names on most of the headstones.  
In the heavens the night skies are chatoyant with stars.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **It Seems**

We human beings come in all sizes, shapes, shades, species, etc.  
Skin colours are included, languages with thick accents as well,  
Also well-held or professed beliefs and disbeliefs  
Laid down by similar and dissimilar godheads.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **Wife**

Kiss your wife if you have one. It will be a long time before you get a new one.

This is an aphorism from the poem "Horoscope: Aries" composed by the Norwegian poet Ola Jonsmoen.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **One Word for Life**

I finally found the one word that best describes the life that we are living these days. That word is new to me and perhaps to you, my reader, as well. That word is *immensements*. Its meaning should be self-explanatory.

Where did I find it? It was employed by Ian Sansom in his column "The Case for Pencils" in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 Sept. 2024.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **Androgyny**

These days there is little if any *nous* in androgynous.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **Covid Fashion Note**

I observed that Covid introduced a change in fashion, at least in the streets, offices, and shops of North America. Women abandoned their skirts for tight pants and trousers, and young men laid their razors aside in favour of growing unsightly facial hair.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **Mottos**

When I search “Canada” these days for the remnants of “The Peaceable Kingdom,” what I find is the dreary reminders of “The Land of the Midnight Sun” and “From Sea to Sea.” This is a play on words of popular and official mottos for Canada as a political entity, as a Northern region, and as a geographical landmass.

*5 Oct. 2024*

### **Coat of Arms**

Alas, there are no lions or unicorns in the country, though there are plenty of maple leaves, three fleur-de-lys, but only one lyre – on its official coat of arms.

*6 Oct. 2024*

### **Vision**

In both of your eyes are the constellations that sparkle as I try to recall and locate them and represent them in their billions spangled across the heavens, but yet again I have failed to accomplish so much, for I instantly loose count and you, you, have shut them out. Your eyelids descended on them like portcullises on them, and not anticipating them, you fail to see them as well as me, the lodestars and their creator, your lover in person.

6 Oct. 2024

## **Numbers to Remember or Not**

Inhuman lady

Two words from the Ladino song “A Wasted Week,” *Modern Poetry in Translation*, No. 29, Autumn 1976.

*Nine First Fridays Devotion*

On the Communions of Reparation to the Sacred Heart, a Catholic devotion in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to offer reparations for sins to the Blessed Sacrament.

*Six Weeks of Devotions for Lent*

Crossing the street, the other day or some other day, I passed an inhuman lady, a wooden man, a sponge cat, an agrestic dog, a child of rubber, a chinless wonder, and yesterday’s angel.

6 Oct 2024

## **Whatever happened to General Semantics?**

I grew up physically in the 1930s and 1940s and intellectually in the 1950s and 1960s. One standby of the Fifties was a thick book that combined the study of the effects of language on attitude and behaviour, and that was *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* written by an American-Polish engineer Alfred Korzybski, first published in 1933 and often reprinted. The text exceeds 900 pages in length and introduces a vocabulary meant to be a textbook showing how in modern scientific methods students of the work can find factors of sanity, to be tested empirically, as is expressed in the words of the entry on this subject in Wikipedia.

And so it was that the catchy term “time-binding” became one of many central concepts whereby the student of GS was required to distinguish between differing historical periods and hence differing interpretations of whatever subject was at hand. The reader was urged to add a form of short-hand for historical periods – Communism 1, Communism 2, Communism 3, etc. It seemed Korzybski had found a method to introduce his readers and followers to ways of disentangling subjects from the burdens of contradictory definitions of them over time and place. Why General Semantics failed to solve all of society’s problems or at least a handful of

them must still puzzle its readers and especially its students. What puzzles me the most is it seems to have disappeared from common knowledge. Its absence is notable despite the fact the book is now in its sixth edition (2023) and the text is reproduced in toto on the Net.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Experience**

Experience is like the grain of sand in the cultured pearl, something of a disappointment at the centre of the whole.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Confession**

Allow me to make a distinction in the form of a confession. I am not a poet, like Alfred Lord Tennyson or Leonard Cohen, but what I do write are poems, or what I regard as poetry, or – here I hedge my bet – what I like to term “poems and effects.”

7 Oct. 2024

## **Wrong End of the Telescope**

Twice did I look through the wrong end of the telescope, so what I saw first was a *mota* and second a *somsoc*.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Priest vs. Magician**

As a youngster, black-suited priests impressed me less than black-garbed magicians, both of whom talked for effect. Not that I ever really knew a priest or believed a magician, or believed a priest or knew a magician, but I did respect the performer more than the former. The priest claimed he did nothing; God did everything. The magician admitted he did everything; the spirits had nothing to do with it. The former claimed infallibility, the latter admitted human weakness. I have in mind Father Lalonde of St. Jerome’s College (a highschool despite its name) and Blackstone the Magician (famous as a performer in his day). Lament the day the two functions were

severed.

7 Oct. 2024

## **Six Places to Go?**

From what I can imagine there six places to go after you and I leave Earth for good.

There is Heaven, but I know no one there, I know nothing about the place or state, and I doubt that it even exists.

There is Purgatory, but is there any evidence for its existence or its location?

There is Hell, as Dante depicted it, but is it a place on Earth, in the Solar System, or in the Cosmos? Or does it exist only in the human imagination and nervous system?

There has been no Limbo since the Vatican washed its hands of it in August of 2007. A conceptual loss!

There is the wide-spread notion of Reincarnation, yet the returning of the soul or spirit to Earth after one lifetime in a series of a multitude of lifetimes seems retrograde and irrational.

There are no other places of record. So allow me to suggest one.

The sixth (and last) place may be the long-neglected Garden of Eden, fabled source of the headwaters of four great rivers: the Pishon, Gichon, Chidekel, and Perat. Once in Eden we should bask in the Garden with its forest of trees, including the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Everybody knows about it but not everyone knows where it is.

Maybe ... but then maybe not!

8 Oct. 2024

## **Neither the One nor the Other**

*Thanks to Sybren Polet*

Were I a serious painter,  
Neither op nor pop,  
Either Manet or Monet,  
Avoided by the critics,  
Noted by the public,  
I would regard myself  
As a success. Instead,

I am a writer and an editor,  
An anthologist and a poet,  
Ignored by the critics,  
Unnoticed by the public,  
Enjoying myself immoderately.

*8 Oct. 2024*

### **Six Jigsaw Puzzles**

The imagined 2-piece puzzle  
The fabular 10,000-piece picture puzzle  
The pieces of 2 similar picture puzzles combined  
The view of the universe in only 2 colours  
The monochrome puzzle printed in luminescent ink  
The puzzle with 500 pieces of identical shape  
The blind puzzle-player

*8 Oct. 2024*

### **Two of Hollywood's Stars**

I keep expecting to learn one day that Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich were not two different people or actors after all. Apparently they were not two different human beings or two different personalities at all, but the two halves of one whole performer created by Hollywood to meet all its cinematic needs – the facsimile of a woman of opposites – the ideal suffering woman who loves unceasingly; the perfect commanding woman who never loves unconditionally.

*8 Oct. 2024*

### **A Neonate**

A newborn baby is a bounty, a beauty, a burden, and a blessing ... all at once.

*9 Oct. 2024*

### **The Birds and the Bees**

One day I learned all about the birds and the bees.  
I had long suspected that the expression was silly.  
I was certainly right about that. My mother thought so too.  
Lately, though, I have become aware that there is no avoiding it.  
Life is not about flying creatures, but about lying creatures.  
Are the cats and dogs the females and males of the same species?  
Birds are male, bees are female, I suppose.  
But does the parallel go any farther or further?  
Birds are the predators and bees are the victims, I suppose.  
Or is it the other way round? I never did learn which is which.

*Note:* The source of the reference to “the birds and the bees” is said to be the sonnet titled “Work Without Hope” written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge which originally appeared in *The Bijou: An Annual of Literature and The Arts* in 1825.

9 Oct. 2024

## **Death**

I will soon leave myself for another earth or planet world or domain or dimension or universe or cosmos or reality entirely, once and for all, finally.

10 Oct. 2024

## **Cancer**

For no apparent reason  
one otherwise unexceptional season  
a form of bodily treason  
took place

Early Mycenaean  
or Phoenician  
or late Crimean  
repeatedly beaten

By Cartesian or Boolean  
took place

a special invasion or eruption  
disruption

10 Oct. 2024

## Poetry and Spells

What little time I have at my disposal I want to devote to the literature that rises above the level of writing, compositions that include more than what they exclude, that admit more than the observer expects or is prepared to recognize. Reward the reader; share a secret or at least allude to its presence and power. I have never been interested in bilingual editions of poetry except as attempts to understand a half-foreign language. But I do find single-language anthologies to be worthwhile to read and study, if only to serve as a catalogue of what is at hand (that is, what the world has to offer) versus what is out of grasp (that is, what is out of bounds). Two words are too loosely used these days. A collection is by nature a single-language volume. How few poets these days are able to distinguish between a collection, a volume of the writings of one author, an an anthology, which is a compilation and field guide to what is being written where and by whom and in what language. Essentially we read collections and anthologies for one, two, or three reasons: one is simple curiosity, one is in search of the dimension known as depth, and one is recognizing Aladdin's lamp, or entering the cave of treasures of Ali Baba. The world ill-treats words, yet a poem, should it attempt to attain the stature and status of a world of art, offers a revelation through words: of human nature, of history, and of the fate or destiny of humanity. Treasures abounding: "New lamps for old!" (Recognizing the power of the past.) "Open sesame!" (Possibly "Open, says me!" Recognizing the power of the present.) "Abracadabra!" (Theatricalizing magical spells.)

11 Oct. 2024

## A Line Composed by Stefan George

I suppose I should confess right now that I was taken completely by surprise to be abruptly moved by a line in a poem composed by the German Modernist bard Stefan George.

The title of the poem in question is (oddly) "Line from Southern Strand: Bay." Acknowledgements to the journal *Modern Poetry in Translation*, No. 21, Summer 1974. Here it is as translated by the American poet and historian Peter Viereck: "The gates I haunt have rusty hinges."



11 Oct. 2024

## **Familiar Words**

Little is it known that the familiar words “the be-all and the end-all,” which are heard every day in public discourse, were first used by William Shakespeare in his play *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. They first appear in print in the Folio of 1623. To this day actors are said to avoid mentioning the title of the play, which affirms the power of evil, by referring to it as “the Scottish play.”

11 Oct. 2024

## **Fate of Words**

It is tempting for me to suggest that the sheets of paper upon which my poems are printed will one day turn back into the pulp from trees – that is, the pages of paper will turn colour, from dull white to light yellow, then from light yellow into weak brown, and finally back into the mass of pulp from which they were first emerged buried in leaves and absorbent earth. As for the words themselves, and the sentiments that they offered and the suggestions that they made, these will fade away and the words will simply seep into the muddy earth, a scrabble of letters, then their ideas ... gone for good, gone forever. Tempting it would be to wish them to survive, but to what end, if as it happens the same fate is met by the human beings who might one *aeon* in the future read and interpret them and understand them? Poor Earthlings!

11 Oct. 2024

## **Quip**

Is it true that both the breasts come with a beast attached?

11 Oct. 2024

## **Divagation**

I have been waiting in vain for someone to use the word *divagation* in speech or in writing or in print without immediately explaining that it is the title of a collection of essays and prose poems composed by Stéphane Mallarmé. It appeared in print in

1897. That is a long time to wait to hear it in conversation.

*11 Oct. 2024*

### **Divagations**

We wish to live our lives without any of its attendant disruptions. Indeed, is it at all possible to do so without divagations, deviations, digressions, divergences, or asides, excursuses, *et cetera*?

*11 Oct. 2024*

### **Meaning of Death**

Even if – and allow me to add even when – we shuffle off this mortal coil – we will be none the wiser than we were before. And may I add tragically so?

*12 Oct. 2024*

### **About-faces**

Was Judas Iscariot an apostate? Was Josephus Flavius a traitor? Was Philippe Petain a turncoat? Was Benedict Arnold a renegade? Was Svetlana Alliluyeva a deserter? Was Rudolph Nureyev a defector? The arguments pro and con may seem endless, yet they remain endlessly instructive and informative.

*12 Oct. 2024*

### **King of the Cowboys**

The following question puzzled me more than any other during my childhood years, when I would regularly attend the Saturday matinees of “Singing Cowboy movies” at the Century Theatre in the Ontario city in which I was born.

“Who is the King of the Cowboys?” I tried to answer that question to my satisfaction because I had to distinguish between Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, two popular movie stars at the time.

I felt Roy was “strictly American,” whereas in my eyes Gene always looked underprivileged, and hence I felt he was “quintessentially Canadian.” However, older boys would quip that the “king” of the “Singing Cowboys” was someone else

entirely: Roy's third wife "Dale Evans"!

*12 Oct. 2024*

## **Abraham Lincoln**

No doubt Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) was a man of great and noble ideals. (He greatly impressed the poet Walt Whitman who observed the U.S. President close up on many an occasion during the Civil War in Washington, D.C.) But was he as great a war-time leader as he was a U.S. President?

Lincoln oversaw the Union victory against the Confederates in the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). The total number of casualties on both sides is estimated to be between 620,000 and 750,000 military deaths (plus an ill-determined number of civilian deaths) out of a total population of some 35 million. Add to the casualty lists the civilians who suffered during the fourteen years of Reconstruction that followed the Union victory; from them these estimates it is apparent that Lincoln's victory has been described as the most costly one in U.S. history. It is fair to conjecture that the noble ideals were one thing but the death rate plus the suffering and destruction that followed the Civil War are difficult to accept with equanimity and hardly justify the cost of Lincoln's leadership. Yet he did "win" but "at what price"?

*12 Oct. 2024*

## **What Will Happen**

What will happen when the word processor fails,  
When the string of words fades from the screen,  
When the power fades away for the last time,

When floods and fires, winds and waves, conspire,  
When the ink in the fountain-pens dries up,  
When men and women fall asleep at mid-day?

It is at least as bad as when the imagination of man,  
Ignited by the form and a woman's friendliness  
Neglects its task of inspiration.

