

A Third Selection from an
Unfinished Book of Sonnets

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Repressing memories and paranoid,
Learning to wear a mask before my peers,
I shrank from company I once enjoyed,
And shrank from Mom, as she raved in my ears.
Thus, I was waiting for my graduation,
Growing impatient for when I'd be free
From her. We were long past all reparation:
B-R-O-K-E-N H-O-M-E,
A house of cards, a house of empty smiles,
A house of arguments, a house of tears.
Dad had already been gone for a while;
It was just me and Mom; I lived in fear.
Her parents came for graduation day;
They planned on taking me, not her, away.

She said her guru would kill her if she
Remained alone, so she would go with me.
I had to flee from her insanity:
Her parents were too meek to set me free.
I said to them, If she tries doing that,
I will stay here; if she stays, I will go.
She made a scene, but could not keep me back:
I went to Exeter; she stayed at home.
Over the next few months, I fought naïvely
With my trustee for my inheritance,
Saying the things I thought so indiscreetly,
Learning to hide my thoughts in self-defence.
And once I got it, having studied Buffett,
I put most in the S&P 500.

Goodbye, O lotus eaters: I am gone.
I search for answers on the open sea,
In words undying of the Muses' song,
And in the depths of pure philosophy.
I cannot visit, as the sea is wide;
It is not easy to retrace the journey.
The passing time will strengthen the divide;
No gust of wind will I let backwards turn me.
I leave you to your games and videos;
Enjoy your fads and fashionable phrases.
Like leaves you rattle whither the wind blows:
A life as fickle as the lunar phases.
I hope that you enjoy that which you eat;
My memory of it is bittersweet.

O hypocrites, you have your just reward:
No words will ever make you change your mind.
O hypocrites, the fate you go toward
Is only what you want at heart to find.
Your motivations are not as you claim,
Though they determine how they are described.
Your face is but a mask before your brain,
And acting permeates to thoughts inside:
Acting before yourselves to be thus seen,
Thinking an act, and acting without thought,
Living an empty, all-deceiving dream,
Believing words are truth when they are not.
 So fortune steals, appearing to be giving
 The rotten fruit of unexamined living.

Star-bearing sky, show silently your sight.
Awake, wide waters; whisper wordlessly.
Enduring endlessly, help me indite
The secret of eternal mystery.
Show me the walkways worn with many days;
Show me the graves illegible with wear;
Show me pavilions used many ways,
Keeping no record of their users' care.
The growing list of now-forgotten names,
The endless register of empty actions:
Why do the cogitations of most brains
Amount to nothing but their own distraction?
 Why do some thoughts endure as long as you,
 But most, once thought, fall from all human view?

I mourn for Abraham, for he is dead,
And I, another spirit with that name,
Control his living body from his head:
That head, which now contains a different brain.
I have the memories of Abraham;
I have some of his superficial manners;
But I destroyed his foolish works and plans,
And ended his distractions and his stammers.
For Abraham so wanted to be wise,
That he destroyed himself, became another,
Hiding his thoughts beneath a grave disguise,
No words unneeded letting leave his cover.
 By limiting his outward self-expression,
 His faculty of reason gained accession.

Lord, why did you thus fashion mortal men,
To so delight in empty vanity?
Please pardon us for our unthinking sin:
We cannot through our self-deception see.
For you have kissed us with a kiss of ashes,
And we are nothing but the sons of dust.
A generation comes and then it passes;
All we create will soon decay and rust.
Our sadness and our happiness are vain:
An act produced according to our make.
Though man feels in his soul existing pain,
His suffering is for appearance' sake.
 But though you know the reason why we act,
 The knowledge cannot be described as fact.

A friendship founded on discussing reading
Is an unedifying vanity.
You will not understand the deeper meaning,
And you will not become what you could be.
And as with reading, so it is with writing:
Asking for help with editing is vain;
It will prevent your genius from igniting;
It will impair the function of your brain.
True knowledge comes from solitary thinking:
Leave talk for pleasure and necessity.
This is the underlying factor linking
An author's life with their work's quality.
 A hypocrite will read the words above,
 But will not heed them: vanity they love.

In conversation, say not what you think,
But say that which you think that you should say.
For if you say your thoughts, your thoughts will sink
To what is relevant from day to day.
Instead, hold in your mind a secret garden
Of deep deliberations kept unshared.
If others ask its fruit, demand their pardon,
Withholding it until it is prepared.
Then, when at last the harvest time has come,
And you reveal the fruit of careful thought,
It will be like the rising of the sun,
Whose radiance cannot be sold or bought:
 Illuminating with eternal light
 Even when you yourself are out of sight.

