

Poetry Series

Daniel Brick
- poems -



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Daniel Brick(June 10,1947)

I was born in the late 1940s which makes me one of the BABY-BOOMERS. But we could also have been called PEACE-BABIES, because that's why so many of our parents wanted to start families - a horrendous war had ended in total victory and the Great Depression had been replaced by the New Prosperity. My parents, from lower middle backgrounds, benefited from this prosperity and were truly grateful to God and Country. But peace did not last. Ultimately, the war-mongers of the century can always find a reason for violence, and I include our nation, almost continually fighting a war somewhere, in this criticism. I'm not talking about valid or invalid reasons for war but rather the brutal FACT OF WAR... I was introduced to poetry in grade school by several gifted seniors who volunteered to come to my grade school and recite poetry for us. I still remember I enjoyed them greatly but some of my peers mocked them. Then, as a junior in high school, I had a charismatic English teacher, Mr. Kurtz, who not only taught me how to read and interpret poetry but how to appreciate it. I became a lover of poetry at age 16.



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Of A Human Life, part Four Of Four

Don't call my name yet,
postpone that summons
as long as possible. Let
the earth begin a new orbit, faster
and reckless. let things wind down
and begin to spiral into each other.
Let my fear reach its apogee
of terror, and then disintegrate
into a mist, a cool mist for a moment
and then nothing holds together, it all
disappears into invisibility. And I am
at peace, even though peace is a chamber
of existence that beats faintly,
until a great metaphysical Hand
attached to no shoulder slips
into our dimension and rescues
the spirit, if not the flesh, of things.
But please reconsider calling my name.
I am not ready to carry the weight
of my life events before a tribunal
that has ordered life and death
since Egypt ruled the East. Don't let
that Power yank me off the stage
of mere living. I promise to live for others.
Grant me another century of achievement.

Daniel Brick

W A L L A C E: A Portrait For Barb

Wallace, you are ever in the Present Moment,
while we, your companion humans, get lost on
the downward slope of the Past, or that rare uplift
into the Future. But you summon us back
to backyards and back alleys or to a back court
in which you run wide circles around us, as if
you would fence us in. You are always studying ways
you can run freely, your nose raised high to sniff
the air that promises you the Dog-Wealth we will ever
applaud. It is one-third your fleet freedom and
two-thirds your clinging devotion. No matter how far
pump your legs on lawn or sidewalk or dirt road,
you always circle back to walk at our side to places
we both recognize as our stamping ground.

And in-doors you can practice your vocation
to seek sleep whenever the world seems to be sleeping,
and you stretch out and breathe deeply, until sleep
arrives like a punctual friend and covers your memory
with Dog-Delights. I'm sure you dream of barking
other dogs to submission, of striding proudly next to GiGi,
of making the most out of the hours that begin
with a sneeze of excitement, move with quiet dignity
through dog-day afternoons and into your night sleep,
when you are utterly fulfilled and do not have to dream
of happiness. It is all around you. 'Wuf, wuf, ' you bark
the truth, because this is your time to love and cherish.

Daniel Brick

Hafez Visists Baharak Barzin a Fantasy Poem For Baharak

May the peace of Allah descend upon you.
May you find Khidr's footsteps when you are lost
to lead you back to home and family. May pure water
from Ruknabad cleanse you of gossip and lies.
May the shadows and shine of Shiraz delight you.
May our time together in this quiet garden, sitting
side by side, spirit touching flesh, flesh touching spirit,
blend our deepest thoughts with with our leaping feelings.
I want to carry your kindness forever in my heart,
I want to write poems using your favorite words,
I want to spill images of our joy onto this hand,
this hand that writes the poems, that carries
patience and forgiveness, that waves to you
when you are distant and touches your cheek
when you are near, this hand that knows
how softly poetry lifts things settled in your heart
and shares them with a fragrant morning,
or an abandoned dog, or confused child far from
home. Perhaps as I age into ignorance and decrepitude
you will replace me, that is, you will stand in my park,
recite my meters, gather crowds eager for a recital.
Baharak jan, the old poets Saadi and Attar said the soul
speaks the language of poetry. And angels echo that
language, because the beauty of it ruffles their feathers,
the truth of it launches their singing, and the goodness
of it opens the Gates of Paradise for all who,
in equal measure, toss praise-songs to animals
and humans and angels, and bow before the Throne of Allah. Let my hand guide
you to poetic heights.

Daniel Brick

Sarah, Lovely And Loving

Sarah, lovely and loving, offered
her hand, a simple hand, nothing
more. If her hand had held flowers,
or money, or food, I would smiling
have grasped it. Instead it was only
her white hand, pulsing with life.
Sarah took the moral high ground,
and left me sloshing in the swamp,
soon to realize the cost of love
to those, like her, who give and give
beyond the needs of the moment
toward some larger goal of kindness,
patience and fulfillment for all.
But she turns back and sees me floundering.
That pure hand is tarnished rescuing me

Daniel Brick



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Grasping The Wind

O Wind,
invisible, tactile, fleeting.
how can I grasp you?
You rush over me, beyond me.
Your powers make you one
with the World's original forces.
When all else was formless,
when nothing had a shape
that did not dissolve, when no thing
could say, 'Look at me: I exist!
I fill these contours. I carry this weight.
I occupy these places.' Only silence
and empty places. Everything had fallen
into formlessness, collapsed before
the blank power of nothingness.
Except you, O Wind. Your presence
made smells linger, made rough things
smooth, made branches shiver. Birds
returned to build nests, squirrels stored
their stash, deer walked between trees
in absolute silence. I alone know your
worth, but others are learning to appreciate
your presences, your absences. They bow
to me, because the the Wind is the shape
and sound of Creation, and the Wind is
my friend. It chose me among men.
O Wind, let the Acts of Creation prevail.

Daniel Brick

A Gesture Of Meaning

I uncurl the tight fist of my right hand.
It relaxes. I raise my right arm slowly,
fingers stretched and pointing upward.
Pointing to what? Perhaps a trace of
moonlight or even of starlight
just barely visible. Or perhaps
my hand seeks to grasp a pocket
of air to bring it closer
to earth so it spreads the purity
of the high heavens over our valley
of existence. What am I to believe?
Is believing in something higher and better
the answer to the riddle of our lives?
Or does the answer lie scattered everywhere,
and we must pick up the pieces and assemble
a whole that has never existed before?
Is that what humans are meant to do? Is that
the goal of stretching our grasp and grabbing
whatever we can bring into our ken so that
our brief lives display a redeeming beauty?