The world will not "come to an end,"  
But it will seem that it has,

At least to us, with useless pens in hands.

*12 Oct. 2024*

## **If I Live**

If I live eighty years, I will have survived 29,200 days and nights.

But I have already lived a further eight years.

If I live ninety years, I will have survived 328,850 days and nights.

But will I be granted 730 more years of life?

Dubious, doubtful, debatable.

But is it even desirable, suitable,ailable?

*Note: This account ignores years longer than 365 days.*

*12 Oct. 2024*

## **Stèles**

*Recollecting Victor Segalen's Stèles (1912)*

The wisdom of the *stèles* reaches “ten thousand times ten thousand years,” as it is said, until one day the text of texts will be recovered and it will be found to assert the truth, as inscriptions on stone outlast all else, that *Bon* will again exist and that Tibet will flourish as it rightfully should ... from primordial times to the declivity of China.

*13 Oct. 2024*

## **Dying and Death**

I find myself, to my dismay, to be separated from myself. Where or where is my body, my mind, my soul, my spirit? Nowhere that I can see or sense or comprehend – field, plain, domain, world, globe, planet, orb, solar system, universe, cosmos. I have been separated from myself for good, and am now isolated and abstracted; I find myself somewhere elsewhere: close to oblivion, obviously; I may only guess.

*13 Oct. 2024*

## **Who is the Patron Saint of Lost Causes?**

By tradition, this honour or designation belongs to St. Jude, or Jude Thaddeus, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, who on occasion has been identified as the brother of Jesus. It is hard to take this tradition seriously, though many Christians do, placing classified advertisements in daily newspapers “thanking St. Jude for favours received.” A “lost cause” refers to people who are “hopeless and despaired.” Anyway, St. Jude’s Feast Day is celebrated on October 28.

*14 Oct. 2024*

## **Flowering Stones**

“It is time that the stone made up its mind to flower” is an arresting line from the short poem “Corona” composed by the German-language poet Paul Celan. I have no idea what that line means but to me it sounds haunting albeit somewhat conjectural. However, the *Bon* tradition of Tibet has it that stone has a life and memory of its own being a greatest source of knowledge. Source: *Modern Poetry in Translation* 3, Spring 1967.

*14 Oct. 2024*

## **Tradition of One’s Double**

There is the tradition that everyone has his or her double living today elsewhere in the world. All one has to do is find one’s double and convince him or her of this fact and come to terms with it. I have long wondered what this proves or disproves. *Doppelgänger* is the word, adapted from the German, for the phenomenon of “double-going.” The appearance of one’s “double” is considered to be a portend of one’s death.

*14 Oct. 2024*

## **Lovemaking**

You who neither know nor care that in my mind I feel your soft and silken hair.

*15 Oct. 2024*

## Concise Commandments

1. I am
2. You shall not
3. Remember to keep
4. Honour your
5. You shall not
6. You shall not
7. You shall not
8. You shall not
9. You shall not
10. You shall not

*Based on the Catholic Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:16-21).*

*15 Oct. 2024*

## The Ideal Clock

*Suggested by Xavier Villaurrutia's poem "Enlargements," Modern Poetry in Translation, No. 18, Winter 1974*

The ideal clock, be it with gnomon to point, or pendulum to set, or stem to wind, or batteries to change, tells "the right time" every time, all the time.

Indeed, it is what the Mexican poet Xavier Villaurrutia would call "the perfect and eternal clock,"

Except that he explains that the mechanism he has in mind corresponds to the "veins" of his body!

The flow of his blood does inform him about his home planet Earth and its encirclement of the Sun,

It tells him when it is time to rise, time to dress, time to eat, time to work, time to play, time to rest, time to love, time to sleep, etc.

Indeed, it tells him all about all the debris of the day and even the detritus of the night.

The clock is the calendar of time, or time is the calendar of the clock, one or the other!

I could go on like this, but it would be a waste of your time as well as mine. Like you, I am running out of time, which is what the clock as well as this body is telling me – measuring me.

Who isn't in the same bind or fix or muddle these days!

*15 Oct. 2024*

## **Travel**

The greatest disappointment that I have at this point in my life is that when I was younger and had the chances and choices, I did not travel more for the pleasure of it.

I saw many sites, major and minor, but I missed so much that I could have experienced: no Barcelona, no Great Wall of China, no Tibet, no Angkor Wat. (Also I would have enjoyed revisiting Berlin, as well as having a seat to see the production of a classical opera staged in the Lincoln Centre by the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.)

Such is life, a series of events, some planned, some unplanned, some unknown at the time, some ... which leads me to believe that what we did not do when we had the opportunity to inform one's life time – and as I now see it, deform it as well.

*15 Oct. 2024*

## **Science Fiction Scenario**

One day there will come too much moonlight  
One night there will come too much sunlight

One noon their spaceships will be glimpsed  
One midnight creatures will descend from them

In one week the visitors will spell out our doom  
In one month the visitors will complete their task

Once upon a time there was life on Earth  
Once upon a time there was human life here

Now it is a dark planet in a dark solar system  
Now these creatures are embedded in the earth too

*15 Oct. 2024*

## **Nazi Years**

After savagery, comes scavenge, then salvage.

*15 Oct. 2024*

### **Paleozoic Era Lovers**

We have become trilobites. Yes, we now resemble a pair of trilobites, fossils of the once mighty marine species, now for ages embedded in stone. We were alive from 521 to 22 million years ago, spanning a significant portion of the Paleozoic Era. Our name describes our exoskeletons which are divided into three lobes, hence the name “trilobite.” For coition, our three “lobes” were and hence to this later day remain superior to your two; as well, our stone beds will outlast your beds made of blankets of wool and twin pillows of feathers. Respect us, lover that we were and that you are.

*16 Oct. 2024*

### **Change**

Whether desirable or undesirable, change is inescapable. But bear in mind there are two changes, “exact” and “loose.”

*16 Oct. 2024*

### **All the Easts**

There are more than the three Easts, these being the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East. There is also the fourth East which we should regard as the Due East.

*16 Oct. 2024*

### **Redemption**

For our sins and in particular for our “negligences” all of us are lazy and lax, and most of us rely on the notion and relevance of collective redemption rather than of individual redemption.

*16 Oct. 2024*



## **George Faludy**

I knew him quite well. I have in mind George Faludy, the outstanding Hungarian poet, who spent some years with fellow Hungarians living in Toronto. In fact, with him, I co-translated book-length collections of his vivid verse. It is notable that his writings were twice banned, first by the Fascists in 1939 when he first escaped Hungary; second by the Communists in 1956 when after returning for the second time he escaped Hungary. Twice. Some people (including police, politicians, and poets) never seem to learn!

*16 Oct. 2024*

## **Life as a Prison**

The judge has sentenced me to life in prison, not to a jail or to a penitentiary, as the term is for ninety years *sans* parole, a lifetime for the lucky and the unlucky alike. I am guilty of nothing except being born and assuming my fair share of society's resources – food and drink, heat and shelter, instruction and education, attention and medication, peace and progress, affection and love, birth and burial, etc. – to the fullest extent possible on a vastly over-populated planet with a warring population like this one. Not only is our “island in the sky” over-populated, the populations regularly succeed in waging wars against themselves! The least that I can do behind prison bars is to resolve to behave decently, as I did before prison, and as I will do after the period of incarceration (should conditions warrant).

*16 Oct. 2024*

## **Confession**

I have a great many regrets to recall and if necessary to report, but I am not sad about any of them because the regrets are not at all great ones, merely minor ones. To be sure there is a difference between the great ones and the minor ones, and surprising as it might seem, that difference amounts to a world of difference.

*17 Oct. 2024*

## **Truths and Lies**

It is a truism that truths are really lies that are mutually agreed upon, or is it more

truthful the other way round?

*17 Oct. 2024*

## **America**

“East and West” is how we express the difference, but what we mean, of course, is “West is Best.”

*17 Oct. 2024*

## **Ideological Addition**

What I know is that “One and one make two.” What I hear is that “One and one make three.” What I read is that “One and one make four.” What I write is that “One and one make five.” What I orate is that “One and one make six.” What I am prepared to agree, given the threat of privation and torture, is that “One and one make seven.” What I have come to fear is that by now “One and one will make whatever the ideologues proclaim that they will make. In plain English, it is this: “On any given day one and one make nothing or one or two or three or four or five or six or seven or whatever number, whatever value, they state.” What we have here is Ideological Addition, a vast improvement over ordinary addition.

*17 Oct. 2024*

## **Israeli Novelist?**

Aharon Appelfeld is an Israeli memoirist and novelist of whom it is said “he does not write about his adopted country.” The subject of his fiction is the Holocaust itself and not Israel in particular, which as a young man he experienced first-hand. He was born in Romania in 1932; he moved to Palestine in 1946; he died in Israel in 2018. He spoke at least six languages, learning the Hebrew language last and preserving in that tongue his short stories and novels notably his experiences as a displaced writer writing about his displacement, an Israeli subject to be sure. Yes, he writes about life in an adopted country or world.

*17 Oct. 2024*

## **Eyes**

I have two healthy eyes. Even in my later years, I am blessed with clear vision. It is not that I immediately see everything that I want to see; it is that, given enough time, I see what I want to see, sights that are right in front of me but too often simply overlooked by me and other people. I spot them and point them out for others to see. I assume other people could see them if they were patient enough to do so and devoted the time to looking and were of a mind to actually do so and see what I too had formerly overlooked. Perhaps you see what I mean. (If you are confused or befuddled, see the next entry for an insight. It is titled “The Idiot.”)

*17 Oct. 2024*

### **The Idiot**

“Understanding / Is wisdom / Lack of it / Is ancient wisdom”

“The Idiot” is a nine-word poem written in four lines composed by the Turkish poet Fazil Hüsnü Dalğarca as translated by Talât Sait Halman and published in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, 10: Spring 1971.

*17 Oct 2024*

### **Shortest Fairy Tale**

Once upon a time, they lived happily ever after.

*18 Oct. 2024*

### **Goths, Visigoths, Ostrogoths**

“Goths” refers to bands of Germanic people who from southern present-day Sweden swept into the Europe of the Middle Ages. They may be said to have ended that period in history when the Visigoths (eastern Goths) sacked the city of Rome in A.D. 410. Then they occupied parts of today’s Russia and Ukraine. The Ostrogoths (western Goths) invaded and occupied the so-called Iberian Peninsula, today’s Spain and Italy, lands that they occupied until they in turn were defeated by the invasion and occupation of these lands by the Moors in A.D. 711.

These days the word “Goths” is loosely used to refer to a new fashion: goth-style of female makeup and dress: pale complexion, jet-black hair, witch’s flowing apparel, introduced in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. It has nothing to do with the

Visis or the Ostros, of course, except it appeared pitiless and barbarous. Gothic literature and architecture rightly remain meaningful.

18 Oct. 2024

### **Life Inside One**

Imagine: I live in the *gaol* of my physical body.  
I use the old-fashioned spelling of the word *jail*  
For one reason and one reason only:

It seems I am privileged in my prison.  
There are three separate cells available for me.  
At any one time I may occupy all or none of them.

There is the head cell, where these thoughts form.  
There is the heart cell, where these emotions are sensed.  
There is the body cell, where these changes occur.

Right now I am imprisoned within all three cells:  
All at once! Head, heart, body (or trunk).  
It's a real prison and I am a real, three-part person.

Yet opportunities are said to abound around me.  
I could escape entirely and exist in no cell.  
Not all of life is a prison cell, we are assured.

As a prisoner I serve, I obey, I witness.  
If this is life, it takes a bit of imagining to work.  
But work it does, though not for ever.

19 Oct. 2024

### **Revised Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
    [Here's an absentee father; besides, whatever and wherever is "heaven"?]  
Hallowed be thy name.  
    ["Father" is not a name but a relationship. What indeed is God's name?]

Thy kingdom come.

[“Thy Kingdom”? It is unseen; it is a promise, it seems.]

Thy will be done

[“Your ‘will’ will be done? Another promise!]

on earth as it is in heaven.

[Here’s “heaven” again.]

Give us this day our daily bread,

[Here’s a request from “us,” a big “us,” to be sure. Is “bread” our sole request?] and forgive us our trespasses,

[This could be a tall order, though it is again a mere request.]

as we forgive those who trespass against us,

[Do we as individuals or as a species really “forgive so readily?”] and lead us not into temptation,

[It seems we lead ourselves into “temptation.” Do we have free will?] but deliver us from evil.

[Here’s “evil” which came from where?]

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,

[This line sounds like a list of best-selling books. “Kingdom” again.]

Forever and ever.

[Again repetition. Doesn’t the word “forever” really mean “eternally?]

Amen.

[That formulaic ending is found in Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic versions of this prayer. Linguists and biblical scholars maintain it means “So be it.”]

Of interest: “The Lord’s Prayer, aka “Our Father,” was first written in Aramaic or Greek (some scholarly disagreement here) between 175 to 225 A.D.

*19 Oct. 2024*

## **Donald J. Trump**

*Q.* When is Donald J. Trump like an opera singer?

*A.* When he rehearses and sings, “Me, me, me, me.”

*Q.* What is Donald J. Trump’s favourite letter of the alphabet?

*A.* His favourite letter is the twelfth in the alphabet. It is the letter “I” as in the word “lies.”

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **Conclusion Confusion**

The poem does not end here  
But neither does it continue

Concluding couplet of the poem “After Shakespeare” composed by the Czech poet Josef Hruby translated by Jaroslav Koran and Daniel Weissbort included in *Modern Poetry in Translation* 9, January 1971.

*19 Oct. 2024*

## **Lifetimes**

It begins, for me, when my Grandfather dies, then my Grandmother dies, and then one Aunt and one Uncle die. This happens the second time for “the other side” of the family.

Then my Father dies, then my Mother dies, then their Sisters and Brothers die. This happens the second time for “the other side” of the family.

Then include the others, principally Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Nieces and Nephews.

What happens next ends one cycle but starts another cycle for me when my wife dies and when I die. What happens thereafter may well be the subject of another poem, one that may never be composed or recomposed. Or it could perhaps be described in the next poem or next-to-last poem in this collection.