Beware false friends: their superficial smile
Will disappear when you are most in need,
And fabricating an excuse with guile,
They will deny you that for which you plead.
For they desire merely to be seen
Laughing with you in social situations.
Though you believe that they are as they seem,
Appearance dies with fortune's alterations.
Spend time instead with someone whom you trust,
Who tells you what is said behind your back,
Who pulls you up when you fall in the dust,
Who will provide you anything you lack.
For when all empty words are said and done,
False friendship is like dew beneath the sun.

The only thing that never will desert you,
The only thing whose light will ever shine,
Is inner worth that comes from reaching virtue
When you from vice have found the strength to climb.
For human nature deeply is imperfect,
And unimproved, man is the lowest beast.
Unmoderated appetite will surfeit,
And vain endeavours benefit you least.
Though some may feel for vice a twisted pride,
And justify with empty breath their sin,
Their shallow show conceals their state inside:
A secret heap of shame they keep within.
But time will sift the fortunes of us all:
Those with unconquered vice in time will fall.

Or if they never fall, they never rose,
Constrained to insignificance by vice,
Walking the meagre path their nature chose,
Enviously critiquing others' flights.
They see the faults of others, not their own;
They give advice, but never introspect.
Their greatest fear is thinking when alone,
Lest they find something they do not expect.
All words are wasted that are said to them,
Except those which necessity prescribes.
Just as you don't teach cows or pigs or hens,
It's vain to try to make such people wise.
 Ignore the lure of conversation's rule:
 Only a fool will argue with a fool.

It is not food or drink that lowers man;
It is not age; it is not poverty;
Not even death can lower him as can
The true destroyer of felicity.
The only thing that lowers man is sin.
Sin is what causes evil memories.
Beneath the surface, secrets lie within
That lower man more than a grave disease.
For none can read directly others' minds;
Therefore, they guess their level based on actions.
And sins are data of a special kind
That show the self beneath outward distractions.
 If you want peace, if you want happiness,
 Then do not sin, and fate will do the rest.

O what an age of vice degenerate
When man for titillation brandishes
Pornography, whores of the internet,
And twisted fantasies, and fetishes.
Though vice is prior to technology,
And human nature sins without assistance,
Temptation traps a weak psychology
When they are separated by no distance.
Since physical reality seems flat
When in the two-dimensional bordello,
Addiction's thrills desensitize to fact
And make one's sense of pleasure sick and shallow.
 True pleasure only comes from virtue's pride,
 Which has no fear to show what is inside.

I turn aside, immersed in solitude:
This is the most intoxicating wine.
My mental faculties consume no food;
Instead, I look upon the mists of time.
I look upon the past immutable,
Deciphering the lessons it contains.
Its evidence is irrefutable,
Unread by one who from pure thought refrains.
I look upon the future if I can,
For it is easier to look on air;
Yet I prognosticate a misty plan,
Saving my future self the present care.
 Thus read, the book of self-analysis
 Removes the need for further stimulus.

I meditate on the material
Interpretation of the mind's existence.
In metaphysics, the ethereal
More than the practical will find persistence.
For clouds and waves have infinite detail,
And canopies of leaves are richly patterned,
And in describing them, all words must fail,
Omitting that in them which truly mattered;
But all their beauty is ephemeral:
Replaced by what is next, it always ends.
While deepest thought is always beautiful,
And to eternity a message sends:
 Phenomena will change in time and space,
 While metaphysics stays, but in no place.

The human race delights in vanity:
It motivates the young, mature, and old.
Without it, all our choices would be free;
Without it, all our feelings would be cold.
In love and sadness and philosophy,
In epic and in drama and in hymn,
The superficial style of poetry
Is but the form that motivation's in.
Self-knowledge teaches that this is the case;
No resolution can make false the fact.
It is the nature of the human race
To seek for praise, to praise oneself, to act.
 And from that motive I have not been freed,
 For of composing this it was the seed.

The wisdom of ascetics is a lie:
Nirvana is an act to please the vulgar.
They blindly lead the blind: their inner eye
Is by the dust of boasting overcovered.
For in their hearts, they seek what we all seek,
The hidden motivation and reward,
While with their tongues they speak what they should speak
To strike with shallow minds a twanging chord.
Their meditation is not edifying
Because they boast about it afterwards.
Though wisdom in the street is always crying,
They choose instead the Dharma's lighter words.
 They walk on Brahma's path, but cannot see
 That God laughs at their vain hypocrisy.

