

GOETHE



POEMS by
DAVID HICKMAN

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RADIOACTIVE HERO PRESS

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dwhave@zoho.com

**Layout and Design by David Hickman, Cover and Cover Art: *Thought Bubbles*,
David Hickman**

Published in the United States of America

Here Endeth, The Shadows and On Loss, Appeared in the fall 2003 edition of the Journal of the School of Spiritual Psychology

EPISTEME

Ash Tree In Wind

The tall ash is waving.
Beauty is sailing.

The roots suffuse
The limbs with green.

The stem pours sap
Into the broadening leaf

That waves in me
As my body,

My body waving.

On Motion

Motion needs
A body
To sweep
Through brilliant grass
Or waves in triplicate
As they pass
Through shuddering seas
And personal estrangements

The woman
Going anywhere
Sways the water
And convinces the child
He is beautiful
In any natural light
That sways
And takes her to him

Her motions are
His murmured sound
For them the Fords
And Chryslers glide
The whirl of America
Passes by

On its comfortable way
To The Sea

Motion needs
A mother and child
A landscape
And some clouds
Forms to pass through
And to die
Like waves that chase
Their separations.

The Blinds at the Window

After Zur Farbenlehr

The blinds at the window:

Blue

Orange

Vermilion

. . . Epistemology

Of light into shade

The light

Both tonal

And atonal

As it waves

. . .As a pretty play

Of pretty

Pleases

Sky

Lie quiet then. Here.
The clouds their own measure.

As the times melt beneath them
As in a play within a play

In which giants are eaten
By the children they conceived

And little endearments
Are breathed out as *remembrances*

Aviary

In the aviary that is desire
The birds flit and sigh.

Do not catch them.
Wait.

Then follow them like Persephone
when it's time,
Into dark shade and back again.

It makes no difference if they
Lead to fame or ruin.

Fame is the same as ruin
For desire.

What We Do Not Speak About

What we do not speak about
Is the life in silence

Wind that holds the bee inside
"A unity of apperceptions"

As terns that eke
The little fish

Leave no footprints
At the tide rim's kiss

Wind and Tree

The wind
Is winding

The tree
Is fleeing

Noon
Is groaning

The eye
Is flying

Newton

Newton, in his piety, professed a mercy towards the beasts.

And noted how a solution crystallizes "not all over the vessel alike, but here
And there in long bars of salt." when speaking of the formation of the sea's
"Steep ascents."

Newton, in his piety, magnifying God to man, asserted that "the science of
Colors was mathematical" and "that the absolute certainty of a science
Cannot exceed the certainty of its principles"

And Newton. . . Newton was a principled man.

March 19, 1832

"Ahh, the public' sighed Goethe,"
Then turned and looked down at his hands.

Outside the window Weimar
Slept. Blue trees bent down to dark green grass.

"To conceive of something whole is easy.
To execute it is by far the most difficult."

"Ahh, the public," sighed Goethe again.
Then trembled, rose, and went to bed

In a Bookstore

Seeing her in the bookstore
I was not in love,

But watched her turn and sit
And brush away her auburn hair

Reading Linda Gregg
--A poet I thought highly of.

The next day ,
Seeing her again,

I walked past her
And picked

The Spear Of Destiny,
Off the shelf

And sat down
To read in a green easy chair

Thinking of her
And nothing else.

**

The whole is always
Trying to make itself

New. And so
It speaks, and its speech
is subsumed

In jouissance
The "silver rib"

That makes desire blue.

**

Had I sensed that
Time had come to itself

In that moment
Like a yellow pear drops heavily

Through a green afternoon
I would have said

. . .A word . . . anything at all,
And she would have answered

And we would have been
All tongues.

A Kiss

In his work Kant

Displayed a talent for *hiding*

The lips' attention

From the couples as they kiss

In Darkness

In darkness broods
The mother of light.

But in the shadow of the cogito that passes for
Mind:

The control of currencies, laws and treaties ,
Newton's Optics.

Orpheus

When Orpheus
Went under

It must have
Broken him

To inhale
The myrrh and incense

Still lingering
On Euridyce

A Rose

Each in the hovel
Of their burning flesh

Desires beyond
The reach of their silences.