*19 Oct. 2024*

## **Mankind**

Mankind is the root in the ground of the earth that is beneath our feet that yearns for a route to the stars far above our heads.

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **True Story**

He is a long-retired sales representative putting in time.

One day he asked me, “Still writing your poems?”

“Yes.”

“You’re a poet and didn’t know it!”

“Right you are,” I replied.

“You are working hard all the time. Is there money in it?”

“Yes, I’m working; no, there’s no real money in it.”

“Why do you continue to work like this if there’s no money in it?”

“There’s a good reason. Think about it. The ballet dancer has to practise each day. The singer has to sing each day. The boxer has to box each day. In the same way the writer has to write each day.”

“Why?”

“To keep in practice.”

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **Enclosures**

Our silences are the shelters for our songs. Our prose is the polar opposite of our poetry. Bodies are the carriages fitted out for our souls. Coffins, caskets, and crypts take care of the carrion of our bodies. Angels of Old turn into Modern-day Muses who on their feathery wings waft our souls aloft among and beyond the clouds.

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **Arts**

The sciences provide for the well-being of our bodies, whereas the creative arts provide for the sentience of our selves.

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **The Heart in the Human Chest**

On the Web there is an arresting description of the human heart which is said to be “the size of a clenched fist.” Who would have guessed? This vital organ is not located on the left side of the body though about two-thirds of it is found on the left side of the body and one-third on the right side. According to one authority, “The base of the heart has an apex which points to the left side.” Now we know!

*20 Oct. 2024*

## **Well Before**

Before there were sounds  
before there were noises  
before there were grunts  
before there were groans  
before there were sighs  
before there were words  
before there were speeches  
before there were chants  
before there were songs  
before there were stories  
well before any of these  
there were said to be scriptures

*20 Oct. 2024*

### **Doorways**

There are doors that no longer open or if they open they no longer shut and lock. If their locks are broken, they will never be locked or unlocked again. These doors with their locks are of many types and kinds. Portals, entrees, entries, doorways, etc. Where do they lead? Where do they not lead? Are we never to know?

*20 Oct. 2024*

### **One Dozen Countries; One Dozen National Floral Symbols**

Argentina's The Ceibo  
Australia's Golden Wattle  
Canada's Maple Leaf  
England's Tudor Rose  
France's Fleur de Lis  
Germany's Cornflower  
Japan's Chrysanthemum  
Mexico's Dahlia  
Russia's Camomile  
Spain's Carnation  
Switzerland's Edelweiss  
United States of America's Rose



*21 Oct 2024*

### **Some Varieties of Poet**

balladeer  
berdache  
concrete poet  
dub poet  
experimenter  
epic singer  
folk singer  
performance poet  
poet  
reciter  
singer  
sonneteer  
rhymster  
shaman  
sound poet  
storyteller  
traditional singer  
versifier

*21 Oct. 2024*

### **Miscellanea**

In the sky no stars  
In sight no moon  
No sun to be seen

No moonshine in view  
No sunshine to be seen  
No starshine at all

In heaven no haven  
No place for paradise  
On earth no light

In the street no one

In the glass no gemstone  
In the mirror no me

Yet I crawl  
Yet I walk  
Yet I soar

*21 Oct. 2024*

### **It's Me Again**

emperor of the earth  
*führer* of the feral  
king of my own kind  
leader of the disenchanted  
monarch of the moon  
patriarch of the church  
prince of the powerful  
ruler of regulus  
sovereign of myself  
sultan of the sun

*21 Oct. 2024*

### **Opposites**

The opposite of the Vatican's censor is the censer or thurible of vengality.

*21 Oct. 2024*

### **Sans This and Sans That**

The ocean with no coast  
The mountain with no peak  
The forest with no trees  
The plains with no prairies  
The caverns with no caves  
The earth with no turf  
The air with no atmosphere  
The planet with no promise

The aura with no borealis  
The culture with no acculturation  
The population of no civilization  
The people of little character  
Again an earth of no worth

21 Oct. 2024

## **Biography**

Yes, I did live for some decades on the planet Earth.  
Yes, I did thrive with such-and-such but not with so-and-so.  
Yes, I did sicken and die on the planet Earth.  
Yes, I did write this *mensagem* and address it to you.

21 Oct. 2024

## **Acknowledging the Inevitable**

When I was a youngster, I would dream of dying, not miserably but decisively.  
When I was an adolescent, I would dream of a *Liebestod*, a “love-death.”  
When I was older and more manly, I would dream of the delights of success.  
When I was experienced in life’s disappointments, I would dream of the cessation of pain.  
When I was on my deathbed, at death’s door, now and then I would sigh a short “good-bye.”  
When ... but any more is assuming or presuming!

21 Oct. 2024

## **Awards**

It is a truism that one poem leads to another, one collection of poems to another ... then one award, honour, accolade, or prize to another award, honour, accolade, or prize ... until the state and the reading public run out of laurels for one’s brow or medals for one’s lapel. Not to mention the paucity of appreciators among one’s readership.

21 Oct. 2024

## **Saddest of Words**

Among the saddest of words ever heard or ever read are these two words: *long lost*.

This observation owes much to Guy Maddin, filmmaker, who is drawn to what other people are inclined to ignore and later express what yet other people are drawn to find singularly revealing.

*21 Oct. 2024*

## **No Return of the Dead**

I do not need to have the dead return to Earth to tell me anything about life afterlife. In the afterlife they may feel that they have a lot to whisper about to us, as they roam our world and mimic the sounds of the voices of those who recently died. And I agree. Instead, I am referring to “life after life,” not to “life after death,” for the latter is not possible at all. What it is we yearn to hear and learn are the secrets of the dead but if they share them with us, the living, they are no longer secrets to be shared. Second-hand secrets are not worth the anguish of consorting with the fresh spirits of the dead who defy logic and reason and consort with the dirty dead. Better first-hand secrets withheld which absolve the newly deceased of any possibility of blame. Read these words yet again if the point that I, still alive, am straining to make remain too obscure to absorb on a single reading.

*21 Oct. 2024*

## **Poetic Advice**

I understand that you wish to write a poem. No? I think the expression is “to compose” a poem. Well then, do you have a favourite poet? No. How about a favourite poem? No. Let me ask you why then do you wish to write a poem? (No answer.)

Here is a question mark: ? It’s often helpful to begin to write a poem with a question and then to follow the question with a word or phrase that surprises even you. Okay? No? Would you like me to give you an opening line? You may use it to begin your poem or at least to loosen your vocabulary. No? Let me ask you, do you wish to frighten or reassure your reader with a word or a phrase or a sentence that starts you off and startles your reader? Yes. Good. I hope it startled you when it took you by surprise! Start composing. Keep writing and do it every day. Begin reading

anthologies of poems to find out who is writing like you or whose writing moves you, quite another matter! And attend public readings by published poets. One day ... who knows?

21 Oct. 2024

### **Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp**

When Aladdin discovered his Wonderful Lamp, little did he realize that it was not empty but that it contained a mighty Genii who had been imprisoned inside the lamp for four hundred years. He had no idea that in return for his release the Genii would grant Aladdin three magical wishes.

These days everyone recognizes that part of the story, but according to the tale's later versions, after his release the Genii and the granting of the three wishes, the Genii with great dismay took one look at the world as it is today, four hundred years following his imprisonment, and voluntarily leapt back into the magical lamp, uttering these words: "Better be alone in the lamp than a stranger in the world as it is today."

22 Oct. 2024

### **Post-Mortems**

Death turns us into corpses, eventually.  
Death turns us into cadavers, eventually.  
Death turns us into ashes, eventually.  
Death turns us into regrets, eventually.  
Death turns us into memories, eventually.  
Death turns us into memorials, eventually.  
Death turns us, the believers among us,  
Into the grievers among us, soon enough.

22 Oct. 2024

### **Lines of This Poem**

The word *decomposition* continues to resist its own decomposition.  
Who can tell, from taste alone, the difference between *whisky* and *whiskey*?  
The next line of this poem runs like this:

“Between the subject and the object of any sentence is to be discerned the sentence’s verb.”

The last line of this poem runs like this:

“Stars that serve as the kings of the night sky serve as their pretenders during its daylight hours.”

This very line serves as the second-last line of this poem.

Assuredly this line is its last.

*22 Oct. 2024*

## **Days of Creation**

The Book of Genesis describes the Seven Days of Creation. Yet the seventh day is described as “the day of rest,” so for the record there are only six days of creation. But rather than seven days or six days, there might reasonably be said that there are eight days, though for argument’s sake the eighth day may be called the Day of Destruction to be followed by another Seven Days of Creation. As well, the word “day” is frequently interpreted loosely to mean “period,” as in Seven Periods of Creation. It seems the cosmos itself is but a cauldron of continuous creation and destruction. I vote to be realistic and to include the Eighth Day.

*22 Oct. 2024*

## **Heaven and Hell**

The downside of Heaven is (maybe or make-believe) the upside of Hell.

*22 Oct. 2024*

## **Promotion vs. Production**

The prolific author Robert Sawyer has a line I very much like. It comes not from his science-fiction stories but from his irritation when organizers and producers of radio, television, internet, and film programs who want him to work for free. For the “glory” of it. He replies, “Never be the only unpaid person on the set.” What he has in mind is that whoever is on camera is part of the production whether it is a promotion for a book or a movie and it should be reimbursed. In my experience, no show runner – whether organizer or producer or principal performer – wants to listen to “such talk.”

*24 Oct. 2024*

## **Translation**

Translating a poem from the Bulgarian language into the English language is work that is hard enough, so I can imagine how difficult it must be for an English-speaker to write a poem in the Bulgarian language!

*24 Oct. 2024*

## **Sevens**

Here in no special order are some formulations once familiar to the Ancients, our predecessors, but now unfamiliar to contemporaries, like ourselves, who shun their poetic, symbolic, and metaphoric values.

Earth has Seven Seas and Seven Continents and Seven Races and Seven Scriptures and Seven Gods and Seven Chakras and Seven Pleiades and Seven Colours of the Rainbow and Seven Planets Visible to the Naked Eye and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and Seven Wonders of the World and Seven Notes of the Heptatonic Musical Scale and Seven Days of Creation and Seven Days of the Week and Seven Types of Ambiguity and Seven Wonders of the World and the Number of the Great Beast and the Seven Deadly Sins. So much for septile and septad for sevenfold are the Spirits of the Spirit.

*24 Oct. 2024*

## **Put and Call**

Whoever invests in the stock market has the right to use the options known as Put and Call. They sound to me like terms used in sports coverage, notably the game of golf. Instead they are quite specific technical terms that entitle the savvy investor to exercise an option that permits the investor to purchase (or “put”) a specific stock, or to sell (or “call”) a specific stock when its price on the market falls or rises for a profitable trade.

*24 Oct. 2024*

## **Scalia, Antonin**

What is wrong with American politics at the present time is that it is aswim in American dollars. For this state of affairs, I lay the blame and the shame at the door of the late Antonin Scalia, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1986 to 2016, who in every way possible tried to drown politics and jurisprudence in money and pretty well succeeded in that endeavour. And that is not even taking into account his “invention” of what he called “originalism” and “textualism” in the interpretations – *i.e.*, misinterpretations – of the U.S. Constitution! What a menace!

24 Oct. 2024

### **Women’s Wear & Fashion Shots**

armedly / blotiful / feast&toes / face chaste / headache / handsomewhat / hipster / legngs / navellous / peach cheek smile-a-while lips-stuck / rest of breast / virgin- tight / wairhair / waister / waist amidriff

asti-spumonti / bras-errie / dresslessness / hemi-naked / higheals / lipshtick / nakedress / nighylon stockings / pajamas - pyjamas / pantics / rougettes / scantypanties / scarful / shortstuff / skinkinini / transparent / underbare / underwar

25 Oct. 2024

### **Sentences I Prefer Not to Hear or Read**

Imagine having to say, “I lived between the two world wars.”

\*

I can never remember whether, as human beings, as creatures of this planet, we are moral or mortal or immortal. Could it be that we are all three of these at once – at one and the same time?

\*

As the Hungarian poet Sandor Weöres wrote, “We see God as we see our eyes.”

\*

The two saddest words that I know are these forlorn ones from the once-popular song: “Love again.”

\*

I do like the description “near fine” when it is employed by an antiquarian bookdealer to describe a rare book.

\*



Is there a single Canadian who knows that he or she has a demonym and what that is?

\*

A sextant has nothing to do with sex.

*25 Oct. 2024*

## **Home to House**

Once upon a time there was a house that was fully occupied by members of a happy family. Over the years this house began to show signs of wear and tear. In time the family itself also began to show similar signs. Then the members of the family began to split up and split apart and the special home turned into an ordinary house with a series of structural weaknesses. So it was abandoned but never haunted by angry ghosts because it had housed or homed once-happy people. Once loved, at the end all it offered was the need for repairs and refurnishing to provide future shelter for new owners and occupants.

*25 Oct. 2024*

## **Tattoos**

There are no tattoos anywhere on my body. I should think that being kidnaped or abducted is bad enough, but the torture of being unwillingly subjected to tattoos on one's body would be much worse, as I would assume that any kidnapers or abductors would have such awful taste that it would be continual punishment until these ink-stains were painfully removed, no matter the unease and pain of it all! So there are no tattoos anywhere on my body.

*25 Oct. 2024*

## **Malcolm Gladwell**

Malcolm Gladwell is an essayist and observer of social trends and a writer of considerable energy and ingenuity. He has introduced into public discourse such terms as “the tipping point” and “the overstory” and argued for their usefulness in focusing on small-scale phenomena and discussing their large-scale effects.

I do not regard the Canadian-raised Gladwell as a social scientist at all, but as the successor of Robert L. Ripley, the popular cartoonist and columnist who created “Ripley’s Believe it or Not!” Introduced in 1918, this is a cartoon panel or feature that

surprises readers with research that undercuts the popular beliefs. I will leave it to the reader of this suggestion of mine to come up with comparisons between the insights into popular culture associated with these two popular public intellectuals.