All people fill their heads with stimulus
To help them play a superficial role.
They cannot think; that would assist them less
Than an unthinking blindness of the soul.
For sight is but an inconvenient strangeness
When living in a nation of the blind.
The seeing man or blinds himself, or feigns it
And hides that which he sees within his mind.
At first, he tried pretending others see:
This did not change them, though it blurred his sight.
He looks for one with the ability,
But conversation never quite feels right.
 And so he writes down what he sees in books
 To be perceived by anyone who looks.

Though generally all want satisfaction,
Particularly all want different things.
Habit and nature lead to different action
Dependent on what fate or fortune brings.
And though some say that freedom is illusion,
That all is predetermined by some law,
By essence of experience disproven,
That doctrine yields to what innateness saw.
There is no freedom in what nature gives,
But habit may be freely modified.
Thus, though each man for satisfaction lives,
Some benefit, some don't, when satisfied.
 Virtue takes pleasure in what benefits,
 While vice delights in worthless counterfeits.

O iridescent grackle, mourn and cry:
Weep inky tears and moult your coat of jet.
For you have been deceived to live a lie;
No reproductive fitness will you get.
O iridescent grackle, why do you
Work hours every day with urgent speed
To gather up, prepare, and give your food
To parasitic mimics of your breed?
No iridescent grackle, do not so;
You labour vainly, earning no reward.
This season's span from thaw to coming snow
Will be consumed for a dishonest ward.
 Your son, a broken egg, lies in the earth,
 Mourning, though dead, his interrupted birth.

I want to be an island to myself,
Without relationships or complications,
Subsisting quietly on hidden wealth,
A stranger on perpetual vacation.
For in the past, though I was always speaking
To all the people whom I loved and liked,
It all fell through my hands like water seeping,
Leaving me less than nothing in this life.
If only wisely I had trusted none,
And warily said nothing of my thoughts,
I might have acted out a little fun,
In pleasure, yet avoiding any loss.
 Naïvety and trust are deadly sins,
 And wisdom lies in wariness within.

Rural retirement comes to a close,
And solitary silence must now cease.
I once again will openly expose
My thoughts to conversation's free release.
I regret vanity, my oldest friend.
He is the same, but I perceive anew:
Hypocrisy, which false appearance lends,
I used to trust, but now I see quite through.
Must I be reacquainted with this fool?
Why should retreat not last eternally?
If my retreat was wise, what unwise rule
Makes wisdom last but temporarily?
 Myself I flatter, that I truly choose
 An enterprise whose fruit I should not lose.

The vanity of formal education
I rationally have come here to get,
But I don't think that I possess the patience
To do that which should minimize regret.
For I prefer Port Meadow to the College;
I eat more in my room than at the Hall.
In reading more than lectures I find knowledge,
And I've done little reading since the fall.
But little vanity and much vexation
Is all my labour earns me at this time.
All I can do is wait for the vacation,
Content with putting my complaints in rhyme.
 I know what boasting to my peers would do:
 It would accomplish nothing, though be true.

The discipline I trained my mind toward
Is now ridiculous, contemptible.
My peers express themselves when they are bored;
I wear a mask so virtue never shows.
My clothing and my manners are too formal;
I don't waste hours on social media.
I think when others speak; I am not normal;
I do not value vain criteria.
Thus, though I still have acne on my face,
And have the appetite for generation,
Among this vulgar crowd I'm out of place,
Because I think. My act is simulation.
 I cannot eat the lotus, cannot leave;
 I cannot live while getting this degree.

The difference in our manners is quite striking:
We two delight in different conversation.
And though we felt at first a certain liking,
The heart must yield the brain its inclination.
That which I feel is careful gravity
Appears to you as affectation cold.
Habitual familiarity
To you is dear, to me is far too bold.
Though words possess themselves signification,
Their deeper meaning is the mind that made them,
And underneath the world's equivocation,
This is the only reason why we say them.
 I speak like water, but you speak like wine:
 I could love you but as a concubine.

The kindness of your words is unexpected;
Their time is short, but memories preserve them.
I must admit my heart is quite affected:
It pleases me that you think I deserve them.
What power in your mind and in your words:
The one I see, the other still enjoy;
For that inferred is less than what is heard,
And though I think, yet I am still a boy.
But though I am a boy, I am a man.
At least, my life has made me act that way.
And though we are polite, we cannot span
The differences in what we think and say.
 I see your world, but you do not see mine,
 For thought unshared develops over time.