Daniel Brick

The Wind And I

I sought a friendship with the wind.
I felt it already existed in my soul,
but soul-depths kept us far away
from each other. I hoped to attain
a space we could inhabit together, I hoped
for wide open spaces we could wander at will.
How does a mere human being summon something
so vast? I merely stood at the center
of a circle I imagined into being. A gentle
touch made me turn my head to the left: a dry,
brittle bush was there, a moment passed, and
the skeletal bush suddenly soared into green
abundance. It flourished before me. I knew then
what Wordsworth had tried to teach me through verse:
Nature's Soul overspreads time and place. The wind had answered my summons
without hesitation or delay.
Her gestures blessed me and displayed her
welcoming "YES" to our friendship in touch
and truth. Henceforth, we travel the earth as one being.

Daniel Brick

The Six-Day Poetry Crisis

The Event is so rare in the scheme of Things, it has no name peculiar to itself. Bureaucracies, so eager to gobble up revenue for any excuse, failed to detect this one. No church or museum or university anticipated it. No news organization got the scoop. Their representatives stare at each other in follow-up sessions, and then they all talk at once. It's that kind of situation. When a nervous silence ensues, a dishelved official says, "How could we possibly know dribble-dabblers, these scribblers without any media clout, these poets in an Age of Prose and Sense would count so highly? Could it be a hoax? Of course."

The alarm had been sounded the year before when a joint commission of NASA scientists and Mayo Clinic researchers announced their findings: "Just as the brain releases chemicals which flood the individual's consciousness with positive feelings, so the interior work of poets releases psychic energy beneficial to humanity and nature." The spokesperson almost almost choked, he wiped his brow: "We are as surprised as you with our, um, unanimous conclusions... But, there's more. Our calculations indicate a short-fall of some, ah, forty-five poets to adequately produce these benefits." TV coverage showed some of the specialists laughing, but by Day Three of the crisis, no one was laughing.

The United States government Impact Paper was leaked to the confused public. The San Andreas Fault had widened, Blue Whales suddenly were singing their symphony in minor key, Monarch butterflies could not find Mexico. They were trapped, circling malls in central Texas, traffic was stalled

for miles, even in small towns, a greasy rain stained people and buildings across New England, in southern Minnesota the mighty Mississippi River was turned into stationary sludge. And Good Will among people around the globe degenerated into scorn and threats. People's faces either showed alarm or absolutely nothing at all.

On the Fourth Day, Robert Bly came out of his retirement, and at age 90 began a marathon reading of poems. People crowded into the Landmark Center in St. Paul for the relief which flowed forth from his mighty presence as he read his own poems and his translations of what he called "News of the Universe." The listeners sighed in delight at the words of Neruda and Lorca, Rilke and Ahkmatova, Transtromer and Levertov permeated the air they breathed.

When Robert Bly read "The Night Abraham Called to the Stars," they felt a huge weight lift from their spirits.

He read it a second time and the weight dissolved into the grace of being. In later days, people said Robert Bly's reading was the Battle of Thermopylae in this crisis. When he left the stage on the Fifth Day, two hundred poets and readers of poetry formed a line of volunteers to continue the work he began.

On the Seventh Day, the Mississippi River flowed slowly and majestically below its high banks in the Twin Cities area.

Cool, clear rain cleansed New England, traffic raced the highways once again, and the Monarchs reached their and began their annual reign. Pundits began to dissect the crisis into many unrelated events, and the laughter over poetry in an age of prose resumed... But in a small town anywhere or everywhere in the world, a twelve-year old girl completed to her satisfaction her first ever poem. The opening line read, "We are beginning to read the message each dawn delivers to our waking minds: Keep your promises, people of the sweet Earth."

Daniel Brick

The New Poem

There it is - the New Poem. Read it and read it again. Make it feel welcome because 730+ poems crowd my collection and recite themselves in soft voices. The new poem is shy, its subject is an epiphany of grace, received when least expected but most urgently needed.

Why is this? Can we comprehend the progress of an idea which makes a dwelling for itself within the brain space we call "Mind? " Tendrils, of the extremest flesh, connect the visible with the invisible. The mind adjusts the message, the brain says this in the most decent language.

Daniel Brick



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A New Poem

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Daniel Brick



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Timber Tales

The trees are exhausted, all of them:
elms and oaks, poplars and birches,
Russian olive and Nantuckett pine,
orange blossom and eucalyptus.
The list is perhaps endless.
And we haven't yet accounted for
California and the Great Plains,
and mountain tops have trees growing
sideways, or clinging to the edge
of the drop off. These faithful trees
cannot be forgotten. For ages we cannot
measure, trees have climbed hillsides,
reached their summits and rooted
themselves securely. They do not intend
to budge. Oh, they will bend in a storm,
and after the storm, they assume their
uprightness and their leaves glisten
being closer to the sun. We learned
to bend to Fate by observing the cautious
behavior of trees. Better than the philosophers
trying to reduce everything to a word,
I listen respectfully to their propositions,
their arguments which puzzle most people
I internalize and make my own. When I see
night falling on summits distant from me,
I gather my notes and head down, down, down
the hillside. The trees wave goodbye
with their leaves, otherwise stillness reigns.

Daniel Brick

"There Are Two Doors... "

There are two doors
that need to be opened.
They must be opened
in a particular order,
and left open. This procedure
must be honored, even when it's
violated. Results will vary,
but act now, because the cold air
you feel in hallways and foyers
will increase and make you sick.
You do not want to face failure.
First, there is the humiliation
of being caught, when you are
so adept at being free. There may be
scars, in any case. That's my second
point. The third point is that all of this
matters greatly: the humiliation, the losses,
the trust betrayed again and again. This is
what happens when you are negligent. Do not
be a loser: Open first the door on the your right....

Daniel Brick

We Can Scarcely Believe

A courtier arrives at your estate, and
demands your two daughters over 18
take the test of the crystal slipper.
You know this story only too well,
and it always ends badly for you.
Your daughter is eloping on his noble black stallion.
His? No, his lordship's. After a brief chase,
he is captured and your Miranda is brought back
to the court. No one even considers
her feelings, how hard this is for her
to pretend she was abducted, when instead
she surrendered, a dozen times she surrendered
to her rescuer, who is now traduced as
a rapist. When guards dragged him
from the torture chamber, his body limp
and bleeding, in a miraculous moment
his captors drsgged him past her, and
for a second their eyes clasped, and both
saw only love swelling with the truth of
passion. "I saw into your soul, my love,
and it is the mirror of my soul, your
truest thoughts now inhabit both of our souls."
The guards mocked him, beat him, threw
him in a dank cell. "Oh, my dear soul,
this prison is the latest test of
my capacity to love. I will not fail you."
And truly it had already been written
in the Book of Fate their love would prevail
and they would be true lovers for decade upon decade.