26 Oct. 2024

### **What Do I Lack by Way of Education?**

*By now my education is more or less complete.  
Or is it?*

I studied early childhood education in Canada,  
Money management in the United States,  
The nature of drug trafficking in Mexico,  
The law of torts in England and Scotland,  
Music, theatre, and dance in France,  
Fascism in Italy and Germany,  
Bolshevism and Communism in Russia,  
Ways to memorize the *Koran* in Iran,  
Carving and painting kokeshi dolls in Japan,  
How to understand the *Bhagavad Gita* in India,  
Learned ways to enrich the Coronavirus in China,  
Viewed the cosmos *via* the James Webb Space Telescope ....

*So much for my education.  
Now all that I need to do is to learn a trade.*

26 Oct. 2024

### **Anticipation**

“There is eternity in every anticipation.” This is a reflection that should have the wistfulness of a line of a poem composed by Emily Dickinson. Instead it is by yours truly.

27 Oct. 2024

### **Words**

I say the word *rain*. I hear it and feel it.  
I say the word *earth*. I hear it and feel it.  
I say the word *love*. I hear it and feel it.  
I say the word *you*. I hear it and feel you.

27 Oct. 2024

## **This Country**

*Romanian poet Anemone Latzina (1942-1993) in an English version by Mark Padnos (b. 1944)*

This country fits me  
like the clothes  
I live in.  
A bit too short  
A bit too long  
A bit too narrow  
A bit too wide

From *Modern Poetry in Translation 19-20*, 1974.

27 Oct. 2024

## **Life and Art**

Have little care that Life is brief,  
And less than art is long.  
Success is in the silences,  
Though fame is in the song.

“Envoi,” *Bliss Carman’s Poems* (1929).

27 Oct. 2024

## **Santa Claus**

Adults are encouraged “to believe in God,” whereas children are instructed “to believe in *the existence* of Santa Claus.” Sooner rather than later, the child puts the

childish beliefs behind himself or herself, whereas the adult finds reason to continue to believe (or at least semi-believe) in the hope that it may do some good or if not at least no evil.

27 Oct. 2024

## **Deities**

We humans have tried out a number of well-known deities in the past, in fact a whole series of gods from all the eras and regions of earth. So far at least, none of them has “worked” on behalf of human kind, to express it bluntly. Lists of these divine beings are enough to fill a series of encyclopaedias, yet not one of these figures has done more than raise the vain hopes of human beings before dashing them to the ground, for good.

Here is an alphabetical list of the names of a handful of such gods as were once worshiped. The list includes some names of those who are still “in the business,” so to speak: Ahura Mazda, Allah, Anansi, Apollo, Astarte, Damara, Dyeus Phter, Enki, Erebus, Freyja, Gaia, Heracles, Holy Spirit (Father, Son and Holy Ghost), Itzamna, Jehovah, Jesus, Manu, Minerva, Odin, Quetzalcoatl, Tartarus, Thor, Vishnu.

28 Oct. 2024

## **Premonitions**

*In memory of Vanga Dimitrova, blind Bulgarian seer*

Death is right around the corner  
But in which city?  
Death comes at the hour of three,  
But by night or day?  
Death arrives when unforeseen.

In which city? At what hour?  
When is Death anticipated,  
When expected? Dawn or dusk?  
As a grief or as a relief?  
Not a care in the world has Death.

28 Oct. 2024

## **Secrets**

It is frequently said that a poem should have a secret. Rather than an overstatement that remark is an understatement. A poem *must* have a secret otherwise it is best described as verse. There is nothing wrong with versification, but there is something shallow with poetry that lacks a secret of its own. A secret is a what? A surprise for sure. One that takes the reader unawares and invites the reader to reread it for the insight it offers into human nature. But a surprise is best if it follows a period of suspense when the reader's suspicions are kindled but not immediately ignited. Too bad film director Alfred Hitchcock did not write poetry, as the best sequences of his feature films create suspense and then surprise.

*29 Oct. 2024*

## **The Poems I Did Not Write**

They nag me. The poems I did not write. They haunt me; that is, their absence has been haunting me all these years, even to this very day, this very minute. And no doubt their auras will continue to hover in the air and atmosphere around me for the rest of the current year and for the unspecified number of years ahead of me and perhaps even into the depths behind me of the hereafter. Thereafter ... who knows, nobody I know knows. What I have lost is the incalculable, the incredible, and the indeterminable. Such is the nature of the artistry of poetry ... and ultimately even the nature of the asterism of the Big Dipper, that is, Ursula minor and Ursula major.

*29 Oct. 2024*

## **Lies**

The naked truth lies midway between the lie that is total and the lie that is noble. It beats the mighty myth all hollow.

*29 Oct. 2024*

## **A Man's Life**

Promise in childhood I had.  
Hope in youthfulness I had.

Despair in maturity I had.  
Naught in old age have I.

29 Oct. 2024

## Dictionary

*Vulva*: English noun, French plaything, Italian target, German bull's-eye. Meaning of *vulva*: "vulv-vulnerable."

30 Oct. 2024

## Property

It is a truism to remind the public that ownership of property is regarded by the state in one of these three ways: as Public Property, as Private Property, or as Personal Property.

30 Oct. 2024

## Stars

It has been *affirmed* but not *proved* that vast constellations are upset with the death of one single star in their region of the heavens.

30 Oct. 2024

## Cosmic Destinies

The Cosmos will be indifferent to the destruction of the Planet Earth.  
The Universe will be undisturbed by the collapse of the Solar System.  
The Galaxies will fail to acknowledge the absorption of their Nebulae.  
The Constellations will be decomposed to the point of obliteration.  
The Nebulae will be unaware of the annihilation of the Galaxies.  
The Solar System will cease to exist following the decay of the Universe.  
The Planet Earth will leave no evidence of the crash of the Cosmos.

30 Oct. 2024

## **Life**

Fantasy writer H.P. Lovecraft, referred vividly to what he called “the poison of life,” in his horror story “Celephaïs” (May 1922). He was right to do so.

*30 Oct. 2024*

## **Human Being**

I wonder if there is a word that links the spark of human life with the essence of being human. If non-existent, allow me to nominate this neologism: *existessence*.

*30 Oct. 2024*

## **What about God?**

Some theories about God sound silly, but none the less here goes ....

God came into cultures when early man looked around and admitted he felt lonely.

God once existed but no longer exists.

God did exist but became an unexpected casualty of the Holocaust.

God is alive and well and living not in Amsterdam but in Amherst, New Jersey.

God resides on a planet (or star) named Kolob, according to deliberations of some members of the Church of Latter Day Saints.

God yearns to help humanity on Earth, our planet, and he is on his way to doing so, but even he is subject to the speed of light, so it is taking him a couple of millennia to travel from his home (on Kolob perhaps) to our war-torn planet (third from the sun) to settle things here. (This is Isaac Asimov’s point, a scientist as well as a science-fiction writer.)

God granted mankind free will and allows men and women to use it, for good or for evil.

God will return to Earth but only at the End of Time, when he will sit in judgement of the spirits or souls of the resurrected bodies of all the men and women who ever lived.

God loves each and every one of us, whether saint or sinner, and forgives the onslaughts and slights of sins contemplated or committed.

God speaks to each person on Earth, should he or she so desire to address and respond, and offers spiritual support and advice on all manner of subjects.

God has had many names over the centuries and across countries and cultures

and even identities. For instance, God is Three in One in the Christian doctrine: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or Spirit.

“God exists” is a useful affirmation, a helpful convention – whether as a He, a She, or an It – the original hermaphrodite.

God lives in Heaven, another useful term and way of saying a little or next to nothing at all.

God? Let’s admit it: Nobody knows.

31 Oct. 2024

## **The Trip Abroad**

*Here are some reminders of “the trip abroad.”*

Returning from the European Continent to Canada, I need to remember to enter my car (leased) on its left-hand side; while abroad I needed to remember to enter the foreign car (rented) on the right-hand side.

Planning the trip abroad, I have to try to remember where I have been keeping my passport and my visa and other travel documents, as well as a small stash of foreign currency, not to mention a couple of credit/debit cards.

Studying maps of adjacent foreign countries, it seems no two countries are indeed adjacent, no locations of important cities or significant sites are readily located, and the names of places and highways and streets are subject to quite regular change.

While I am grumpy leaving home at the last moment, I am elated being abroad only until it is necessary to return home.

I am always early for departures at airports, yet my baggage (when I have to check it, as I do early on) is always the last baggage to come off the conveyor belt or carousel.

Whatever happened to “duty-free areas” at border crossings? At one time every airport and border crossing point seemed to have one or more such outlets for dry goods, especially “luxury goods” like alcohol and tobacco and cosmetics. Since then, what is called “free trade” has reduced the savings involved in such transactions and tax considerations to such an extent that these areas are no longer an attraction on their own. These days the shelves in these outlets seem to be stocked with extravagantly promoted products from producers of products with extravagant names never before encountered.

*Bon voyage! Welcome back!*



31 Oct. 2024

## Major Writers

*for John S. Porter*

I'm often asked why I do not write down my reflections or base my commentaries on the texts of such poets, dramatists, and fiction writers as Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, etc. So much for British ones. American ones would include Dickinson, Faulkner, Hemingway, etc. Currently in the news are Pound, Hughes, Eliot, etc. Their names present themselves because revised editions or scholarly editions or collected editions or boxed editions of their works are currently being published and regularly (and repeatedly) reviewed in *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The New York Review of Books*, etc. The reason for this is very simple. These authors and editions of their writings are being considered and reconsidered all the time. Not being an academic expected to review them, I am not about to volunteer to do so. For me there is no tenure that depends on it. Scholarship is one thing and while lexical and literary *minutiae* are important, literature exists for students and non-scholars too. I prefer to notice neglected writers and overlooked or obscure and often foreign men and women of letters and point out peculiarities that appeal to me and not necessarily to academic critics, as I am either an academic nor a critic!

1 Nov. 2024

## Drugs

As Grandfather Stone whispered to Grandson Stone, "I am so relieved that drug-users no longer describe their drugged states as "being stoned."

1 Nov. 2024

## Death

Death remembers nothing. That is its greatest scourge and strength.

1 Nov. 2024

## Sevens

The colours of the rainbow are seven in number: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Also seven in number are a great many cultural artifacts: Liberal arts, notes of the musical scale or octave, days of the week, ages of man, planets known in antiquity, spirits of God, deadly sins. No doubt there are seven times seven more natural, scientific, and cultural artifacts that could and should be included, but be reminded that what you are reading is what I call a “literary effect” and not a dissertation or a thesis – a grab-bag, not a compendium.

*1 Nov. 2024*

### **Tricky Observation**

Starting point / *embonpoint* / end point.

*1 Nov. 2024*

### **Love or Charity**

I have always found it interesting that the phrase “faith, hope, and charity” trips so readily *off* the tongue, after which it abides in memory, whereas the phrase “faith, hope, and love” trips awkwardly *upon* the tongue, only to fall flat on the ground.

The phrases are biblical in origin. What is found in the King James Version of the Bible (1 Corinthians 13:13) is this: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Over the centuries the word “charity” has acquired the sense of a voluntary and usually a corporate response to the need for organized giving to alleviate personal and public need. That is not the meaning of the word “love” which is giving help oneself, privately and affectionately. There is passion in “love” but only generosity in “charity.”

*1 Nov. 2024*

### **Denial**

Only but just merely barely hardly me at all.  
One, two, three, four, five, six times in all.  
Not only me this time. Again, not at all.

*1 Nov. 2024*

## Short Departure

*In memory of R.F.C.*

I see you begin to walk away.  
I see you cross the roadway.  
I see you amid a crowd of people.  
I see you draw near the horizon.  
I see you float among the clouds.  
I see you alongside the Moon and Sun.  
I see you amid the constellations.  
I see you as you begin to fade away ....

*That's all. There's nothing new or now to add,  
At least nothing more that I may add.*

*2 Nov. 2024*

## The National Redoubt

As a youngster who listened enthralled to reports on the radio of the closing months of the Second World War, I worried myself to sleep that the enemy, the forces of the Nazis, would take refuge in their national redoubt amid the mountains of Bavaria from which they would continue to wage their self-declared vendetta against the West. The Allies of the world would never again be safe from the Axis powers as long as there were Nazis in Berchtesgaden, Bavaria, Germany, Europe, etc.

Needless to add, I worried in vain because Allied bombers quickly flattened these structures and then American troops occupied the Eagle's Nest, the Kehlsteinhaus. (Were their secret armies being reformed in the caverns of the mountains?) Whether or not this is so, the Nazi ideology lives on, its fascist and racist dimensions certainly do, perhaps mainly in Obersalzberg, certainly elsewhere throughout the world, unto this day.

The myth of the National Nazi Redoubt: ideology *über Alles*.

*3 Nov. 2024*

## When We Make Love

When we make love, it is not merely the following acts and activities:

Carnal knowledge, coitus, congress, copulation, fucking, getting laid, humping, intercourse, lying with, making love, screwing, sexual congress, sexual relations, sleeping with, etc.

It is such acts as these, of course, intercourse is, but it is much more than those besides. It is affection, alleviation, assuagement, deference, delectation, delight, enjoyment, fondness, kindness, loving, loving kindness, passion, relief, respect, tenderness, etc.

Making love is an experience that may be seen from as many perspectives as there are available to men and women, if only for the following reason: Making love remakes the two of us.

4 Nov. 2024

## **I Can Tell It in a Line or Two**

*Nine words from the poem by Max Jacob called "Fairytale Confession" translated by Edward Lucie-Smith, Modern Poetry in Translation, No. 2, Summer 1966.*

I can tell it in a line or two  
but I can also tell it in fewer than nine words.

I tell it in a line or two  
I tell in a line or two  
I tell a lie or two  
I tell a lie too  
I tell lies too  
I tell lies  
I lie  
Lies

4 Nov. 2024

## **Stars**

Stars illuminate the black night sky. The naked eye may see them as incandescent white lights, but telescopes present them in their range of colours, corresponding to their ages and temperatures. Their colours include red, blue, violet, orange, yellow,

white, green, and purple.

