

Poem of the Month

March 2012

THOSE WRITINGS ON THE WALL

Oh, to read 'em now,
those writings on the wall,
poems, parodies of Poe and Pound,
stuck there with jam, back then.
Ah then! Carefree and footloose,
students of literature and art!
Life was so easy. we didn't care a bit.
(I had a reason not to make a rime).
Bob wrote fatuous lines about some man
"who flitted from corner to corner
of his misspent life" How apt.
Back then! We mocked both Heaven and Hell!
Then Bob's just broken-off engagement ring,
melted down, drip-drip, till nought was left
but some base alloy black and drab.
Bob talked to some imp, (or was it Puck?)
perched where walls and ceiling meet,
He said he did, who cares that much.
(I had a reason not to make a rime).
We mocked life, now life mocks us.
To read 'em now, those writings on the wall!

August

Tea, Darling? We're British.

I have a funny feeling.

It is all so unappealing.

The dollar's hit the ceiling.

This may may send the markets reeling.

If the markets hit the floor,

Paul says we'll all be poor.

Oh, how beastly! What a bore!

But Peter's not so sure:

"Whenever markets crash,

it's time to make a splash,"

and, as Grandma used to say,

"There'll be another day."

It's time for an excursion,

not for worry but diversion.

Who's for cream cakes and tea in Ealing?

Earl Grey or just Darjeeling?

We'll have to mend our fences

and go easy on expenses.

On this may all agree.

It's always time for tea.

I SAW HER ONCE MORE

I saw her, a little girl framed as by a wreath

Of foliage at the neighbour's fence,

When I later visited Aunt Rose

She and hers were gone.

I saw her once more beside a palm.

Too young to wear a veil,

she had a face with beauty to inspire

verses by Byron or Shakespeare.

I saw her once more mid a field of corn,

framed by an Amish bonnet.

To my question on her faith,

She confessed to one true God.

I thanked her for her answer,

and drove off.

I saw her again in a downtown store

dressed immaculately in white.

She caught my eye and smiled

a moment too long.

Her supervisor coughed.

I shall see her again, I imagine,

when she smiles a sweet adieu

handing a scalpel to a surgeon

during an operation that could fail.

Are memories more than molecules?

More than a string of fading images

produced by a rubbery greyish mass,

itself doomed to decay?

Or visions of the infinite,

intersections of the one path trod

with the many we might have chosen?

May we still explore them, guided

by imagination or by faith

through the internal labyrinth of the mind,

or the outer realms of God's eternity?

Who knows the difference,

who dares to contemplate, who cares,

is eternity is now?

Remember Alexander

Namque Romanis cum nationibus populis regibus cin
ctis una et ea vetus causa bellandi est: cupido profunda imperi et divitarium
After: "Letter of Mithridates to Phraates, King of Parthia"
Historiae VI by Sallust

I am a man more poisoned against than poisoning.
That's my version anyhow, and I'm sticking to it.
Don't blame me for having survived a few meals
Which others, less fortunate, could not.
All that doesn't help me now with Pompey at my throat.
Pompey, plunderer and bully, who has enough wit
Only to command a Materialschlacht,
But that is child's play with Rome's support.
Rome! Scourge of cities, tribes, peoples, nations, all mankind,
Were not the Pillars of Hercules, the western shores
Sufficient for your ravenous appetite
That your eagle eyes scan my realm?
O Phraates, King of Parthia still unvanquished,
Had you but lent your ear to me when together we
Might have rid the East of this ill-begotten son
Of Mars. Small the credit, so great the loss!
For Rome, unchallenged, bestrides the Great Sea. Eastwards
He surveys my mountains and your rivers, groves and plains,
No doubt beyond. Remember Alexander,
Who sacked glorious Persepolis.
You vainly sue for peace, like credulous Philipp once
When fondly strung along with Rome's promises of "pax".
And what of Carthage? Where now her wealth of gold
And purple? Barren her poisoned lands!
Mind you, I'm not well-placed on a high moral pedestal
When it comes to poisoning, but limits I respect.
A few enemies now and then, I admit,
Died at my table. The ham was off!
But the earth is sacrosanct. I never salted fields,
For Rome's venom is stronger than aught I ever brewed.
Where shall this end? Shall Rome vanquish all nations?
Shall all cower to his bloody sword?
But Rome! With surfeiting the eaten, not the eater,
Prevails. The whole world is, even for iron digestions,
Strong meat. It is the sun, not Romulus, whom
East and West obey. Helios rules.
With Rome to east and Rome to west, then two Romes are there,

And I do fear for man and earth. The approach of death
Lends men insight. I fought, I won, I lost in war.
My spirit is still king. Sirs, your health.
The last round! Like Carthage we lose to Rome the third round.
Once more is the Gordian knot in twain. Quirites,
The gods look down. Remember Alexander,
Who died of fever in Babylon!

What's a Year in Time's Vast Flow?

When a sailor man bade his sweetheart good bye
he said she should tarry a year
until he sailed back with silver and gold
and a ring to dry her last tear.
"To me you are more than silver and gold,"
said the maid in sorrow and pain.
"The ocean is cruel and the wind will change,
and we'll meet no never again."
The sailor laughed at his love's deepest fear,
"What's a year in Time's vast flow?
Wait for the day my good ship returns,
then the truth of this promise you'll know."
The maid remained faithful and constant in love
in this world where few things are clear,
till she met a young man with no silver and gold.
What he did have was abundant, and near.