Daniel Brick

The Witness Of Poetry

This is a verse story from somewhere
in Centeal Europe, in our time.

Wasn't there a promise made
about the Return of Happiness?
Did we not gather in a series
of circular formations for people
to meditate? And then we bonded

in a swirl of frolic and dance,
and so we ratified the promise...
I remember listening to speeches,
then half listening, and finally,
my mind numb, I stopped listening.

I had begun to think for myself.
At first, my early adulthood was
wonderful - being in love and together
building a home. Oh, our joy in Juan,
our first-born, is something I recall

at my peril. Nostalgia sharpens loss,
and Memory is cut to shreds...
Those leaders who promised prosperity
gave us poverty, taxes, conscription.
Their promises of victory, repeated

again and again, became hollow. I have been
a citizen soldier for twenty-seven years.
Our leaders say there have been six wars
in those years. All I remember is fighting
and always pressing forward on the battlefield.

To what end? There is never a clear victory
for us or them. We just keep fighting, killing
and being killed. I woke up in a field hospital
with a bandaged left arm. Volunteers from America
had come to help us survive, to heal our wounds.

A twenty-one year old nurse dressed my wounds,
then she sat by my bedside for hours telling
me sweet and wholesome stories about her life.
Her life reeked of privilege and wealth. She simply
did not realize how her life mocked mine.

She will return to her prosperous life
in America, and tell stories to friends
and relatives of saving badly wounded men -
so they can fight another day. But
I am stuck, trapped eye-deep in hell.

I healed slowly but steadily. I returned
to our home, and my wife fussed over me,
displayed an excess of care that came out
of her depths of love. She redeemed me.
I rejoined my family, my neighborhood,

my life stretched before me, and summoned
me to - what else - a long-postponed happiness.
I dream the same dream: I am lying helpless,
in a pool of blood. A hand stretches out.
I grasp it with both of mine, and I am pulled to safety.

Daniel Brick

Under The Autumn Moon: Enter Two Singers In The Chorus

The red butterfly
flying on the lower hem
of your robe
reminds me Autumn
is a season of sudden flights.

A green thread circles
the red butterfly, and
both move in perfect sync.
Circle and insect are
witnesses to the passing seasons.

Autumn moves in stately
measures toward winter
and the New Year. We are
its fellow travelers.
The butterfly is grounded until Spring.

So there will be no singing
in my life for the next six
months. I will search
in the partial silences
of the world A Redeeming Music.

By Thanksgiving I will return
to our society. By Christmas
I will be teaching the Chorus
new melodies you must learn by heart.
By New Year's Day we will ready to premiere.

Where will I look for these melodies?
Are some lodged in the corridors of
my brain? Are song birds presently
singing them? Can you hear the lone flute?
the solitary guitar? From my dreams... all of them.

Aphrodite, Her Theophany On Chios

It was dawn when Aphrodite alone
entered our world. Time and Change
scattered before her august approach.
She stepped forth as from a mirror,
glittering, flashing, she seemed
to float across the marble floor.
A fountain cascaded with its columns
of water made more pure in the Goddess's

presence. She stopped at the edge
of the portico, and looked up
into the vanishing stars. Her eyes
connect the stillness of things above
and below. She stands or moves. It does
not matter which, it is the same poise,
the same serene presence. Her calm,
an ultimate calm, puzzled Creon of
Delos, a poet of the Creation Story.
Her beauty spread beauty everywhere,
and Creon's mind had expected only turmoil.

A silence had descended over the bustle
of a palace morning. Servants bowed
their heads, some fell to their knees.
The old men of the Council had witnessed
such a piercing of the fabric of the world.
Oh, some among these graybeards smiled,
they felt no fear, and their worshipful
stance pleased the Goddess. What they saw,
what everyone saw, was a benign presence, gentle,
pure, kind. Aphrodite glided across the floor
mosaic, and people heard the music of Aegean
waves, rolling back and forth. She trailed sweetness
wherever she went. The astonished people smelled
ichor and nectar long after she disappeared into ether.

Daniel Brick

Possible Futures

How much does it matter
that I can square the circle
before the sun sets today?
How much does it matter
that three men we hired
forced the boy to bend
a willow tree, until
its top leaves kissed
the earth, the sacred earth?
How much does it mean
that we danced on the Moon
with no help from gravity?
How much does it mean
that the novel I saw
whole and complete in a vision
is mine to write? Will the Great Wheel
lurch forward into its iron future?
Or will we simply fall into deep sleep
and dream of a society of sincere hearts?

Daniel Brick

Advice, Before It's Too Late

Go as far as you can.
Stop listening to that
foreign voice within.
It cannot help you
as it did then when
the words chosen were
soothing, and again
and again made you turn
away from anger, withdraw
into quietude, a kind of sleep
for your troubled senses.
To be right, to be righteous
is to be alone when you most
need companionship. Look there!
The thread you need is entangled
in the willow tree. Free it: it is
the thread of Homecoming, taut
like an arrow ready to fly
to the target's center. The word
lodged in my head offers soothing.
It has reached me like the ancient
gift of Victory. You have gone
far enough. It's time to rest.

Daniel Brick

"Creeps In This Petty Pace"

September Tuesday. California burns.
The news is monotonously bad.
Why would you decorate these
diasters with words? They deserve
no poetic halo. It is just extinction
of our perceived asylum in space.

EARTH - Erda - Ishtar - Our Lady - Mother of Us All

** *

In southern Minnesota a giant tree-root,
half above, half belowground,
unwinds down steep hills, over streams,
through campsites, treasure paths,
broken trails, and clearings with pools
of white light shining on the leaf mold.

Look! There is the moist earth. You're standing
there, not on pavement, not on concrete. Real organic
living earth. There you stand.

Look up. A sky completely empty, only color,
no clouds, not even bird flight. Is it a Zen Moment?
or perhaps a commonplace September event?

Breezes stir rivulets of relief.
The air has never been so pure. It must have
launched with holy abandon.

