

Submissions for Sixfold Third Version

Yoga

Back arched

butt tight

I move away from myself—

goodbye to all that.

Next stop,

clear intelligence of the soul.

Memories go first

then appetites

language

love

self-loathing.

Gone.

What is left

flies up to the rafters

to check out the view.

Keep Your Enemies Closer

Courage arrives when we run out of options.

Demons and dung beetles,

spiders and slugs:

these—

a few of my least favorite things—

must be confronted and appeased.

The powers that be

do not have our best interest at heart.

A benign universe requires greater optimism

than I can usually muster.

Life is bittersweet at best

and we already know the ending.

But if reaching in is reaching out

then the sky's the limit,

and beyond.

So sing a chorus of hallelujahs,

meditate on stars,

dance to the music playing in your heart.

Fear is the enemy,

not demons and dung beetles,

and death is the door

to that other dimension.

Distance

Your voice in my ear is not pillow talk.

When you say "See you later" it might mean Skype
or it might be simply habit.

In your absence, everything speaks for you.

Rough bark and cool water speak for you.

Hardwood floors and hot fires speak for you.

Old books and newspapers,

tire tracks and puddles,

wild parrots and fat pigeons,

cop cars, wedding gowns, hungry dogs, tired wives,

slow trains and fast cars:

everything, all of it, nothing exempt!

Creation speaks your name ten thousand times a day.

Fish Freeway

The grating roar of surf on rocky shore
caught Sophocles' attention long ago,
reminding him of human misery,
while Mathew Arnold heard in it the loss
of faith and hope in a superior being.

The dull, monotonous roar of surf upon
this Northern California rocky shore
sounds like a distant freeway for the fish.
Millions of fish are swept from home to work
and back again, a very dangerous trip:
propellers,
nets,
oil spills,
plastic bags,
bigger fish.

Natural threats aside
we humans are the enemies of life.
From industrial pollution
to unused recycling bins,

we are all to blame.

Fish don't lament the loss of faith,

their lives are rich and full.

What need have they for abstract gods

when all is in its place?

Assaults on the environment--

once few and far between—

Now threaten kelp and crustacean,

coral and sea urchin too.

THIS WILL NOT DO!

Matthew 25

I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty, and you led me to water.

When I needed courage, you showed me a mirror
and told me to look no further.

My car needed washing, nails needed clipping,
clothes needed mending, dog needed walking.

Everything and nothing: no task too humble, no challenge too tough.

For moments in and out of time occur in subways and Subarus,
on shipboard and in showers. They do not discriminate,
ask for green cards or bank statements, mother's maiden name,
or thumbnail photo downloaded from your iPhone.

What is required is an open heart and mind, a loving nature,
and a great capacity for forgiveness of oneself and others.

Contrary to public opinion, the sheep and goats end up in the same place:

It just takes the goats longer.