It is the source of sorrow
And of all our rages

That our seeming rides
On this interminable jest.

**

Sit quietly then.
Say nothing.

Watch the rose
Unfold
In every kind of
Wind

Color

Color
Is light
And texture

The shadows
Wounded

HEADS

Descarte's
Head
Ate his body

Where
From
Mind's anus

The little ids

Plopped.

On Consumption

Voracious siblings! We must think a little before we
Consume.

As "those refractions do separate or mingle the rays"
That turn and lend themselves to the corporate miasma.

Misery is built in, why increase it?

It is better to live in silence than to speak a word that kills.

As 3% of the holdings of the wealthiest seven hundred
Would end poverty in the world according to *The
European*.

What does it say about us, that we have these poor?
That kind of wealth is *anti--human*.

Turning

Who turns inside sorrow

Is strong

Who turns inside error

Is stronger

Techne

Their arguments for their instruments

Are their arguments for (and against) their guilt.

So love for Techne

Has two distinct edges:

One leaves a gash

The other

Dissects.

Sorrow

This

Red

Consumed

In shadow

Flows

Into

Umber

Some Air

Some air
Has gone inside
A barn
With a belief
In physical laws
A fluid
Always
Takes the shape
Of its container
It says
Then learns
A human geometry
Later
The air gives a
Lesson
In the loft
Silence is
What silence does
It says
As it is passing through

A Parable

Little worm of red and umber,
The sun is here
and the earth is dry.

Dark mucous
Appends
Your slow desire

As the ochre chips
Assume your skin.

This your return then,
Your desiccated end.

Silence

We swim

In a silence

That births

Our name

From a name

Only silence

Can ever

Intimate

Wan Thought

To die

Shelly

To disappear

Is to muse on muses

Musing on air. . .

A Spring Tide

In every man
There is a woman
Desire can't kill

In every
Form
There is a blessing

Dry logic makes ill

The green world
Is
Numinous

Every child
Knows its every thrill:

Bright sky
Of blue
That lights

The swelling
Green
Hill

One Pure Thing

The little lake dissolves

Into the sky that holds its blue

And the blue is absolved

Of all but silence

Airplane Days

Little

Man

Little humunculous

Of first class

What would you make

Of yourself

Without

Such

Airs?

Newton

"God has no need of the organs of sense" --Newton whispering into the ears of the Positivists. And in the sarcophagus of night we become a machine of sleep, and are Constructing a box the size of our "beliefs," The box is our monster, an oblong of desire That has been shaped against desire, constructed of planed and beveled mirrors, mirrors That reflect the acts of speech.

A leviathan of words, its signs *hiding everything*.

The White Goddess

The willow
Is a character
That droops in the field.
He speaks
Through the bran
Blessed
But disturbed.
Sophia weeps for Him
In every idiom.
Even our crying is her weeping

The Irony

The irony
Of irony is
There are no apologies.
No embarrassments
And no regrets.
So Bhudda smiles thickly
On blue mountain range.
What he comes for he is.
What he is he gets.

EPIGRAMS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The great themes have been lost Daphne. The idea of becoming and the ontology underneath its rhymes are diminished or obscured in the journals & the Times. It's rare to appreciate a simple thing -- A bell-blossom of morning glory on a trellis in the spring -- the daubs of light around the blossom's skin, where I remember for a moment past the prison of memory, something bright and clear. An unmade thing.

*

There is a clarity that, when perceived, lights the one who knows it. It is like a kiss, but it is brighter than a kiss. It knows what it is, not by reflection, but experience --and is the constant perception of its own concept .

*

All proofs fail the numinous.

The only hope for the numinous is the experience of it.

*

Sorrow is everywhere. No one needs to look to find it.

*

In our time it is ego that is the model for almost any system: the head of the hydra that grows a new head, whenever it's exposed, and, inevitably, decapitated.

*

The past lies empty. the earth is dying. The darkened contours of a dry intelligence move in isms and shifts, dividng the population against itself. In the new millennium we call this "management," and it works as well domestically as it does for export.