Daniel Brick

A Poem Inspired By Sarah Feldman

I always assumed I would behave
with just the right measure of pride
and humility. This I will achieve
with Socrates's aplomb and whatever
else pertains to his bright Self.
But the World itself is vexed: we live
broken lives in the crumbling cities
of a rotten society. Will this creative
fire burning within reconcile me to loss
and ruin. Such hopes were strong
in my youth when everyone was an ally,
even a friend, definitely a fellow journeyer.
What concerns me now is the darkening web
over the everyday, which renders everything
and everyone hazy, unfocused, unreal.
How can we find allies, or friends in such
a crowd? How long will we strangers to each other?

Daniel Brick



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Visions In The Night

In sleep, I am always
with others. Blessed spirits hover
over my self asleep. They softly
sing music only pure souls hear
as they lie motionless in the currents
of night. Friends appear repeating
their kind daylight gestures, but I -

I feel darkness encroaching...
Soon body and mind will surrender, and
soul and heart will purify what has been
and what is. This is the deepest place:
a Mystery awakes and spreads through all sleepers.

Imagine Homer's asphodel garden in the shadow
of Hades, imagine holding Aeneas's Golden Bough
as you ascend with other souls in a mad rush
into the Light. Imagine Persephone calling
your name, as you stumble in the Dark Lord's realm.
Imagine your delight reaching her mother's wheat and barley fields.

Or imagine any paradise that fulfills your soul.
Does it seem as if the blazing sun is really
Apollo's shining being? Watch as some light
ascends and disappears, while other light
pools around us, bright and cool and refreshing.

Daniel Brick

Sleeplessness

In sleep, I am always alone.
No bed is large enough hold
all of my tossings. I awake
again and again, and feel
darkness as a weight.
Even as I push against it,
it presses harder, it takes
my breath. I am scared to see
my exhaled breath dissolving.
Something malign exhausts my reserves.
Or so it seems. Could it be some wounded
part of me exacts this hostility? Only
near dawn do I sink into a vexed sleep
that mocks the repose I long for.
Oh, in what detour of darkness
do my sweet dreams reside?

Daniel Brick



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A Scene, With Birds

Afeeder sways
gently in a breeze,
fresh rainwater fills it.
Beside it, a rusty pole is
fixed in the muddy ground.

Overhead a few birds
along their migratory path.
They are tardy travelers,
having postponed departure
for two weeks. They are

cautious birds, not scavengers
like blue jays, not tricksters
like crows. They are necessary
creatures, whose flight sustains
the harmony of sky and land.

I could readily join them, slipping
into flight with ease and coasting
on air currents, far above the dust-
deluged surface. A few of them descend,
and splash in the rainwater...
Then they ascend.

Daniel Brick

A Vision Of Music

In Memoriam:

Horatio Radulescu

Each day makes its way back
silence. And we make a parallel
journey. It is the same imperative
that reaches closure. In silence,
feelings asleep, thoughts withdraw
into depths where they coil themselves
and wait for the moment to ascend.
Meantime, silence fills all available
space, and time keeps strict measures.
I could write a poem but that activity
must also wait its turn. I want to sink.
I want to be embedded in soul's soil,
to be immersed in the incomparable wealth
of primal growth. I am neither hope
nor fear at these depths. Rather I witness
an original unity. I can hear rainwater
part walls of dirt, as it slips downward
to become earth. Such images are
a synesthesia that takes us across the threshold,
and we greet the others, also just arrived.
We behold - nothing. We are the silence.

Daniel Brick

Greensnake, White Snake

(Drawn from ancient Chinese myth)

The Green Snake coils itself
around itself. It is in total
command of the hills that stretch
from here all the way to the sea.

Who really believes sadness
can be assuaged by time passing?
Look for a better explanation.
Look at me, I'm old enough to know
what is real. I have watched scene
after scene of beauty, each one
holding my gaze as the next crowds in.
Shining things make every space
a garden place; shining things
flash and fascinate time upon time.
My heart skips a beat. I am breathless.
Nature is the beautiful background
of our lives. Oh, pull it into the foreground!

The White Snake of the West
sleeps, coiled deeply upon its dreams.
It is in total control of valley upon valley.

Daniel Brick

Eros In Spring

She sits very still
in a grassy plot that will
soon be night, crossed with shadows,
pierced by shafts of piercing moonlight.
She sits very still, revolving her thoughts.

I am standing a short distance from her
in a grove of trees with pale green leaves.
There is no breeze. Every leaf is still,
even my breathing is slow and soundless.
Her twilight complexion is more beautiful

than twilight itself. "Turn toward me,"
I plead. "See me. Greet me." To no avail.
I walk tentatively behind her, and enter
the edge of her grassy plot. Suddenly
I feel like an interloper, and leave quickly.

As I turn away, as I walk away,
her presence weighs on me. I feel motionless
air on my arms and face. I see traces of moonlight
on my clothes, even the silence touches me.
But that girl of spring touches me most deeply.

Why do moon and trees, air and heat, darkness
fading light all acknowledge me, and yet
she is silent, self-absorbed, distant even
in nearness? We are sharing this silence.
We are of one mind. It should be a shared spring.

Daniel Brick

Acts Of Kindness

(1)

Kindness is the oldest gesture
in our vocabulary of gestures.
And the sweetest. Did Eve extend
her hand to help Adam to his feet
when he awoke beneath her smiling face?
Did Abraham steady Ishmael's steps
as they trod the rugged path of Mount Horeb?
Did Rachel's glance reassure Jacob of her love
even as he married Leah to satisfy the father's
bias? And what of Noah and his crowded cargo:
How many frightened animals did he calm
during their tumultuous voyage?
And how we are humbled and amazed
in equal measure over God bringing
the sparrow back to life and flight
to reassure Abraham's heart....

(2)

I will not speak of the great deeds.
They will take care of themselves,
God willing. Let me rather celebrate
a small gesture with a long shadow.
You saw me locked out, and fumbling
with keys. In a flash, you opened
the door and admitted me to the place
we both belonged. Then you vanished
into your act of kindness, needing no
thanks for following God's example, and God willing,
I will learn from your example to be so kind.

Daniel Brick



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The Third Son And His Consort, Marcella

I was the third son of the aging Count Rousillon. My two older brothers were divided and fought over the estate, but always reconciled. Allies are better than enemies. Our family estate in the forest of "Friendly Shadows" was my refuge from my brothers' greed. I nursed my father's last years there, and he died a happy and fulfilled man. I buried him at the spring called "Pure Waters," withn sight of our estate's highest tower.

I eked out an austere but rewarding life.

I treated my peasants fairly. Despite my youth, they call me "Father," and the happiness in their faces brings tears to my eyes.