Yet there is another type of star, entirely different in nature, that is yellow in colour. In German it is called *Judenstern*, literally “Jew’s star.” It is the six-pointed Star of David, patch or badge, often yellow in colour, generally worn by order of the Nazis in Occupied Europe. Its purpose is to distinguish a Jewish person from a non-Jewish person. It is an evil star.

Some years ago, in a New York suburb I was shown one such patch and was then handed it by the woman who had worn it in a work camp. I felt a wave of hate and disgust emanate from it. The feeling was familiar to the elderly woman who had worn it under duress for some years. It is comforting to know that for every such badge there are billions and billions of real stars of many colours in the black night sky.

4 Nov. 2024

## Steppes

As a youngster, the five words “the steppes of Central Asia” haunted my imagination, at least until I learned that the seven letters of “steppes” did not refer to “steps” at all but to “steppes lands” (in effect, grasslands, level lands with grass; grassy prairies or plains). Indeed, the words “Central Asia” themselves once possessed and still possess that spell, as did the rhythms of Russian-born Alexander Borodin’s symphonic poem “On the Steppes of Central Asia” composed in 1880.

*Note:* I am always taken by surprise when the word “steppes” is pronounced “steps” and not “steeps.”

4 Nov. 2024

## Forbidden Subjects

Some subjects are simply *verboten* in everyday conversation. If you approach them, someone is sure to reproach you.

4 Nov. 2024

## Masturbation

There is one word or subject that is seldom if ever mentioned in a serious poem or song lyric and that word or subject is masturbation.

The word itself is taboo in polite circles, but like taboo's opposite, the totem, it possesses powers of attraction and repulsion all on its own when described in any detail. So despite pros and cons, here are some elementary thoughts on the word and the subject.

Do people always feel guilty when they masturbate? Onanism or coitus interruptus to one side – it is arguably a form of birth control (another controversial subject that leaves most people feeling uneasy) – masturbation is often dismissed as “self-abuse.” The act has acquired a bad reputation for which we can lay the blame at the doors of religious institutions.

At an early age, when the urge took over, I recognized that the sense of guilt itself added no pleasure to the activity; indeed, it is the feeling of guilt itself and not the act itself that generated the ill-will. Despite this, the act is a lonely one but then at times all of us are lonely. There is also the sense that it is a substitute for the mutuality of the sexual act, and while that is true, one cannot always be in a position to engage reciprocally.

Substitute for “self-abuse” the notion of “self-release” and one's perspective on the word and the practice will change ... presumably for the better. There will always be nay-sayers, but my bet is that they are the ones who engage in masturbation a lot and are frightened to death (as the expression goes) doing it. Double distress.

*4 Nov. 2024*

## **Mixed Marriage**

These days a “mixed marriage” is not the marriage of partners of different religious and cultures, but two mates who mate and amalgamate.

*5 Nov. 2024*

## **Life**

Hereafter would you rather enjoy serenity or eternity, given your estimate of the number of the years that you have yet to live?

*5 Nov. 2024*

## **Always**

Always there is pain, disappointment, disillusionment.

Sometimes there is joy, delight, and enlightenment.  
Never ever is there the right amount when most needed.  
There is always less of more, more of less, now and then.

*5 Nov. 2024*

### **Angel, Incubus**

It has turned out so awful that now no one is able to distinguish between an idyllic dream and a fulsome nightmare, or between an idyllic nightmare and a fulsome dream.

*5 Nov. 2024*

### **Two Arks**

The Ark is parked nowhere because once the waters of the Bible's Great Flood subsided, there was no non-muddy or non-mucky place to anchor it. Now, you think I am referring to Noah's Ark, but it is the Arc of the Covenant that I have in mind. There was no place to park this reliquary that includes the two stones on which were inscribed the Ten Commands either, so forget about its remains said to be rotting on the slopes of Mount Ararat, one of the massifs common to Armenia and Turkey, and forget about Aksum (or Axum) in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia where the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion is believed (mainly by Ethiopians) to be the sanctuary of the Arc of the Covenant.

*5 Nov. 2024*

### **Four Seasons**

Here are brand-new seasonal associations for the four quarters of the year, which themselves are Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter: Springiness, summery, freefall, hibernal.

*5 Nov. 2024*

### **The Low Countries**

Belgium, Benelux, Dutch, Flanders, Flemish, Holland, The Low Countries,

Luxembourg, The Netherlands .... Try as I might, I have to struggle to untie this knot of nomenclature (land, people, language, country, culture), so I will leave it to the reader to do so on my behalf to encourage wide-spread satisfaction.

6 Nov. 2024

## **The Lost City**

It seems every people, every civilization, every culture, every continent, every country, indeed every land has in its past “a lost city,” though it might take the form or shape of an archaic community or a futuristic metropolis, to identify two possibilities of many. (Off-hand I am able to recall three such legends or myths all set in the Canadian Arctic. Most countries possess more of their own “lost cities.”)

What draws this to mind is the Russian tradition of Kitezh, the “invisible city” that may exist to this day in the depths of Lake Svetloyar near today’s Nizhny Novgorod, to the puzzlement of the Golden Horde, under Batu Khan in the thirteenth century. The outlines of the beautiful city appear only to “the pure of heart” and so not to the Mongol invaders who would pillage and destroy it did it not sink first.

There are many reasons why it is being remembered today, not the least reason being the fact that the legend served as the subject of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s four-act opera titled *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* (1907). The legend also attracted the attention of the poet Anna Akhmatova, who wrote two poems that allude to it, and the film director Werner Herzog who explored the myth in his documentary *Bells from the Deep* (1993).

6 Nov. 2024

## **Words**

It is estimated that there are around one million words in the English language, of which 175,000 words are in common use, including 30,000 or so that are in daily use.

All this verbiage to one side, I have need of but a handful of common words (like *love*, *affection*, *beauty*, and *respect*) to describe you because you have been so exceptional!

7 Nov. 2024

## **Hitler and Chaplin**



What did Adolf Hitler think about the way he is depicted by director and actor Charles Chaplin in his 1940 movie *The Great Dictator*? Nobody knows but one is free to imagine. Much information about Hitler's tastes in films has been published as well as being debunked by biographers. However, it is pretty well established that among American movies the Nazi dictator admired Gary Cooper in *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) and Spencer Tracy in *Captains Courageous* (1937). (It is of minor interest that these two feature-length films have Canadian connections.) It is also known that he enjoyed the comedies of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy as well as the epic *Gone with the Wind* (1939). It is well established that he cherished Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse* cartoons. For his own use, he arranged for his contacts in Portugal to supply a print of *The Great Dictator*, but what he thought of Chaplin's portrayal of himself remains unknown, even whether he had the opportunity to watch the comedy, not once but twice, in which Chaplin portrayed not only "Adenoid Hynkel" but also the otherwise nameless character called "the Jewish barber." Chaplin has been quoted as saying, "I'd give anything to know what he thought of it." Hitler's cinematic preferences were for epics like *Die Nibelungen* (1921) and the political and athletic documentaries of Leni Riefensthal of the 1930s.

7 Nov. 2024

## **Where Ever You Are**

Now "somewhere" in the world may be found our happiness.

Maybe that "somewhere" is off-earth (*i.e.*, in air, atmosphere, sky, space, another temporal rather than physical dimension, *etc.*).

Maybe that "somewhere" is undersea (*i.e.*, in an aquatic region, epipelagic zone, submarine trench, *etc.*).

Maybe that "somewhere" is underground (*i.e.*, in a burrow, cavern, tunnel, mineshaft, pit, volcano, crater, hollow, *etc.*).

Maybe that "somewhere" is on the earth's surface (*i.e.*, on the planet, earth, desert, ground, terra firma, *etc.*).

Having raised the question of "where," let me try to answer where:

Here is where it is, our happiness: off-earth, undersea, underground, on earth's surface (*i.e.*, where ever you may happen to be at this very moment in time and space, *etc.*).

7 Nov. 2024

## **Permanency**

Nothing is permanent, not even dying followed by death,  
Though there are human beings who like to maintain  
That even death, though a requirement, is impermanent.  
(Admitting or imagining it must bring them some grief or relief.)  
They do so in gossip, in reports, and in scriptures  
That some people, as unlikely as it may seem to have been,  
Have defeated death through rising from the dead.  
Not many, at all. Perhaps not any, at all. Such is all.

8 Nov. 2024

## **The Meaning of John**

To my surprise, I recently learned that the English name *John* is the transliteration of the Greek name *Ioannes*, and that the Greek name *Ioannes* is itself the transliteration of the Hebrew name *Johanan*. Here, quoting an authoritative website, I am doubly surprised to learn that the name appears 132 times in the New Testament, with reference to five (possibly six) different Johns. Here they are:

John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1); John the Apostle (Matthew 4:21) who may or may not be the same as John the Revelator (Revelation 1:4); the father of Simon Peter (John 1:42); a Levite of high-priestly descent (Acts 4:6); a man also known as Mark (Acts 12:12) who is walked out of prison by an angel, if you can imagine!

The etymology of the name *John* or, in Hebrew, *Johanan*, consists of a variation of the letters of the Hebrew original *YHWH*, the Name of the Lord, and the words for “favour” or “grace” or “grace and favour” in the sense of “graciousness.”

*Source: Abarim Publications' Biblical Name Vault.*

8 Nov. 2024

## **Sex**

I find much of today's television, internet, literature, dance, and music to be more *clitcal* than necessary.

8 Nov. 2024

## **Sculpture**

Sculpture is art in the round; scripture is literature in the round.

8 Nov. 2024

## **Twenty Titles of God**

*Jehovah, Jesus, God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit*

Abba  
God Almighty  
He Who Made Heaven and Earth  
King of All the Earth  
King of Kings and Lord of Lords  
Lord God of Hosts  
Lord of Heaven and Earth  
Possessor of Heaven and Earth  
The Alpha and Omega  
The Destroying Stone  
The First and the Last  
The God Who Works Wonders  
The Lord God Almighty  
The Lord of the Whole Earth  
The Maker of All Things  
The Most High over All the Earth  
The Resurrection and the Life  
The Rock of Ages  
The Way, the Truth, and the Life  
Your Heavenly Father

*Addendum:* Despite such grandiose titles as the ones above, and many more besides these, the Great One (or Ones) seems unable or unwilling to save puny mortals from halting their wars before they begin, massacring themselves, destroying their homes, and polluting nature and the planet that supports everyone.

8 Nov. 2024

## **Two Verses**

This rhyme is dedicated to the determined person who reads all of it,

But do it before I find it is time to quit.

This verse would have been longer  
Had I lived a little longer.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **What I Am**

Whatever or  
whoever I am  
or aim to be  
is awkward to  
admit even hard  
to say with  
any degree of  
clarity despite  
the fact that  
the words  
are simple  
enough these  
days to say.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **UCAC**

There is no House of Un-Canadian Activities Committee, as there is the House of Un-American Activities. There should be such a House within the House of Commons, with its own cast of sub-committees to investigate un- and non-Canadian activities in specific fields, such as television, internet, radio, print, media, culture, film, theatre, education, defence, parliament (commons, senate) ... *hey*, once I start to list them, the list of needed committees seems endless, growing remorselessly.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **Untitled**

I am lacking a title for the present poem.

I am without a rhyme for its second line.  
I am missing a metre for all its lines.  
I am minus a form to select for it.  
I am wanting a theme for it as well.  
I am left wondering what to write about.  
I am intent on wanting you to think about it too.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **U.S. President Trump**

Donald J. Trump shows no respect for the office of the President of the United States of America. The truth is that he does not yearn to be its President; he yearns to be its Emperor – the Emperor of the United States of America.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **Progressivist Poem**

The sea has a shore,  
The continent has a coastline,  
The mountain has a peak,  
The plain has a bluff,  
The snow has a snowbank,  
The ice has a glacier,  
The sky has a boundary,  
The sun has a moon,  
The moon has a sun,  
The night has a day,  
The day has a night,  
The earth has the light  
Of an infinity of stars.

*9 Nov. 2024*

### **Born of Fragments**

My poetry begins where the poems of other poets come to an end. In the process mine collect and collate the words that were left behind. I am ever grateful for the use I

may make of them, and ever delighted that they retain residual powers of their own. While the dramas have been drained away and the skills have been laid to rest, they nonetheless remain suggestive of structures and strictures superior to themselves alone. Forgive me if the surfaces remain coplanar, for being flat they demand none of the narrative that other poets require for their constructions. What is it they require? A power that is transactional, a soul that is participatory. I could go on but, once again, I want to shed a spark of light and not floodlight the night.

9 Nov. 2024

### **Powers and Presences**

In this poetry or perhaps among or between these poems, you will see or feel or hear or otherwise sense the stirring of ghostly powers and presences that are neither yours nor mine for they seem to be those of someone or something else that is neither human nor unhuman but portions of an immensity that has ever been the same throughout the ages and sages of ancient climes and times. They have so arranged things and nothings to make their existences felt not all the time but wherever and whenever *thee* or *yee* may be.

9 Nov. 2024

### **Hauntings**

Ghosts don't bother me. It's spirits that I fear.

9 Nov. 2024

### **Secret Thrills**

Thanks to you, Vanga Dimitrova,  
Thanks to you, Philip Glass,  
Thanks to you, Umm Kulthum,  
Thanks to you, P.D. Ouspensky,  
Thanks to you, Rainer Maria Rilke,  
Thanks to you, Sax Rohmer,  
Thanks to you, Denis Saurat,  
Thanks to you, Yuma Sumac,  
Thanks to you, Walt Whitman,  
Thanks to you, *friends forever*.

9 Nov. 2024

## **Universities**

Many a college or university faculty appears to me to be little more than a cult.

10 Nov. 2024

## **Swift, Taylor**

Taylor Swift, the singer and songwriter who broke all world records with her Eras Tour of 2024-25, was most often photographed on stage wearing brightly and variously coloured sequined body suits – *i.e.*, bathing suits – which may have accounted for much of her popularity among the young women who flocked to attend her concerts.

10 Nov. 2024

## **Character**

Here is the question that I am facing every day these days: I know I am strong enough to live but am I strong enough to die?