*

In the field the birds turn and hover. It is as if they float on the rays of the sun, following them into light's oblivion, the molten drops of fire that, burning, clarify them.

*

Eurydice, did Dante speak with you? What circle do you inhabit, dead before Christ's birth? . . .And what of Rilke. . . did his his poems comfort you? Or was his obsession with Orpheus just an excuse for fine words? . . .Death finds everyone, though you would understand that better than us. Having met more than those who were tourists among your griefs, having watched as they turned you into imagery for their poems. Eurydice, I'm sorry. Though in your internment you must have learned more than them, having seen the vanity of so many who were ruined, as they knelt at the waters of the Styx and burned.

*

A human being is more symphony than cacophony. Yet one tuned

poorly leaves the music stranded. In part we have our institutions to thank for that. What a difference if acts of kindness yielded a five percent return.

*

In times of consequence, longing fails us. More is needed: the intention to be empty. To give up what is sought after and find what blooms.

*

When the False One came he wore a face of number, and, bleeding us en masse into the silver bowl, offered up our sanctimony in place of hope.

*

The Gods are jealous of us. They look down from their fires at what gnaws Prometheus, and make certain that everyone takes part in the grinding.

*

The bald eagle rises out of the Roman phalanx
to guzzle the oil of Sassanid

*

In Iraq and Afghanistan,
the jets machine

another plinth of corpses
for a man of destiny

*

The shame of my country lives in the many lacuna's formed of its lies.

*

In the papers the pundits hawk
a glib unity, the language of liberty
an excuse for much death.

*

In the cities all silence has been erased.
Reverence is forgotten
in the rush for duct tape.

*

To think on divinity is impossible now,
as the fear has done in, not the numinous,
but the approach to silence. . .

*

In Washington death
wanders the official corridors,
fingering the names not yet inscribed
on the marble.

*

Who lives in silence
is at the door of truth.

On False Joy

Drusilla, come,
The day is burning.
The wind
Scratches
Dactyls on
The western window
Then flames into a sheet
Of fire
That expands and flexes
To a reddened wing
As if Helios
Were twisting down from the skies
To light
The love
We still deny

Complaint

Listen gods

If you can hear this:

No matter where you look

The game is *fixed*

Your silence

Has been co-opted

Until every aspiration

Has its origin

In the sin

Of living your life

Through someone else's.

The dissemblers have

Won then.

The earth is sealed

Against your

Light.

There it languishes

Like a forgotten seed husk

That has been

Painted

To resemble

A dollop

Of lead.

Before I Left Her

In the tall

Grass

We lingered

Lydia

And left the shape

Of your ass

In the soft

Green

Shoots

As you purred

I thought I heard

The goddess

Singing:

“Leave behind all isms

And do not turn back”

Invocation

Techne!

The times are killing us.

The philosophies have
Been appropriated

In the service

Of a dark intent,
The economies

That dominate

Enriching only the

Ruling class.

And those

Who speak against it

Have been effectively
Marginalized.

There is nothing left to do

But find the courage to fail,

To remember the gods

With reverence

And speak

Without

Language

Elysium

A field

Elided

Yields

Broken words

Turn from

That

Burn

Every opening

Is inside

Itself

METAMORPHOSES

Leviathan

Once a man walked into the ocean and down.

Leviathan approached him immediately
And pushed him backwards
Up the slope
Is blunt nose blue
As the water's surface

"I confess I am made of words" whispered the whale as it pushed him,
"And I further confess that I have come to say good-bye. For I have seen
The surface and been occupied
With time, and I have been to the
Depths and sported and made much of the
Water and the water's rhymes."