I allow them to hunt for venison, so their children will grow healthy and strong.

The local friar Andrew is my bosom friend, we prepare feasts on Holy Days with hymns sung in the Church and madrigals and canzone both sung and danced in the estate park.

I was almost invisible to my brothers when I found Marcella among my peasants.

She was eighteen, beautiful to my eyes, and a musician. Our life together has been one long rehearsal for a concert we will give when angels and humans and animals are all one Being.

In the meantime, we play our viol duets, and pause only to listen to the birds' carillon at nightfall. Last night, Marcella's viol tone was so pure and transparent I was transported to the Empyrean. And there she was, ahead of me, tuning her instrument, ready to create beauty.

Daniel Brick

Joseph Looks Forward

Joseph laughed as he told stories in his brothers' company, with all of his Hebrew-Egyptian household surrounding him. His grandchildren cheered him as he pretended to bring an ornery camel to a fresh stream of water. The adults maintained a respectful silence in the presence of Egypt's savior. He was both the Hebrew Patriarch and a Prince of Egypt. Joseph sat at the center of a series of concentric circles: his brothers and their wives and families, his Egyptian relatives by marriage, friends and servants, all artfully spread across the space in front of his palace. Joseph's palace was Pharaoh's gift for his years of loyalty and service. But it was also Pharaoh's palace. Pharaoh supervised building the largest and most splendid palace for Joseph, it mocked all other palaces. It was a sign and warning: a sign of Joseph's solitary greatness and a warning to others - THIS IS THE LIMIT OF AMBITION IN EGYPT.

Years of uncertainty and false imprisonment had humbled Joseph, he was not the master of men his titles proclaimed, he was still the shepherd boy who prayed to his God at night, on the hilltops where the flocks slept, under the burning light of a multitude of stars. Even in his old age Joseph was still a Child of God.

As he aged, he grew silent about dreams and prophecies and the Voice of God in his heart. Beneath the precious gowns and lavish jewelry, Joseph was simply a Man of Prayer. Each morning he prayed in his heart, "Lord God, this is your day dawning. Make me an instrument of your Will"; Each night he prayed, "Lord God, this is Your day sinking into darkness. Make me an instrument of Your Will."

The end came quietly during a time of prosperity.

Joseph reclined on a couch with sweet incense swirling in the air, and soft sounds of female harpists cushioning thoughts, and peace was as palpable as silence. Joseph gently stroked the fur of an orange cat nestled in his lap. He suddenly spoke: "My prophecy is the Good Life in God's World. My way of life has that which should accompany old age, as honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." He stopped stroking the cat. The cat looked up into his face and saw the light fall out of his eyes as his body slumped. And Joseph sleeps in Abraham's bosom... And GENESIS closes in calm and confidence....

Daniel Brick

Layla And Majnun By Daniel Brick

Dedicated to my Persian Princess,
Baharak Barzin

I have been following traces of Layla and Majnun.
It is a labor of love, like their wanderings
to find an asylum. Hardships began with winds and
rain erasing their footprints everywhere they went.
Some have concluded their story is only words
on paper, which can also be erased. What do you think,
my friend? I know they live in your heart, whether real
or imagined. They prosper there, because your heart,
young, vibrant, full of an excess of love, holds the secret.

I often stop in some green place,
sit in shade or warmth, depending
on the season, and watch the things
they watched. At this moment, I see
flowers bending in the direction
they took. The lovers and the flowers
both follow the sun. As it begins to set,
Layla and Majnun blend into the darkness.
The flowers toss their aromas into the night-
scape. Layla breathes deeply the scented air,
and Majnun swells with pride as he senses
her presence in the purple scent. Are they
really together in this tender night?
I do not know: the darkness heroically
protects them, the night has absorbed them.

Where is Majnun in the wide expanse
of the morning? He has found a forest
clearing. He has braced himself against
tree bark, and waits for her arrival.
This is how Majnun lives each day and
every night. He is perpetually hopeful.
He cannot accept any help. Any help
would diminish his passion, and he lives
only for his passion and Layla. I see
his emaciated body, I see the longing

in his eyes, and I pray for him. He is suffering in his inner and outer selves.

In the bright light of mid morning,
I see Layla standing on the cliff's edge.
She looks into a sky filled with tumbling
clouds. When I look again, she is sitting
on a cloud throne, and her subjects cluster
below her. They love her, her beauty and poise
remind them of a rising sun. But Layla sees
only Majun on a stage of her imagination.
He sings to her, he dances for her, he recites
poems he wrote to her. I am convinced
they are together during his performance.
Then, the bitter truth assails me:
it is a mirage, I was deceived by hope.

The next morning I awake in the summer palace
of my friend, a minor nobleman. When I speak
of my sightings of Layla and Majnun, the courtiers
laugh: they assume I am joking. Then they leave
my presence to pursue the games of courtiers.
Oh, love, where have you fled? Is there not
room in this mortal world for an immortal romance?
Is there a secret truth about Layla and Majun?
I will be the guardian of their passion.

Daniel Brick

What Lovers Know

Distance is not a reality to those
who love. It is so easy for them
to conquer space: they merely
occupy it, look around and measure
the steps to reach the next place,
a place to rest or a place to launch
into space. This is how all humans
move from place to place, but lovers
can leap over the fabric of reality,
and land in some pleasant private place:
an island in a rushing stream, a peninsula
connecting a green island to the dusty
mainland, a nest made of promises and praise.
There's no need to race: The love is always present.

Daniel Brick



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What They Say

They say a woman's hair
is her crowning glory, and
I half believed it, until
I became aware of the curve
your mouth, when you are near me.

They say a woman should surrender
to a man's superior thinking.
I laughed that they could not
grasp her fierce wit.

They say a woman's voice peaks
and declines rapidly. No, it is
the hearing of men which declines.
They stop listening to her intently,
and fail to appreciate her special charm.

They say composers contend to write
music that fits her voice. But I know
as one who stood in the shadows
as she sang, everything we heard was pure sound.

Daniel Brick

A Night Journey

A Poem for the Two of Us

I went in search of LUCK today.
I looked first in my apartment.
I even moved furniture to look closely
in out-of-the-way places it might be hiding.
Nothing. So I went outside, and walked over
the soft grass, intensely green from rain.
A row of trees and bushes stretched
into the thickening darkness, and
and the night-purple sky spread overhead
like a richly colored Persian carpet.