10 Nov. 2024

## **Moon Struck**

The Man in the Moon has no opinion of me, yet He eyes me night and day. The Woman in the Moon avoids my gaze, whether day or night, for She presides over its dark side and sees me not.

10 Nov. 2024

## **Five Points**

It was usually late Sunday afternoons that I would walk the five blocks from the home of my youth to the area in Kitchener called Five Points because it was the meeting point of five residential streets. Once there I would purchase at the grocery store a brick of ice cream to share with my parents once I returned home. Naturally (or

unnaturally) coming or going I had in mind enjoying my share of the ice cream (usually the three-flavoured Neopolitan) and many fabled strikes for gold, at the following sites: Eldorado Gold Mines, Lost Dutchman Mine, Slumach's Lost Mine, Lost Golden Bullets Mine, King Solomon's Mines. A dish of ice cream was "mine," but not "a gold mine."

*10 Nov. 2024*

## **Unjustice**

Given the sufferings visited upon some people, aware of the benefits granted unto some other people, allow me to conclude that any god that exists – he, she, it, they – is an unjust deity.

*11 Nov. 2024*

## **Elites and "Delites"**

Some of us are downtrodden, others of us are upgraded, with little or no input from our inner selves.

*11 Nov. 2024*

## **Dealing with Problems**

I have long not wondered about abstract problems or questions of a pressing nature, though I have occasionally pondered them. I have in mind cosmic problems, theological problems, human problems, political problems, and social problems because there are no plausible earthly solutions for them.

Cosmic problem: Is there intelligent life on other planets or worlds?

Theological problem: Does an all-known deity, that is, a god, exist?

Human problem: Is there a way to ensure that Earth's population has access to potent medicine, potable water, and ample food?

Political problem: How is an ideology responsible for many of our problems?

Social problem: How do we ensure access to freedom of speech to deal with problems of a social or cultural nature?

The principle problem here is that there is no possibility of agreement on the solutions to these problems, not at all. So I no longer consider them pressing, though I do enjoy pondering them from time to time. Yet no earthly solutions to them occur to me. Problems spells trouble. Questions spell possible answers.



11 Nov. 2024

## **A Problem of Mine**

*I know there are ways other than the standard ones to deal with the world's problems. – Jón Oskar, Icelandic poet*

Well what is the problem?

I am not hungry, not thirsty.  
I am not endangered, not threatened.  
I am not spied upon, not hunted down.  
I am not jailed, neither imprisoned nor exiled.  
I am not impoverished, not destitute.  
I am not without companionship.  
I am not without living quarters.  
I am not specially bright though not stupid.  
I am not particularly happy, not really unhappy.  
I am not nothing, neither anything extra-special.

Perhaps that is the problem.

11 Nov. 2024

## **Moon**

I am unlikely ever to view the Dark Side of the Moon, and certainly I will not live long enough to stand within one of the *mares* on the Near Side of the Moon.

11 Nov. 2024

## **Remembrance**

I must not allow today to pass without acknowledging that today is Remembrance Day throughout much of the English-speaking world. It marks the passing of the Armistice that marks the end of the Second World War at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year 1918. It is one day of honour that seems to be more meaningful to older citizens than to younger ones who know no one at all who experienced the carnage of the 1914-1918 hostilities.

11 Nov. 2024

## **Word and World**

What lies between this *word* and this *world*? The question is a somewhat interesting one, if only because the *word* is beautiful and stable and remains so to us, whereas the *world* keeps changing, one day delighting us, the next day disgusting us. Such is the power of transformation of the lower-case *l*, the twelfth letter of the alphabet!

12 Nov. 2024

## **Whatever Happened To**

Whatever happened to television aerials on roofs, running boards on automobiles, pawn tickets, sweepstake tickets, grand tours, Marshall Stalin's promises, Adolf Hitler's Germania and His Thousand Year Reich, crystal snow globes, King Solomon's Mines, Original Portions of the True Cross, manuscript of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Won*, Sunken Continent of Atlantis, Brigadoon, snows of yesteryear, musical score of Mozart's Cello Concerto in F ... and whatever happened to my long list of such "lost treasures" which itself seems to be irretrievably lost!

12 Nov. 2024

## **End Times**

If it is true that belief creates reality, rather than that reality creates belief, it is a mighty multitude of messiahs who will freshly arrive from afar or suddenly appear among us to usher in the End Time or the End of Time or the Time of the End, expressions vary. The messianic names are legion and most of them appear to be irate and intolerant men (with only a few libidinous women to worry about) intent on our destruction. Beware or at least take care!

12 Nov. 2024

## **Obituary Notice**

*Ernest Singer, died in Toronto, November 12, 2024*

He died *expectedly*, finally, it might be added, after a long illness. The extermination camps in the "blood lands" did not defeat him or his brother. Decades spent in

business in Latin America taught him the importance of humanity, hard but intelligent work, business ethics, etc. He kept his wits about himself and became an exceptional husband, father, grand-father and great-grandfather. His wife Helen and their family and their children were of dominating importance to him. With his two children he built and saw the erection of tall buildings in Toronto. He himself was very tall, like the buildings the family erected. "My husband made me a millionaire," Helen told my late wife Ruth, her long-term friend, before adding, "Our children made me a billionaire."

*13 Nov. 2024*

### **Mistresses**

Unlike the ladyfriend of considerable experience, the girlfriend is likely to be an inexperienced young woman with designs of her own.

*13 Nov. 2024*

### **Moon and You**

I see the Moon and think of You; I see You and think of the Moon. The lunar body waxes and wanes in size, as does your allure depending on your apparent distance from me. Perigee is preferable to apogee.

*13 Nov. 2024*

### **Words Again**

I live my life in a world of words, a welter of words, a welkin of words, a swirl of words, a whirl of words, words in a whirlwind. It is also a life of sounds and images, a legerdemain of aural or oral as well as optical or visual effects, largely illusory. I find it all to be somewhat comforting when it is not moderately distracting.

*14 Nov. 2024*

### **No Grave Accent**

No monument, no statuary, no statue, no memorial, no tomb, no headstone, no grave, no casket, no coffin, no remains, and certainly no grave-marker of any sort. Only the memories and the ashes that were blowing in the wind or clinging to the clouds or

resting on the ground. That is all. No more means not a thing more, not one thing more.

*15 Nov. 2024*

## **Broadway Musical**

The audience is hushed. The musicians begin to play. The single curtain rises or the double curtains part. The audience applauds the set and scenery. The musicians continue to play until they cease to play. It grows silent as a number of the actors and singers take their places and begin to address each other as well as “the fourth wall.” Also audible, amazingly, is the anticipation of the members of the audience for the next sixty or ninety or one hundred and twenty minutes, including one intermission or two.

*16 Nov. 2024*

## **Cemeteries**

The gates of cemeteries are generally open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., sometimes earlier, sometimes later. The arrangement corresponds to regular business hours, but it says nothing about “the hours of the dead” or “dead time” itself. “Living time” extends from birth to death. “Dead time” is a reference to the time before birth and after death, I guess.

*17 Nov. 2024*

## **Dreaming**

It has been hypothesized that the function of dreaming is to keep us asleep, in effect to entertain consciousness so the brain or mind may continue its work, whatever that is, otherwise the sleeper would wake up leaving that work incomplete. The dreams are meant to entertain us while in the state of semi-sleep. Lucid dreaming, to the extent that it is possible, would observe the imagery that is recalled or fabricated.

Do the dead dream? Hardly likely, but nobody now alive is in a position to know if it happens and if so how long. If, as is likely, the contents of the conscious mind disperse upon death, it would seem that the dead do not dream. If they do continue to dream, it would seem their dreams might resemble the nightmares of the living.

18 Nov. 2024

## **Sexual Intercourse**

A post-coital morning followed by *deux croissants et café au lait* in a Paris *hôtel* room is a morning to remember, a morning with a meaning, and no mourning to reconsider.

18 Nov. 2024

## **Latin Expression**

After the learned disquisition and its ignorant dismissal were delivered, the following Latin tag was most appropriate: *Sed tamen potest esse totaliter aliter*. It means nothing less than the following: “But even so, it may be completely otherwise.”

19 Nov. 2024

## **Distinction**

As a youngster, I struggled long and hard to remember the differences between these two verbs, *can* and *may*. Once I grew up and learned to appreciate how they do differ, I relaxed and thereafter easily distinguished the differences between *boy* and *girl*, *male* and *female*, *man* and *woman*, *gentleman* and *gentlewoman*, *yes* and *no*.

20 Nov. 2024

## **Vanga the Psychic**

The leading psychic of Bulgaria was the pride and fame for the blind woman affectionately known as Baba Vanga. (“Baba” is a term of respect for an elderly person but it may also mean “foolish old woman”; “Vanga” is the diminutive form of a girl’s first name “Vangeliya.”) I am referring to Vangeliya Pandova Dimitrova Gushterova (1911-1996) who resided much of her life in the border town of Petrich, where her reputation as the blind psychic or prophetess is known to every Bulgarian and attracted many a foreigner to that Balkan country “to learn what the future holds.”

Here words and works are featured in a twelve-part TV series called *Assim falava Vanga (Thus Spoke Vanga, 2003)* directed by Rosen Elezov, as well as for a made-for-television documentary *Vangeliya (2013)* directed by Sergei Bovel, not to forget about the feature-length television documentary film *Fenoment (1976)* directed

by Nevena Tosheva. Her position in Bulgaria was assured by the Institute for Suggestology and Suggestupedia of the Academy of Sciences. Shortly before her death in Petrich, among the hundreds of celebrities and thousands of ordinary folk who sought her out, she prophesied for two visiting Canadians (in the early 1970s), and showed herself to be an adept character reader, though at the time she was close to totally blind.

21 Nov. 2024

## **Equivalent**

Q. What is the equivalent for the youthful male of the youthful female's *menarche*?

A. The equivalent is usually known as *spermarche* and on occasion is called *semenarche*.

22 Nov. 2024

## **Artists**

Most of the young painters I have met may be knowledgeable about contemporary art but they have difficulty distinguishing between the paintings of Monet and Manet.

23 Nov. 2024

## **Imagism**

I have always had trouble with that line of William Carlos Williams that runs "No ideas but in things." It appears a number of times in his long poem called "Paterson" (1927) and one time as "Say it! No ideas but in things" and another time as "No ideas beside the facts." Are "facts" things, or are "things" facts? It's not very clear, at least to me, but it is now one of the tenets of the movement known as Imagism. Yet the notion that only things embody ideas strikes me as not only unlikely but also as unprovable. Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens are but two important philosophically minded poets who would be uneasy with the catchphrase.

The text of the poem has appeared in print many times but most notably in *Paterson: Revised Edition*, 1992. For all that, Williams, a potent and accomplished poet, wrote a mantra that inspired the work of a near generation of young American poets.

24 Nov. 2024

## **Pool of Words**

I feel I think I sense that the words that come into my mind I do not mind at all because I am pleased but I do not want them to swirl around for too long. They are distracting running loose like this and when I try to recall them they are long gone. So I harness them to make poetic sense not in any literal sense but poetic to the extreme to be sure. The extremes may easily be modified or lessened without loss but instead perhaps even with gain. A drop of water becomes a puddle becomes a pond becomes pool becomes a riverlet becomes a river becomes a lake becomes a great lake becomes a sea becomes one of the Seven Seas and then an ocean of spirits and thoughts. Maybe even a mighty verbal globe-sized deluge.

25 Nov. 2024

## **Neologism**

Instead of lingering “inlife” we face loitering among the “indead.”

26 Nov. 2024

## **Love and the Octopus**

Q. How many hearts has an octopus?

A. Amazingly, it has three hearts as well as eight limbs and nine brains.

Q. Could an octopus love you more than I am able to love you, possessing as I do but one heart along with merely two limbs and one brain?

A. No, because unless you are a cephalopod and because I happen to be a cephalopod specialist, one of my hearts, one of my limbs, and one of my brains equal all the features of the cephalopod.

Q. How do you know all of this?

A. Easy. You should have guessed by now ... that you are, to me, a cephalopod as I am, to you, a cephalopod specialist!

27 Nov. 2024

## **To Grow Old**

“How strange to no longer desire one’s desires!”

If Rainer Maria Rilke found it strange, should we not all concur? He admitted so in the first of the “Duino Elegies” composed in 1912 as a guest of Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis at Duino Castle north of Trieste on the Adriatic Sea.

To grow old is what it is that we try to do until it is done, notably we who are older than the masses of men and women whose expiring spirits and animated bodies throng us and will not leave us alone with their confused thoughts of mortality.

We find it unfamiliar, as did he, despite the cries that call out for us among the angelic hosts that were solely overheard by him alone and only then. Let me require of him what only he most assuredly knows and knows for certain, experiences not naturally known to one nor all, the lore of it among the ignorant, the knowledge of it among the sages and the saints, as the saying goes.

One’s own desire draws one ahead of the multitudes and the masses at least until one renounces one’s vain hopes and feeble trusts and utters these words: “It is enough” – without adding the adverb “now” or the adverb “never.” These former desires are as foolscap among the confetti of the times for those who contemplate the requirement “to grow old.”

*Inspired by the “loose translation / interpretation” of the first of Rilke’s “Elegies” by the American poet Michael R. Burch.*

28 Nov. 2024

## **Standing There**

You, standing there alone at the busy intersection,  
Waiting for the light to change, the traffic to halt.  
As I step past, I quickly appraise your appearance,  
As much as it is possible to do. Impossible really,  
But rewarding nonetheless. Too little time at hand.

Everything and everyone moves, except this You,  
Who looks elsewhere and avoids the gazes of all.  
Tall, taller than I am. Unlike me, stylishly dressed,  
Indeed almost elegantly so, for a busy afternoon  
In a bustling city. Modishly slim, You seem to be,

Almost painfully so, in spite of the loose cape,  
The one you wear or that wears you. Long fingers.  
I judge your legs to be remarkably lissome too,  
You being very tall, yet your breasts are so furtive,



At least as my mind imagines. My mind moans.

The weather has been miserable for three days,  
But this vision of black cape, framing your hair,  
Piercing eyes that gaze elsewhere, nowhere at all,  
A statue alive, yet the work of a departed sculptor,  
One of great ability and insight and penetration.