The man laughed glumly and said back to him:

"I pronounce you cautiously, listlessly then, for in my former life I was an
Antedeluvian mime, and I know nothing you can say to me
Is not broken from the real, that which has spoken me, turned me
Backwards and forwards, that which has tossed me, and
Spit me out and passed me by "

Then he slipped through the whale

Into the ocean's dimness
And swam among the dingles
At the bottom of the tide
Lighting a match brightly
As it was vast there and beautiful
Knowing nothing could rescue him
From the depth of his loss

Then, out of that darkness, came a booming voice ,
Speaking as water
And water's torpor

Saying "what do you want from me,
I have nothing to offer"
What is your wish? I have nothing
To hide"

The man breathed deeply and made no reply
Vowing to purge
And obscure himself finally
Inside the onslaughts of those waves
And the terrible sleights of women and men

Pegasus

When Pegasus came out of the sun, the little men below
Refused what they saw, looking away into a canyon of emerald buildings.
The horse looked at each one of them and began his triage, taking first the
Most prestigious and last the most glum and, singing to them as he rose,
Cut through white clouds and the spiraling blue ceiling, until they lost
Their breath, and died among the stars.

All, that is, except the last one, the most fatally glum and dyspeptic of
Them, who, riding, burst his tortured lungs, but found that when he
Breathed in the nothing it was as if he were breathing air. He did not
Understand, but that emptiness sustained him, inlaid as it was with the
Silver of stars, and it filled him with a joy both familiar and strange, and
As he laughed and flew the horse did also.

When Pegasus set him down on the earth again, the man began to writhe
And foam on the ground, until all his wishes poured out of his side. Taking
The forms of animals and more rarely that of men and women, they sang
Jeering songs and made lewd gestures and in general, they tormented him.
But the man sat down on a granite stone, and for twenty years he wept and
Read Job, until he had given up on all he held dear. And that was when
Pegasus returned in the form of a winged angel's head, burning away the
Circling faces and their leers.

When the man was finally empty, he lookd up a the sky. White letters
Wrote themselves on the azure above him, and inside those letters there
Were threads of gold reflecting the faces of those who had gone before.
So he sang a little song for them, the words of which may not be
Repeated, And the wind sang with him, as did the sea, and the sun
That was his diadem.

Here Endeth

A man was walking down the sidewalk, swinging his arms and wildly
Gesticulating. As he walked he spoke in a garbled language, and none who
Heard him could understand. He walked drunkenly, stupidly, moving
Over the earth and into the distance, filling it with his ever-shifting, wildly
Motioning presence.

The grass around him was very green. A depth of green that had not been
Seen before. Almost like lime, and almost like jade, and at the edges,
Where the softest tufts crowded the sidewalk, the sun suffused the
Thickened blades and they shone like a border of beveled emerald.

Reaching the center of the lawn, the man turned and shook himself,
Speaking loudly and gratingly in an unintelligible jumble. The syllables
Poured out onto the grass as letters, littering the deep lawn, and shivering
There like a mass of impenetrable pain.

Then the man began to move again, swinging his arms more quickly,
Turning and aching until his fists began to blur and beat the air until
Suddenly they became the air and he began to dissolve, becoming thinner
And thinner, then nothing at all. And when he had gone there was a
Shining in the air, as a smile arched broadly on the sun above. And the
Letters that had strewn themselves on the rolling lawn
Rearranged themselves with a shudder to spell "Here Endeth."

On Loss

Once a beautiful woman who had known nothing but pain, slipped
Into the water of a very warm spring. The water felt like
Carbonation against her body, and the bubbles moved her as she
Lay down and sighed, knowing that her beauty was
The falseness of men, and that she had used it to every advantage
Her desire could arouse--that neither the women nor the men that
She had once seduced would turn from their desire, their grief,
Or their accounts, to breathe a single sigh for her as she lay
In the water, sparkling like a wafer dipped in champagne. So when
The woman began to cry, she issued the tears of a woman in pain,
The tears of a woman who sought beyond her body. And that was
When she began to call out, begging to be changed into something
That could never be mistaken for a woman again. And as she wept,
The blood began to bubble inside her. She felt herself grow lighter
As the sunlight combed her body into the muddy bank of the
Spring. As her body rippled, seething with elasticity, her arms
Bloomed suddenly into feathered wings and her torso unfolded
Itself into an egret of light that flew above the city into the
Darkness above, where they who are not known to us until we
Have given up on risk, held her and soothed her and offered her
Their kisses.