I saw two people, young and clearly
happy in each other's company. They sat
very close, and their silence was
the eloquence of true love. "Hey, guys,"
my voice invaded their silence. "Have you
seen any trace of LUCK nearby?" They looked
puzzled, but the girl said, "Why do we need
luck when we have each other?" I hope
she saw my smile, as I withdrew...

I walked along a darkening path, a tree
swelled out of the shadows, and on a long
branch sat a dozen finches. Two had already
buried their heads in sleep, others ruffled
and combed their feathers. The sight of their
calm made me abandon my search for LUCK.
I saw an elderly couple walking slowly
side by side. They did not see me:
they were looking into each other's faces,
no doubt searching for secrets they alone shared.
I left them in their private peace...

The air was still heavy with the day's
extreme heat. Had not all the creatures
already surrendered to sleep? Animals and
people alike were now prepared to dream

their passage into morning. Before I can join them I must bring closure to my search for LUCK. Perhaps LUCK is not a thing we can hold, even mold into what we think we need. LUCK is rather a mood that friendship creates and sustains. It is not an event, it is a series of actions that promote joy and hope.

Daniel Brick

April

No surge of Spring
has loosened Winter's grip
on April. The cold air
mocks this month which should
host the beginning of Summer's
lease. Instead cold rain falls
and confines us indoor and
confounds our dream of Summer.own
What dream-action must we complete
to release Summer from Winter's
bloated grip? Is it a common magic,
lawful as eating, we must summon,
or must we sue dark powers for more help?
There may be a vibrant reality
beneath us, with its own resources,
its own promises, its silence and deep
wells of reflection. When will this inner
reality burst into our surface lives?

Daniel Brick



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A Response To Kihachi Okamoto's Sword Of Doom (1965)

(II)

The samurai, Ryunosuke, speaks:

There are so many ghosts my sword has
given to death's kingdom. They gather
around me, shove their bloody faces
into my face. But I have left fear
far behind me, sometimes I see fear
leering at me. I growl and send it
packing! Then I drown myself in sake,
and fall into a troubled sleep. I wake,
I shudder, I grab my sword and hold it
against my heart. One beats, the other
is still. That is the nature of things.
You cannot change this reality. Can you?

A Buddhist monk confronted me. People
were watching. I would not be held up
to ridicule. I sent him packing,
and the others. Later I found the monk.
He expected to be killed. His eyes closed
to the flowers of spring, he braced himself
for the death-blow. Instead I dropped coins
at his feet, and walked slowly away. I want
people to be confused. I want them to feel
no one can understand me. I want them to stay
away from me... If they knew how I live
while others die, they would be compassionate.

But I will not allow their compassion,
I turn my back on them. I join in no games,
pretend I cannot hear theirs greetings,
sleep alone, night after night, and
drink sake until I pass out. Then
I cross paths, in my dreams, with men
who are from another dangerous clan.

Or I am enveloped in a swirl of women -
their perfume, their silk kimonos,
their laughter, their promise of
pleasure. I push them away, I go away.
This life has become tedious, is it worth it?

My sword, my soul, is all that matters. That IS life.

Daniel Brick

A Response To Kihachi Okamoto's Sword Of Doom(1965)

(I)

The samurai, Ryunosuke, speaks:

What if I do not complete it?
My mission, my duty, my swan-song...
What if I command the field, but
still fail? Some will live after me.
They will claim to have defeated me,
and left no trace behind. Who will
avenge me and dispel their lies?
Will it matter to me in the darkness
of death's kingdom? I cannot win
this match? I will win this match!

The old man I killed on the mountain,
I sent him to the merciful Amida Buddha.
He should thank me from the grave
for releasing him from life's sorrows.
I keep winning, there is a pile of bodies
without souls. Let them mourn in peace.
I fight their souls. They cluster around me,
and die under my sword like dogs. I neither
laugh at them, nor pray for them. This is
my business. It is my art, my religion,

my life's purpose: How I long for the peace of the grave.

Daniel Brick

In The Light Of Day

24 June 2020

A bird feeder sways
gently in a wind
only half-born. Beside it,
an iron pole is fixed
securely in muddy soil.

Overhead a few birds fly
along the migratory path.
They are tardy travelers
having postponed departure
for three weeks. They are

serious birds, no scavengers
like bluejays, no tricksters
like crows. Just stalwart
birds of all types, whose flight
maintains the Harmony of Land and Sky.

I would readily join them
in miles and miles of flight.
We, whose flight in the light
of day, will maintain the Harmony
of the Land and the Sky for all creatures.

Daniel Brick

The Holy Mountain

My Holy Mountain rises imperceptibly
Onn your path. You do not realise
you have already climbed half-way
to its summit. When you open your
spiritual eyes, you will see light
shining on trees and grass, rocks and
water with a brilliance that will calm
your heart, like the sight of people
who know the path you tread without effort.
Are you tired? No. Are you lost? No.
Do you feel a strength rising from the base
of your being, filling every empty place
within? Yes. Then welcome to my Holy Mountain.
You have entered its precincts, which stretch
further than even your spiritual eyes can grasp.
I AM WHO I AM... I exist.

Feel my presence - in the sweet air
you breathe, in the sunlight pouring over
you like precious oil, and in the distant
blue haze in which I dwell. You have
reached the summit, Daniel. I am there
as you are there. Birds frolic and sing
between Heaven and Earth. Now, what
will you do with sacred moment?

Daniel Brick

At The End Of The War - November,1918

Smoke from the fire-fight still swirled around us, as we carried the Captain to the shelter of a huge oak, gashed by bullets and bayonets. We braced his body against the bark. His breath labored, his face wrenched with pain, we knew what he too must have known: he did not have long to live. Jake and I, who knew him from the first year of fighting, sat close to him, the others milled around or leaned into the oak. The Captain tried to speak, but words failed him. They also failed us soldiers. What do you say to man dying inch by inch? Would the Germans attack again before he had the chance to die in peace? Would we mourners have to be fighters again, and abandon him? But the Captain rallied, and greeted each man by name. The whole scene was like an unspoken prayer. An hour passed, he was fading from us. He drifted into delirium. He addressed us as children, what peacetime ritual unfolded here? I leaned closer to him and he spoke to the air, and named perhaps a childhood friend, "Sam, you know it is the sweetness of life I'm losing, I'll never hear PARSIFAL again..." His voice was twisted into silence. He seemed to sleep, but I think he was awake but turned deeply inward. The pain disfigured his face, so I told the medic to give him more morphine. He rallied again, "No, I'm not going to need it. Save it for the others." It brought tears to my eyes to know he was thinking of others and not himself. I had lost track of the movement of time. What did it matter with all this death? I bowed my head, he passed quietly. It was as if some angel had descended and eased his departure. I don't believe in angels, but I believe in men who become more than themselves in crises. The sky was overcast and air was chilled. It was a Monday

morning,10 am, the war would be over in one hour,
one hour too late for our Captain. How badly
the world will need men like the Captain. How can we
go on without them?