In a week of miserable weather I fleetingly behold  
This vision of You, caryatid that You seem to be:  
The traffic light changes slowly from red to green.  
Miserable weather. Noisy intersection. A woman  
Greater than all the Gods of Greece and Rome.

29-30 Nov. 2024

### **Greetings on Her Birthday, December 2, 2024**

In vain I search for her first name  
To celebrate her birthday, this day,  
Hers and hers alone, for *it is Helga*.

Given faith in the powers of *a cappella* and of *rime*,  
It could easily be one of these first names,  
All of them reserved for women:

Adela, Adelia, Adella, Bela, Bella,  
Elka, Elsa, Gabriella, Isabella, Marcella,  
Melba, Selma, Silvia, Stella, Thelma, Zelda.

But, alas, it is not one of these, for *it is Helga*.  
It comes, it seem, from the word *heilagr*,  
The word in Old Norse for “holy” or “blessed.”

1-2 Dec. 2024

### **Two Haiku**

*Based on “loose translations / interpretations” of two haiku composed by*

*Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) by the American poet Michael R. Burch, revised  
by JRC.*

Winter is in the air:  
My neighbour over there,  
How well will he fare?

\*

Nothing in the cry  
Of the cicadas  
Suggests they soon must die.

*2-3 Dec. 2024*

### **Un-Merry-Go-Round**

What remains of youth is age.  
What remains of age is memory.  
What remains of memory is distortion.  
What remains of distortion is deprivation.  
What remains of deprivation is want.  
What remains of want is youth.  
What remains of youth ....

*2-3 Dec. 2024*

### **Human Life**

birth date  
a.m.- p.m.  
*anagrafe*  
death date  
a.m.-p.m.  
*aetatis*  
r.i.p.

*3 Dec. 2024*

### **Snow**

Out the window I looked and when I beheld what was covering everything I

exclaimed to myself: “O, No, Now, Snow!”

4 Dec. 2024

## **Dada**

People who disdain or dismiss Dada as meaningless, the product of neutral Zürich in Switzerland, fail to recall the atrocities of war being imposed by the non-Dadaist population led by militaristic Berlin in Deutschland.

4 Dec. 2024

## **Yves Tanguy’s Images**

*painter of singular species unknown to biology or physics*

neither scientific nor sensical  
biometal, mentalmetallic  
spiritshape, beachshape  
lifeunlike, bodshape, mechbody  
mental-minded-metal  
mechanical-mechanal  
splint-spin  
machine-mechanism  
calm, balm, mad  
bodilyparts-bodilyarts-bodilywarts  
breast-west-east-best

*biology or physics known to singular species of painter*

5 Dec. 2024

## **Illusions**

During our bright daylight hours, we gradually lose sight of our illusions, the illusions that return during our dark, night-time hours.

5 Dec. 2024

## **Numbers, Magic**

Three and seven are magical numbers. But then so are one, two, four, five, six, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

5 Dec. 2024

## **Plots in Literature**

The observation is often made that there are only two plots or themes in all of literature: The man goes on a journey, or the stranger comes to town.

The statement itself has been variously (and without evidence) attributed to Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Hemingway. Various expressed, it is derived from a remark made by the American novelist John Gardner in *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (1984). It has a literary resonance to it though lurking behind it I sense the presence of the insights of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud or those of the psychologist Carl Jung. Yet whoever first wrote it the statement is incomplete as it stands.

Earlier today it occurred to me that the formulation is not really about two different people. The reason for this is that the two men are really one single person, a young and innocent man perhaps and an older and wiser man to be sure. This insight is quite literary in nature, one worthy of the literary critic Northrop Frye. Yet nowhere in the thirty-three or more volumes of Frye's writings will it be found. Not even in *The Northrop Frye Quote Book*.

6 Dec. 2024

## **Fantasies**

A fantasy is to be relished but not believed. Those fantasies that are meant to be believed are better known as "fantasies."

7 Dec. 2024

## **Hopes**

All of us yearn for "better things" from our society, but seldom do we long for "a better planet."

7 Dec. 2024

## **Sappho to Her Lover**

To her lover, Sappho is said to have said, or to have whispered, or to have hummed, or to have sung, or to have written, “I discovered the Goddess in your body’s curves and crevasses.”

*7 Dec. 2024*

## **Observances**

### I

I look behind and see no end at all.  
I look ahead and foresee the end of all.  
I look below and forecast the fall.  
I look above and forestall the fall.  
I look within and foreclose on it all.

### II

The Planet is lukewarm.  
The Moon is freezing cold.  
The Sun is fiercely hot.  
The Solar System is indifferent.  
The Heart of Man, disheartened.

*7-8 Dec. 2024*

## **Hanna Arendt**

*Thanks to the poet Michael R. Burch*

“But how does one live without the dead?”  
That is the question of Hanna Arendt.  
“Where is the sound of their lost company?”  
That too is the question of Hanna Arendt.

My question is the one that follows:  
“Did you know that Arendt wrote poetry?”  
“Yes, you did? No, you didn’t?”  
Yes, she wrote these lines in German.

Then she asked the following question:  
“Where now, their companionable embraces?”

We wish they were still with us.”  
This question of hers has no ready answer.

According to Michael R. Burch, she asks:  
“What avails? That we commit ourselves  
to their memories, and through this commitment,  
learn to survive.” We do, thanks to Hanna.

*8 Dec. 2024*

## **Two Puns**

Q. What kind of pants does a psychic wear?

A. Just a paranormal pants.

Q. What does a lawyer want with his Scotch?

A. Just ice.

*9 Dec. 2024*

## **Literalism and the Bible and the U.S. Constitution**

Expecting the text of the King James Version of the Bible (1611) to be a faithful expression of “the Word of God” is an undertaking fraught with difficulties. Literalists and Biblical scholars face not one single book but the sixty-six books that comprise the Old and New Testaments, as translated from various ancient languages by a committee of a text that consists of a combined total of 783,127 words. This is the word count given by Wikipedia in articles here and there; elsewhere the length is said to be 788,280 words, so even the number of words to translate and interpret is uncertain. As well, meanings are muddled and so are interpretations. The same problems affect readings of the Constitution of the United States by the principles of “originalism” based on the supposed constitutional, judicial, and statutory interpretation of the text on the original understanding at the time of its adoption in 1787, a word count of 4,543 words (plus 7,762 words of later amendments). One looks in vain for a Biblical translator or a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court with a background in literary criticism and theory. After all, interpretation is all.

*10 Dec. 2024*

## **Poetic Remains**

The remains of the late poet include his critics, his corpse, his diminishing reputation, and his verse, but not necessarily any of poetry *per se*.

*11 Dec. 2024*

### **Lifetime of the Lover**

Laughter, life, light, lonely, loss, lost, love, lust, lyric.

*11 Dec. 2024*

### **Witches and Bankers**

A coven is not necessary a gathering of female witches; for instance, for all practical purposes it could be a convention of male bankers.

*12 Dec. 2024*

### **Setting the Time**

I never knew a clock or a wristwatch to clap when its hands were set one hour ahead or to complain when its hands were set one hour behind.

*13 Dec. 2024*

### **Lost**

I was about ten years old when I was lost for an hour and a half in Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo. I occasionally wonder if it was a failed abduction.

*13 Dec. 2024*

### **Moon**

It is maintained that eventually all objects lost on Earth will turn up on the surface of the Moon.

*14 Dec. 2024*

### **Shadow or Skeleton**

I have yet to decide what is more frightening to me, imagining my shadow or my skeleton.

*14 Dec. 2024*

### **Loneliness**

I am never alone as long as I have myself at hand.

*15 Dec. 2024*

### **Two Lines**

Here are lines of poems that are currently on my mind and haunting me with both their allusiveness and their vividness.

Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.  
Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man" (1921).

My body of a sudden blazed;  
And twenty minutes more or less  
It seemed, so great my happiness,  
That I was blessed and could bless.  
W.B. Yeats, "Vacillation" (1932).

*15 Dec. 2024*

### **Great Ocean of Space**

The words of the text that I am writing in my mind form a palisade in that part of my brain to keep stray thoughts at bay at least long enough for me to complete this text. Later on those stray thoughts may be relevant and useful. In time that part of the brain assumes the shape of an island. I ease these thoughts onto this island of their own between the swells, the waves, and the rollers. So I have before me, my writing, and the barricaded portion of my mind which rapidly takes on the shape of a lake which before long becomes a great lake and then a grand sea and finally one single grand ocean which overwhelms its shores to flood coasts of foreign seas beyond the stars. That may be why I think now of Solaris, the sentient ocean of Outer Space.



16 Dec. 2024

## **Labradorite**

Labradorite is a mineral named after Labrador, Newfoundland, where it is found in abundance at Pauls Island in the vicinity of Nain. It is also found elsewhere in Canada, the United States, and around the world. It bears the name of the land mass, now part of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where it is maintained it was first encountered.

The gemstone is translucent to transparent in such colours as gray, brown, greenish, blue, yellow, colourless, and it commonly exhibits iridescence. Based on entries in Wikipedia, it figures in Inuit legend; labradorite is described as having been created when a warrior freed the Northern Lights trapped in rocks by striking them with his spear. Labradorite is highly regarded for its “spiritual significance” and is known for its ability to protect the aura and ward off negativity. It is also associated with transformation and inner strength.

The mineral is commonly used in jewelry, but it has also been utilized in the production of glass, road construction, and ceramic manufacturing. To this day a mineral’s ability to change colour with the reflection of light is termed “labradorescence.”

17 Dec. 2024

## **Dada**

Why is it impossible for so many people to regard Found Art as profound art?

18 Dec. 2024

## **Found Arts**

It has been observed that what *collage* does to space, *montage* does to time. The former is frequently employed in painting and other art works, whereas the latter is used by directors in cinematography to capture movement, notably through the passage of time. Quite distinct is a *mosaic* which is a static decorative composition which features bits and pieces to create a pattern, rather in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle.

19 Dec. 2024

## **Childbearing**

To a young mature woman, maternity seems like an eternity, a physical, mental, and emotional state of childbearing that is deeply desired and long awaited, fraught with fear and apprehension, as well as joyousness.

*20 Dec. 2024*

## **Cosmic Art**

Last night, I spent an hour or so perusing the paintings reproduced with notable clarity on two websites, accompanied by articles of criticism and appreciation contributed by knowledgeable curators and scholars. The paintings and articles proved to me that the critics of Canada's Group of Seven had no grasp of artistry of their period and how the Group contributed to the world's repertory of the Northern and Arctic imagery of the planet.

The two painters are Europeans who were close contemporaries and near neighbours in time and place: M.K. Čiurlionis of Lithuania and Félix Vallotton of Swiss-French fame. The former, neglected during his lifetime, was granted recognition as a national artist following his death. The latter, whose work was always regarded highly, is currently seen as contemporary with the imaginative concerns of members of the Group of Seven. Just as the influence of the Group could be extended from seven original members to eleven or twelve members over the years, I would be inclined to add to these painters the names of Čiurlionis and Vallotton.

The "hour or so" that I devoted to examining their works before I went to sleep was indeed time well spent.

*21 Dec. 2024*

## **Time**

I would like to write a *résumé* of my life on Earth, at least my life so far, though if I did, it would not include any *dramatis personae* at all. I, as writer, will have been here for a mere instant of cosmic time; you, as reader, the same. A convergence of instances. A cosmic coincidence, none the less!

*22 Dec. 2024*

## **Indulgences**

I do wish the Roman Catholic Church had never done away with indulgences. Yet everyone recalls the problems they caused the Church in the time of Martin Luther (and the problems he caused during that period because of them). They were a highly imaginative way of manipulating true believers.

*22 Dec. 2024*

### **I and You, You and I**

I am the person writing this line, composing it as I go along, basing it on a set of principles that provides a sense of structure, sharing it with you, the person reading this line, regarding it all the while not as scripture or scholarship but as one sentence among many. It is true that it is not memorable for what it expresses or in the manner of how it expresses this intention. What is memorable is that exists ... for a miraculous instance or two in time.

*22 Dec. 2024*

### **The Christian Community in Canada**

While reading a monograph devoted to the history of the Christian Community in Canada, I found myself formulating an opinion about the inherent good nature of mankind and how it is being reinforced by small groups of families of like-minded men, women, and children. The groups have to be small, perhaps even as small as a single parish; the groups have to be large, perhaps large enough to expand into similar parishes. The men and women are the resources and have to supply a variety of labour and find enough capital to continue as self-directedly as possible in a capitalist society in the recent past and the current present and the burgeoning future. In addition to size, there has to be a sameness. (For instance, few people realize that the members of the Salvation Army profess their own decidedly different version of Christianity from the doctrines adopted by the mainstream faiths.) All of these characteristics may be found in the Christian Community in Canada, a sacramental practice with a faith in the energy of angels and devils hardly taken seriously or even symbolically by Christians of other denominations, at least at the time of this writing.

The CC has been composed of folk and their descendants from rural Germany between the two World Wars who found through avoiding wayfaring and warfaring but adhering to hard work and burgeoning communities that they could meet their own needs and those of their descendants, as they were believers in education and basic Christian values. This at least is my opinion. I find them to be a fine people deserving of their successes in North America in the Postwar Period. If there is an

absence of individualistic psychology here, there is a remarkable depth of insight into basic Christian insights inspired by the religion's symbolism interpreted by their "sacred science" that separates them, rather as the Talmud and the Torah do the Jewish communities of North America, from all the values of the mainstream. The separation is laudatory and not at all perfunctory.

This is the Christmas season, so appropriate is a reading of Barbara Günther's compilation of *Chronicle of the Church of the Christian Community in Canada* (December 2024).