The Shadows

A man who was defeated sat on the steps
And looked down. His head was bright with sorrow
And he leaned out over the depth into which the stairs descended,
Until they became a tiny ribbon of blue enamel lost in the square
Of darkness below. The man was very tired, and decided to lie
Down and sing a song to the elements, the stars and their steel
Mallets, the trees as they crowed, and the earth as it heaved
Backwards into the darkness of the town the little man imagined he
Must have come from. As he finished his song and fell asleep, he
Began to cry out, his words forming little angels of insolence and
Bliss until an entire landscape of angelic hosts burned above him
Like notes that appended a holy writ. But the man slept anyway,
Oblivious to his words, until he began to burn from within with a
Brilliant light and his body began to glow like a rose colored
Ember as he floated
Into the morning and became what it meant.

Then the town that had shaped him out of life and desire, made a
Monument of shadows for the nothing he had been.

A Man of Stone

A man turned to stone in the darkness
His arms twisting into ruined jade.
His belly flowered into a deep crevasse,
The green stone murmuring, then hardening
Into a form of pain. His legs sank heavily into the earth beneath
Him. And his head, which had always resisted thought, was frozen
Into a shade of darkening emerald, the mouth twisting
Into an aberrant grimace, with the last ideas in the coral of his
Mind still shining dimly in the ruins of his eyes.

Inside him as he stood there, encased in his rind of stone, a brilliant
City flourished and writhed. There were advances in medicine, arts,
And science, the beauty of a populace that had been quickened into
Life, then mown and harvested by time and its rhythms. In the
Center of the city was a tiny square of sculpture, and the forgotten
Verses of a forgotten time. Among them were these lines by an
Unknown poet:

"When light was first born it was nascent, an ember. And the
Children laughed because it reminded them of themselves. But
None pass through the winter of love untouched ."

One Morning

A man lay in bed one morning when suddenly Cerberus broke from his Side. Precipitated out of a black blossom that made a metallic roar, it ballooned out of his rib cage to take its form. As the dog advanced and dragged him to hell, griping and cursing and nipping at him, the man shouted "STOP!" until eventually Cerberus did, as hell is composed of fragments and has no context without human intervention. At that point the man saw Ahriman standing next to him in a jumpsuit and fedora with a Lon Chaney grin. He stank like a slaughterhouse, staring at him with blank blue eyes. But the man knew Ahriman was powerless over those who recognize him, so he jumped on the dog to tour the stench of the Underworld, and, for their own reasons, certain choirs of the dead were willing to make him welcome.

They planned to seduce the poets and humble a century by imprinting him with the neurotic sanctimony that marks the academy today-- a syndrome arising out of a fear of history that will create the very thing it hopes to prevent. But he had already posited in himself the necrotic roots of much human knowledge and he understood fear as the chief enemy of consciousness, so he made up his mind to learn what he could from the cities of graphite and plains of lead around him, the valleys of burnt skin, their huge beads of saline bound only by surface tension, shade on shade inside them, washed in black blood. This was the doppelganger he had long ignored--the frequency of shadow the ancients had understood--source of that friction from which a longing comes, to know and be silent, past all consumption.

Clouds

It was a blue day. The grass was orange. White blocks of granite
Piled high to make a building. It was a beauty like love
At the edge of the sky. He had been thinking of Job and his
Accusers. What sorrow there is in humanity that love destroys us
For love. And that his neighbors accused him, knowing nothing of
The pain. Pain like the dog with glass in its paw. Dumb pain,
Without understanding.

It was a white day. The clouds dragged their asses. The clouds
Moved through him and were lovely nonetheless. Their grace was
A casual motion through his chest. He wanted to be a cloud so the sun
Would destroy him casually. He wanted to rain like that, until he
Was nothing--to be a heavy silence that scudded through the
Air. He imagined that all sufferers longed to be clouds. That
Suffering was their intention in longing to be something else.

It was a red day. The roses burst in the air, like red flak above
The furrowed earth. He imagined the roses were like blood
Vessels. The spume of their scent bleeding into the wind,
Leaving long streamers dissolving in the gusts. He imagined Job
Among them, naked and disturbed. But refusing to give up.
Walking out and coming back, with that heaviness.

Goethe

From "laws and rights
Like an endless illness,"

He rose up to write
On the air as he died.

The light suffered
In the little violets.

A deepening silence
Turned the years.