Daniel Brick

Memory And Forgetfulness

Are my memories what I choose
to remember, or is there a mechanism
which regulates what stays and what vanishes?
I hope this resident regulator sleeps
long hours, even whole weeks, so that
my mind can harvest a heap of events
the regulator would factor in
only to his advantage. Have I uncovered a threat?
Does the regulator swagger through my mind and
misuse its freedom? The freedom of the sovereign mind
is bedrock, it is the channel both memory and forgetfulness
maneuver. They become more entangled in each other
they often move in tandem, like a dancing couple
sweeping across the dance floor, and then parting.

There will still be floods, volcanoes, diseases,
but I choose to remember this rapprochement.
Without it, we would live in an Age of Half-Measures Only.

Daniel Brick



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The Next Road

Dedicated to all seekers,
who walk the difficult path of knowledge

There are so many roads to take you
to sites that enlarge your Soul.
How will you choose your next road?
Will you look into the sky, and wait
for a hawk or eagle drag your sight
across the western pillars? Is that
the strength you want to emulate?
Or will you press your face to the ground,
and listen to the mole, blind but certain
of his destination, scuffing through moist
earth? Or will you close your eyes
against wavelets ignited by sunlight,
and envision the warm islands you visited
in the Persian Gulf. You are invited to return....

Daniel Brick



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A Poem For Baharak

February 4,2020

Which of your poems
shall I memorize first?
Which poem should I place
near my heart,
so that heart and poem share
the same rhythm, and
both blood and verse serve
the same purpose: To strengthen
my resolve to make Love the center
of my being. Your heart and my poem
will blend over time into one life force.
And all of me - body and soul, heart
and mind, flesh and spirit - will rejoice
as your poems pass by my inner sight.

Daniel Brick



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A Request

for Baharak

Which of your poems shall
I memorize first? Which poem shall
I place near my heart, so that
both heart and poem share a rhythm,
and both blood and verse serve
the same purpose, to keep me alive,
and strengthen my resolve to make
Love the center of my being. My heart
and your poem will blend into one being,
and all of me - body and soul, heart
and mind, flesh and spirit - will rejoice
as your poems pass by my inner sight.

Daniel Brick



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The Good Angel And The Bad Angel

The Good Angel never missed a session of counseling with a sinner, but he arrived late, very late. He grunted a greeting to the Bad Angel who delivered bread and milk to hungry but uncomplaining kids. They know -

they're cared for. The Good Angel knows the complete liturgy, and recites the prayers in a slow, sweet voice. The Bad Angel remembers nothing, recites nothing. He bows his head and does not complain. After the service, the children gather around him, and he tells them the stories they love.

The Good Angel keeps people keyed up for Judgment: "I am a sinner; you know this. You are all sinners; do you know this? Or pretend not to?" Meanwhile, the Bad Angel watches the purposeful activity of birds. "How do they know when to sing? Do their songs reach Heaven? Yes, yes!"

The Good Angel can enter Heaven whenever he wants to. When he enters Heaven, a detachment of militant angels who served in the War in Heaven blow Trumpets of Prophecy. When the Bad Angel arrives, he is shunted to the back, where he hears the chorus and organ with heightened beauty.

The Good Angel has quarters in the office, where church business is conducted. It's lively, distracting, the Good Angel's prayers are cut short, the words lie untended on the floor. The Bad Angel listens at a distance in a perfect silence. Grace descends.

At the end of Time, the Bad Angel is told, "You have, with the help of the Holy Spirit, redeemed yourself. Congratulations! You can enter Heaven!" The Good Angel was promised a fanfare of victory, but only a pack of sinners showed up in need of counseling.

Daniel Brick

Music And Its Currents

A variation on Rilke's line,
"When my soul touches yours,
a great chord sounds"

What chords did we hear
sounding again and again
in cafes, gazebos, gardens
and silent, hidden places
we alone can find? We heard
bass notes as if they rose
from depths of ancient cisterns.
When we listened a second time
to melodies weave and wander
in watery harmonies, a staircase
descended for us to climb. And so -
we did. A vista of trees and
rough paths spread out below us.
We could see for thirty miles distant.

Oh, we belong to the brightest spots
on earth! Our chords will sound
their purest tones, and fulfill
their mission of perfect pitch
in every song. It's as if we saw
a rope ladder strung between two peaks.
The other peak was grassy and rugged.
Our longing to be there was sufficient force
to put us there. We were fleet, light-footed,
and we slid down that ladder at sickening
speed, but the lawn cushioned our arrival back
at the site of our departure. New chords echoed
between mountains. We were still, we were listening.
The song of a yellow canary was carried
by a gentle wind, as blithe and bright
as the morning light which contained it.

Daniel Brick

On Dan's Path

5 October 2015

I was walking through Salem Hill Park,
as I do everyday, but I chose a new path,
down a lane of sumac beckoning me
with its new autumn red attire. A plaque
pounded into an aspen tree overlooking
the lower path caught my eye. DAN'S PATH
the inscription said, and an arrow pointed
left, the way I was heading. In smaller print
the dates of his birth and death were carved.
Only thirty years old when he passed
from their presence to whom he was
a friend or a lover or a brother,
so many possibilities but only one fate.
I imagine a circle of friends witnessed
his burial, said their final good-byes,
and decided upon this memorial path.
And on a day perhaps much like today
they assembled in the woods, chose
the tree above the sumac lane, and
stood in silence as the plaque was
pounded into place. Sheets of sunlight
cascaded over them as they said a second
final good-bye. And then it was over,
and they dispersed. But one mourner
lingered alone under the tree's shade,
staring at the plaque, and occasionally
at the path below. I wonder about your
silence at the edge of speech. What is it
you want to say? I am listening...
Do you want to say Dan is in God's Heaven
with Jesus and the Saints. I will bow my head
prayerfully. Or perhaps you think death
is the final end, and Dan now lives only
in your memory, forever thirty, virile
and healthy, full of more life than thirty
years could use up. If this is what you say,
I will applaud the strength of your memory.