Surpassing love for women is our love,
For friendship is the purest of all ties.
And I could say that friendship is enough,
But then my deeper thoughts would be disguised.
For when I speak with you, I feel desire
Surpassing what pertains to friendship purely.
But though I feel within my heart a fire,
I cannot guess your inner feelings surely.
So for a while, I will speak no more,
Delighting in your boyish conversation.
Until I see what I am waiting for,
I choose my words with careful hesitation.
For in confessing love unshared by you,
I'd lose not only love but friendship too.

I mourn the loss of friendship and of love:
A friendship found and lost, a love not found.
This vanity I cannot rise above;
Grief sweet as honey makes my mind unsound.
Philosophy approaches with a smile
Of condescension and of sympathy,
But I will scorn her reason for a while,
Indulging in my mourning vanity.
It could not have been otherwise, she says.
Feel no regret: you were not indiscreet.
Go speak your words, I say, to one who has
An appetite for words: I will not eat.
The only thing that's sweet to me is sadness;
All I desire is solitary madness.

Your boyish arrogance and foolish notions
To you are monuments, to me are cute.
And underneath my chat, my heart has motions
That reason is not able to refute.
I wish I could communicate to you
The wisdom of a song that most deny,
So you'd give me a kiss and make me new,
And in the shade of privacy we'd sigh.
But you prefer instead your vulgar noise
And blustering about the fairer sex.
You cannot understand the love for boys,
The taste that comes to him who self-reflects.
 Speak on and play your part, handsome young man;
 Speaking blinds you from seeing what I can.

As if the one who figured out the secret
Of the material interpretation
To study math would need someone to teach it,
Rather than read a book for information.
Should I reveal my work to a professor,
To seek for sponsorship, like Wittgenstein,
So they would see that they in fact were lesser
Than him they thought they taught, this patient Wine?
No, such a sponsorship would but defile
A work of such importance, which should not
Have the acknowledgements, works cited style
Of academics trapped in shallow thought.
 My *magnum opus* will not be corrupted
 By one by whom I feign to be instructed.

My dear professors, how could I explain
That secretly I can see through your lives,
See through your publications and your brains,
Because I had the strength to look inside?
For underneath the surface, I am writing
A book to make you boast I was your student.
How must I act? My genius is igniting;
To boast of it to you would be imprudent.
Instead, I must continue secretly,
In my free hours, when I am alone,
Writing a treatise of philosophy,
Whose germ I first discovered way back home.
 I know what links the body and the mind,
 But a true course of life I cannot find.

Your colleagues who profess philosophy,
Who comment on the works of men like me,
Could look over my manuscript and see
That I'd been greater than you, secretly.
But what would happen then? They, envious scholars,
Would want to get some credit for the knowledge,
Make it their student's thesis, chained and collared;
They'd want to edit it and be acknowledged.
I'd rather die than let that happen to it;
I'd rather do math homework patiently,
Pretending to receive instruction through it,
When it is merely shallow vanity.
 Alone will I make my investigation
 On the material interpretation.

Can I keep on this mask for three long years,
Feigning to learn from my inferiors,
Sitting with peers who are no more my peers,
To dress with B.A. my exterior?
Pretend to learn from worthless idiots;
Pretend to learn with worthless idiots;
Pretend to be a worthless idiot:
To boast of it to worthless idiots.
But there I broke the rules, went quite naughty,
For I rhymed *idiots* with *idiots*.
Whatever. If politeness cannot stop me
From such insults, I'd be a hypocrite
 With measured brain to uniformly keep
 The pattern of the rhymes, the number of the feet.

Hither and thither people in the street
Move endlessly with all-consuming speed.
Their words of great import outpace their feet:
As fast as light they reach receiver's feed.
And this, I have no doubt, will make a great
Enrichment of our human store of learning.
One who disdains this is disdaining fate,
And for an empty nothing only yearning.
I'm sure that wisdom comes from endless chatter,
And knowing something about everything.
This is the way to make one's thoughts have matter,
And make one's life amount to anything.
 I'm sure that silence is an empty fiction;
 I'm sure that thinking is a bad addiction.

Alas, I do not have refrigeration.
Therefore, I daily walk along the street
To buy myself a freshly made collation
Of perishable plants and milk and meat.
The food is good, but O, the vulgar crowd
Almost subdues my stomach's appetite.
With what they show the world, they feel quite proud,
But make my eyes wish that the day was night.
For, rightly read, the whole world is a book,
But so prolix in injudicious style,
That it is more instructive to go look
On a brick wall in silence for a while.
For information is but part of thought:
The key to judgement lies in what is not.