From earlier months:

Roxana's Curse

Hey you guys, why leave your town
To find a bride and settle down?
Take a tip and don't philander
Somewhere remote like Alexander.
He married a princess called Roxana,
It seems, to make her hill tribes calmer.
To equalize the world by sex
Was a worthy aim subject to checks.
Pneumonia, poison or whatever
The emperor from his wife did sever.
So poor Roxana was alone
Cut off from people, friends and home.
She made her way to Macedonia
There to die not of pneumonia.
She, much sinned against, did sin.
She did in some foes and got done in.
Want to learn more? Surf to 'Cassander'
And read some books on Alexander.
Before they placed her in a hearse
She pronounced an awesome curse.
'To conquer my land shall many strive
who ne'er shall leave that land alive'.
I fear this curse still ails her land,
which nought can lift save God's own hand.
Name this land if that you can.
Take this hint. It ends with –stan.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF VIENNA

She was only a girl who served breakfast and tea,
But, O, the difference to me!
She was dark and petite,
Her smiles honey sweet.
I almost went dotty
When she served extra coffee,
And how my heart jumped
When accidentally we bumped.
I say nothing false :
I don't walk now, I waltz.

No Valediction

What can match the sheer perfection

of executions by injection?

Every oath that's ever been

obliges men but no machine.

There's nothing personal in a bleep

indicating death, not sleep.

From vacant eyes I seem to heed

words inaudible that plead:

"Burn me, hang me from a tree.

Take everything save dignity."

No valediction can they log

when they put you down like a suffering dog.

ADIEU, MY FRIEND

Shall we ever meet again

at the crossroads of the mind?

Shall we ever meet again

in the fragrant fields of thyme,

though memories fade and flowers must wilt

and every heart must fail?

Shall we ever meet again

though none may tell us where?

What once was good is ever good,

and faithful, true and fair.

This thought assures us we shall meet

and tames my dark despair

THE GOOD _____ (GAP TEST)

They say that in the Holy Land

so very far away

there really are SAMARITANS

who to this very day

at Eastertide, or round that time

..but wait, who comes our way?

Some long-haired loner type, I'd guess

but let us listen for a jest

to what he has to say.

"My names are one and many,

to some I was Jim Crow,

GOOD AFRICAN is what you'd write

if you should choose to know."

"My name is Sean O'Hara

your neighbour from the Falls,

GOOD MAN, put down that rifle

before the thing recoils."

"My name is Isaac Mandelbaum,

your face I mark it true.

It is so clear that you should write

quite plainly THE GOOD JEW."

You are an actor, please admit,

but me you'll not take in.

To change the words of Holy Writ

would be an grievous sin.

It surely says SAMARITAN in the Bible on my shelf,

JACK'S LAST APPOINTMENT

Jack came to the strangest conclusion,

which was: "Time's an illusion."

He turned up too late

for each appointment and date

till the day of his very own funeral.

Transmuted

A king as wise as Solomon

had a temple full of gold

until a fierce fire fell upon

the riches it did hold.

A woeful monarch spied a scene

Too painful to behold,

For all the glories that had been

were fled like Ur of old.

Yet from that chaos what strange sight

Did to the king appear,

For in the dimming sun's last light
shone forth picture clear.

In streams of molten iron
Merged with twisted gold
Sprang forth a mighty lion
And a hero strong and bold.

He ne'er forgot the picture
In all his reign so long,
As proves a psalm in scripture,
Immortal be his song

A Plain Man Looks at Goethe's Faust

Goethe's Faust Part One

is all about this horny don,
who gets browned off by all that learning,
for all he's missed in life much yearning.
Mephisto, you might say the devil,
promises Faust a helluva revel,
on one (see the small print) slight condition,

After the party it's straight to perdition.

Then prancing witches chant "hubble bubble",

Faust goes and gets his gal into trouble.

(Faust may have knowed an awful lot,

but on birth control he weren't too hot).

Things get so bad it can't be true.

They perk up a bit, though, in Faust Part Two.

***** Past Month

Dyeing for You

But a brush and a touch, one parting more,

Delilah, Moon-girl, you stole my strong light.

I, your Sun-boy, am shorn having blackout,

But remember my close shaves, the honey,

Dead days, my foes jaw-struck, the longwinded ass

My aid. Drawn by love's waves, I come to.

With influence silverish, drowning

My golden locks, the yolk-eating fish-god wins

For a period till dawn's yellow round.

I shake gold pillars to discomfit

The uncut, for at noon I burn for you,

Daily I dye for you, O Delilah!

GINGER MAJESTY (on

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video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i8-llV5hoY>

Hail, Ginger Majesty on high,
where on your royal ledge you lie.
Occasionally a glance you throw
On us unfortunates below,
A restless crew who daily pace
Compulsively from place to place.
Appearances may easily fool.
When masters serve, those kept shall rule.
When Ginger slinks through furling silk
It is to claim his cool fresh milk.
Human cares may humans stir.
Cats generally prefer to purr.
Them no falling stocks appal
Who today have got it all.

Cats, of course, aren't always nice,
Especially to birds and mice.