23 Dec. 2024

### **Patriotic Poetry**

There is a verse in a poem composed by Sir Charles G.D. Roberts in 1886 that always stops me in my tracks. The poem, simply titled "Canada," was first published nine years following the founding of the Dominion of Canada, and despite its age, the message is as true today as it was then. The anthem begins

O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,  
Who stand'st among the nations now  
Unheeded, unadored, unhymned,  
With unanointed brow, –

and continues in this vein for a total of fourteen four-line stanzas, in all a total of fifty-six lines devoted to a retelling of the heroic victories of the struggling founders of this immense country. For a number of years I thought the last word in the third line quoted above was not "unhymned" but "unrhymed." The country has national anthems in both English and French, but very few patriotic poems that are well "rhymed." Remember that a national anthem is basically a religious hymn and martial marching song. Hence I felt Sir Charles was absolutely right. Yet we do not need more hymns; we need more rhymes, and although he wrote a slew of them on a multitude of subjects, there is no epic like say "Hiawatha" (composed by an American to boot) to celebrate the ascendancy of the Europeans who made the country what it is today. Sir Charles would undoubtedly agree, given the chance. In reproducing the stanza above, I was tempted to simply replace the last word in the third line with the word "unrhymed" and wondered if anyone would realize the "error." But I reasoned that no one would and that this would be a shame. So let us have more rhymes and fewer religious-martial rhythms in the future than we have had in the past.

24 Dec. 2024

## Synonyms for Winter

I have lived in this country through eighty-eight winters, though fewer than that number as an adult who checks words that he does not know in dictionaries. Early on, I learned that *hibernal* is an adjective for *winter*, and only yesterday did I learn that it is based on the Latin word *hiems*, which means *occurring during winter* or *stormy weather*. One other adjective for that cold season of the year is based on a different Latin word for *winter* and that word is *bruma*. The adjectival form is *brunal* which means *wintertime*. I rather like the adjectival word *brunal*. “Have a *brunal* Christmas.”

25 Dec. 2024

## Season's Greeting

Here is an unconventional season's greeting appropriate for the day:

Happy Holy Boxing Day!

26 Dec. 2024

## One's Mate

A husband or a wife should be no mere *mate* but a *consummate*.

27 Dec. 2024

## One's Late Mate

The death of one's long-term marriage partner amounts to a *fait accompli*. The French phrase means “an act done” or “a done deal.” It is an irreversible act or fact, one that could be the result of *le destin* or *la destinée* or *la fatalité*.

28 Dec. 2024

## Time

The familiar expression “past, present, future” is not entirely appropriate. What is fully appropriate is “fast present, future.”

29 Dec. 2024

### Names of Cities

The names of two capital cities are merged and alphabetically combined in each of these lines. European cities appear in the first line, Canadian cities appear in the second line, and Bulgarian cities appear in the third line. Separately un-arrange them and then identify them.

a c e e e i i n n n v v  
a e l m n n o o o o r r t t t  
a a a b g n r r v v o o

30 Dec. 2024

### Think Historically

If Canada is to protect, maintain, and grow its status as a healthy democracy, it requires a well-educated, engaged citizenry with the capacity to engage in critical study of the past. The capacity to “think historically,” which involves both knowing and doing history, helps students make connections between the past and the present and is transferable knowledge that is crucial in a time of “fake news.”

This is one of the “challenges” or “issues” being addressed by the project “Thinking Historically for Canada’s Future.” The project is a Partnership Grant sponsored by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, 2019-2026. Website: <https://thinking-historically.ca>.

Accessed 31 Dec. 2024

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### Songs of Sappho of Lesbos

Sappho of the Island of Lesbos of the Port City of Mytilene of Ancient Greece is the name in English of the poet and singer who was born here about 610 B.C.E. She lived on the island and in the adjoining city (except for a period of apparent exile) until her death about 570 B.C.E. Here, for the purpose of orientation only, the island of Lesbos is located approximately four hours south of the site of Troy, the Turkish city known

today as Hisarlik, by automobile and ferry service. It takes about 13.5 hours to fly east over the Aegean Sea from Athens to Lesbos.

It is believed that Sappho was born into an aristocratic family on Lesbos and was noted for possessing “a sweet voice.” Her name may derive from the word for the dark-coloured gemstone known as the sapphire which has a traditional association with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. It is suggested that Sappho was married and the mother of two children as well as the founder of a training school or singing academy for girls and women. History holds that she was a superb composer and singer who accompanied her own lyrics on the lyre. Her songs were largely devoted to such subjects as love and desire. In their pursuit and celebration, it seems that she did not distinguish between the sexes.

Yet history has been hard on her accomplishments as a song-writer. She composed a great number of lyrics, but only one of them has survived intact. The entire text of her “Hymn to Aphrodite” (it could as well be called “Ode to Aphrodite”) exists because the text was quoted in its entirety by a writer whose work *has* survived. Today, hundreds of fragments of her song lyrics have endured but in fragmentary form: a word or a phrase, a few sentences, here and there. Over the centuries scholars have been drawn to these fragments and have translated and interpreted the evocative epigrams into intact phrases or lines of poems or verses of songs. So after all these centuries, Sappho is recalled and respected today mainly for her epigrammatic fragments of love lyrics. It is due to the efforts of her many translators and interpreters to reinstate and restore them that we are now able to appreciate their originality and style. At one time, it is said, her lyrics were collected in nine volumes, but as these encouraged the wrath of the mediaeval clergy who regarded them as sinful in the extreme, so on two occasions they had them purged from their depositories or libraries.

In college I studied the Greek language for one year, but instead of the Classical Greek of Sappho in her day, it was the Koine or Hellenistic Greek of the later periods, so I must leave it to polyglot linguists to distinguish between the two versions of the language. As well or ill, I have never been a master of languages like Michael R. Burch, poet, translator, interpreter, collector, and compiler of texts like these, publishes them via his website *thehypertexts.com*. From his base in Nashville, Tennessee, he amasses them for his masterful and mammoth compilation of such materials for the website that has the general title *The HyperTexts.com*. Burch describes these texts as “loose translations / interpretations.” Yet his translations of poetry are among the best of the past and the present and his versions of Sappho’s were inspired by her presence in ancient history.

Here are a few words about *The HyperTexts*, which is remarkably the work of a single person: a poet and translator of poems of all ages, a lover of verse *per se*, an appreciator of poets like William Blake and Walt Whitman, a collector of popular

poetry in numerous fields, etc. Since January 2010, it has had over 16.4 million “page views.” It would be an education in itself to have the time to read this entire electronic text, both reprinted matter and commentary upon commentary, screen following screen. Herein lies a genuine education in literature, a form of expression that has been called “the shadow of mankind.” In a sense it all begins with the “sweet voice” of Sappho.

Two other treasures are here to discover and hoard. In 2002, the scholar J.B. Hare compiled and edited for the Web a site that surveys more than 122 of Sappho’s texts. It may be reached at *The Poems of Sappho Index – Internet Sacred Text Archive*. Today, those readers who have an ear for the music of Ancient Greece, especially for such texts that are associated with this singer, should check out *YouTube* which offers its subscribers on the Web dozens of short documentary sites devoted to the lyrics of this poetess, whose popularity seems to be increasing with the years. It is probably no exaggeration to say that more book-length studies of her life and lyrics, her songs and scripts, have been published in the last five years than in the last fifty-five years.

Where do these lines below – these fragments of English-language texts, as truncated as they are – come from? We have them here, thanks to Michael R. Burch. Yet their origins are various and multiple. Some of these fragments are self-revealing translations from the Greek into the English of lines of her own lyrics. Some are interpretations of passages that she might well have written in English, instead of in Greek, based on lacunae in the manuscripts that attracted the attention of later poets, singers, translators, and scholars. Some such passages are recreations of poems that she might as well have written, lyrics of songs she might well have sung. And some are sporadically inspired tributes to her, composed by famous writers over the centuries – 2,600 centuries ago! – that recapture the rapture of her style, story, and legend.

My interest in these fragments has focused on giving distinct expression to utterances that could have been hers – indeed, that many of them likely are or were hers, or inspired by her presence in ancient history, albeit in succinct form and in English, our strange tongue and language and literature that in her day had yet to emerge from the womb of time. These lines offer the reader a sense of the singer as a woman totally committed to the expression of her own emotions and sensations, notably her sense of hope and desire, loss and gain, lust and love, sexuality and excess. The poems and fragments that do survive to the present day attest to the fact that the singer was not afraid of her own body, her lover’s body, the subjects of her songs, her sentiments and those of her lovers, whether male or female. Note that in these lyrics the heart takes precedence over the head. It is true that while today’s readers and fanciers of her poetry would be inclined to describe her as auto-erotic, lesbian, gay, homosexual, heterosexual, or sapphic, it is uncertain how her actual



companions and lovers and readers and listeners and country women and country men would have described her. She has established with all her powers of vocal expression an appreciation from other women and men alike over time, not only as a remarkable poet and singer, but also as a notably singular woman of immense yet intimate accomplishment.

The reader is invited to eavesdrop on the private life of this public woman.

### **The Fragments**

I discovered the Goddess in your body's curves and crevasses.

Once garlands had been fashioned of many woven flowers, with much expensive myrrh we anointed our bodies like royalty on soft couches, then my tender caresses fulfilled your desire ....

Immortal Aphrodite, throned in splendour! Wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, enchantress and beguiler! I implore you, dread mistress, discipline me no longer with such vigour!

I often bemoan my fate ... but what's the use? Not to grow old is, of course, not an option.

She keeps her scents in a dressing-case. And her sense? In some undiscoverable place.

The sweet-voiced girl.

Eros harrows my heart: wild winds whipping desolate mountains, uprooting oaks.

Eros, the limb-shatterer, rattles me, an irresistible constrictor.

Mere air, my words' fare, but intoxicating to hear.

I desire and I crave.

Don't you remember, in days long gone, how we did such things, being young?

I am weary of all your words and soft, strange ways.

Some say that the fairest thing upon the dark earth is a host of horsemen, and some say a host of foot soldiers, and others again a fleet of ships, but for me it is my beloved.

Pain penetrates me drop by drop.

She has almost killed me with love for that boy.

All mixed up, I drizzled.

Someone, somewhere, will remember us, I swear!

Some one will remember us, I say, even in another time.

What cannot be swept aside must be wept.

We're merely mortal women, it's true; the Goddesses have no rivals but You.

He seems to me to be equal to the Gods.

With my two small arms, how can I aspire to touch the sky?

Those I charm the most do me the most harm.

The moon rose and we women thronged it like an altar.

Leaving your heavenly summit, I submit to the mountain, then plummet.

You forget me or you love another more! It's over.

Gold does not rust, yet my son becomes dust?

Neither the honey nor the bee for me!

May the gods prolong the night – let it last forever! – as long as you sleep in my sight.

I'm undecided. My mind? Torn. Divided.

The moon has long since set; the Pleiades are gone; now half the night is spent, and yet here I lie – alone.

Midnight. The hours flow on, I lie, alone.

I sleep alone.

Of all the stars the fairest, Hesperus, lead the maiden straight to the bridegroom's bed,  
honoring Hera, the goddess of marriage.

I'm not resentful; I have the most childlike heart ....

May you sleep on your tender girlfriend's breast.

Is my real desire for maidenhood?

I love the sensual as I love the sun's splendour.

Nightingale, all you sing is desire; you are the crier of coming spring.

Look me in the face, smile, reveal your eyes' grace ....

You inflame me!

I am an acolyte of wile-weaving Aphrodite.

The head that I shall dream of, and 'twill not dream of me.

Your voice? – far more melodious than the lyre, more dearly bought and sold than  
gold.

What rustic girl bewitches thee who knows not how to draw her dress about her  
ankles?

Eros descends from heaven, discarding His imperial purple mantle.

As a friend you're great, but you need a younger bed-mate.

The softest pallors grace her lovely face.

I yearn for – I burn for – the one I miss!

I have loved thee, Atthis, once long ago.

Death is evil; the Gods all agree; for, had death been good, the Gods would be mortal like me.

Come, dear ones, let us cease our singing: morning dawns.

Just now I was called, enthralled, by golden-sandaled dawn ....

Into the soft arms of the girl I once spurned, I gladly returned.

Since my paps are dry and my barren womb rests, let me praise lively girls with violet-scented breasts.

Listen, my dear; by the Goddess I swear that I, too, like you, had to renounce my false frigidity and surrender my virginity.

My wedding night was not so bad; you too have nothing to fear, so be glad! (But then why do I still sometimes think with dread of my lost maidenhead?)

Maidenhead! Maidenhead! So swiftly departed! Why have you left me forever broken-hearted?

I have not had one word from her.

I sip the cup of costly death; I lose my colour, catch my breath whenever I contemplate your presence, or absence.

They have been very generous with me, the violet-strewing Muses of Olympus; thanks to their gifts I have become famous.

Stars ringing the lovely moon pale to insignificance when she illuminates the earth with her magnificence.

My body descends and my comfort depends on your welcoming cushions!

I have a delightful daughter fairer than the fairest flowers, Cleis, whom I cherish more than all Lydia and lovely Lesbos.

He is dying, Cytheréa, the delicate Adonis. What shall we lovers do? Rip off your clothes, bare your breasts, and abuse them!

A short revealing frock? It's just my luck your lips were made to mock!

That country wench bewitches your heart? Hell, her most beguiling art's hiking her dress to seduce you with her ankles' nakedness!

A cold sweat covers me, trembling. Grabs me all over: I'm greener than the grass is and appear to myself to be a little short of dying.

I think I am a little short of drying. But all must be experienced ....

Please send away your maids and let us share a private heaven-haven.

There was no dance, no sacred dalliance, from which we were absent.

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**Worlds of Shouts and Whispers** consists in the main of a compilation of the shorter poems and the longer poems and the literary “effects” that were composed during the calendar year 2024 by the Canadian author and editor **John Robert Colombo**. What began as an attempt to write some lines every day of the year, to keep in shape so to speak, whether inspired or not, in forms that are readable even when not remarkable, in the interest of preserving some of the impressions and thoughts of the times, resulted in the present collection, a true miscellany, a journal of sorts: a potpourri to delight and instruct. Added to the contents are the explorations of words and phrases, expressions, both clichés and commandments, depositions in effect, if only because language has long been known to reveal uncommon sense and conceal uncommon nonsense. Such are the intents and contents of the present collection. This work is available for reading as a PDF on the author’s website: [www.colombo.ca](http://www.colombo.ca).

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