Still you may believe there is an immense cavern
in which all of our dead sleep, holding hands and
slipping in and out of each other's dreams.
And no one can disturb their delight so perfect
is this sleep across eternity. If this is what
you say, I will share your smile, and we will
briefly join hands. Whatever you want to say,
whatever you need to say, say it...
I am listening still.

Daniel Brick

The Pledge

The pledge you made yesterday
under the sunlight of March
binds you closely to Poetry.
But before proceeding further
look into the auditorium:
your audience droop and wilt
like flowers that drank too much sun.
They must be awakened, galvanized,
alert to every message, both blatant
and subtle. So let the trumpet in your
voice sound forth, filling this place of
silence with meaning. Improvise a drum roll
to introduce a solo flute, that chases
the trumpet melody and suddenly takes flight!
As the flute flies, it draws me up into the air.
We perform an awkward duet as we fly in tandem.
Then I watch as the flute flies through scales
and grace notes and comes to rest in a Largo.
It is time for my solo, and it only requires
I listen under the night sky to whatever message,
blatant or subtle, that is delivered to me.
Finally, I will drop the necessary words
into mix like so many coins tossed
into a baroque fountain of cool nocturnal waters.

Daniel Brick

The Quiet Of Poetry

(1)

I will write a quiet poem
to ease the sadness of my heart,
or to tease it out of being.
But sadness is native to the heart.
It shares the percussive rhythm
of the blood, so sadness and heart
are like siblings, or they are like
matching Chinese vases:
the heart is the delicately painted pastel
container, the sadness is the raw wine
we drink from it.

(2)

Eventually, I will write a poem
that needs no words, because a poem
is a threshold to Silence. That is its destiny:
to become a zephyr wind that softly disperses
the sadness of things. And then the poem will
flash with light and leap into its proper place,
which is its silence, its destiny.

(3)

P o e t r y

There is a voice within each of us
which is everyone's voice, there is
a hearing within each of us that listens
to the beating of a common heart,
there is a mind everywhere that
spreads its light over all of us.

Daniel Brick

One Of The Day's Dead

I was almost a prince. My father favored me over his first-born son. He was delighted as I excelled again and again in the arts of fighting. He gave me his retired great sword, and said holding my shoulders tightly, "Practice until this sword is an extension of your arm." I trained with that beloved sword day after day until it became part of my body. But my father also engaged the Sophist Anagoras to teach me how to think. From him I learned to plan a strategy, to balance strength with cunning, to think beyond just the killing stroke. When Anagoras told my father I was his finest student, my father's pride in me made me the proudest of sons. I listened to my father, to my teachers, to the prophet Calchas with his knowledge of the gods and goddesses, to old and seasoned warriors, to a priestess of Isis. Oh, I was so prepared for the battle over Troy. On the voyage across the Aegean, I sharpened the point of my father's sword so it would puncture armor. I was prepared. I leaped onto Trojan shore with a dozen others, and looked around for my first victim. But behind me a Trojan warrior lifted a huge rock, and smashed my brain into my skull. Hermes guided me into the Land of the Dead. His face was sad. I didn't know a god could be sad, but Hermes was. "This is your human fate, ephebe. You lived a good life, making your father proud. Do not think of yourself as just one of the day's dead. You had your shining moment, on the plains before Troy, and it was a heroic death."

Daniel Brick

5th Chorus

5th Chorus: This poem is an resolved crisis between people who are Poetry-Enthused and people who are Poetry-Apathetic. Hey, you people, listen to some JAZZ: Get electrified.

On my walk around the upper level
of O'Hare Street Park,
I saw a fox sunning himself
on a red-dirt mound in the valley.
His red-gold fur shone with a vividness
he felt as warmth, sleep-inducing warmth.
He stirred as I passed him,
my scent descending into his knot of fur
and flesh, and alerting him,
"A stranger passes. Look dead."
And so he lost the opportunity
to learn from me, and I from him.
Just like the merchant, cutting corners
out of stress, who declined a gift of verse,
or the young woman, so lost in her I-Phone,
she missed the Flight of Poetry, soaring,
just brushing the top of her head.

And on the other side of things,
an old man softly holds a blue leather-
bound book, called "The Long Haul, "
poems his wife wrote early in their marriage,
poems they read together on their anniversaries.
A middle-aged woman tells her friends, she visits
her mother once a week. She tries to embrace her,
but her mother sees a stranger, not a daughter.
and pulls back indignantly. And she cries inside
when she remembers how much she loved her mother's voice.

There's Angus, the Blues bassist. We nod to each other.
Angus stops and watches the relaxed fox, the king
of his small red hill, anointed by sun shafts.
That's the fox, laughs Angus, not me.
"I'm King of the Night Realm Jazz. The Masters
of the surrounding vegans serve me.

"We take your breath away. We blow off
the top of your heads. We launch the music
as if for distant listeners. But it's enough we're electrified."

Daniel Brick

Twin Cities Choruses

1st Chorus: A jam session saves me
from prolonged stress.

Useless hands - they droop
at my side. In a dream - No,
a nightmare. Again and again,
I witness this loss of dexterity.
Useless hands, and myself a jazz musician!
Who are we? Say it loud and clear:
"We are jazz musicians. We shine at night,
from 6 pm to 6 am, we shine! "

My 60+ years old hands, wrinkled, gnarled,
blessed, hold my bass, I twirl it around
while plucking out a rhythmic phrase -
What talent! Don't waste it, buddy-boy.
This belongs to more than just you.

2nd Chorus



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OK, I'm as ready
as I'll ever be...
What's the point of all these points
of view? Let's settle on a mission,
say, teaching everyone in both cities
to sing the blues choruses, or at least
hold the beat while they sit. How can
you jazz cats feel the jazz current
and not be electrified!

OK, the set begins. I quiet the noise inside,
I muffle the noise outside, I turn it all into MUSIC, yeah!

3rd Chorus

They say, You're hot! You're on a roll.
Don't blow it. Keep focused on the music
moving from one musician to another.
Each of you makes something unique

and precious out of the same tired tune.
It's the alchemy of jazz, transformations
abound, we make and use up 4 or 5 souls a night.

The night moves at its own pace, it is sometimes
transfixed by the music, and opens its cavernous
jaws and swallows everything with rabelaisian
gusto. The show goes on in darkness, the musicians
create a stage and an auditorium with their eyes closed.
Everyone is a performer! All of us make this holy racket.
The musicians, the crowd, the invisible Angels of Swing,
and the demons working their way back to grace
by losing their bad impulses in the beat.

Daniel Brick

Conundrums

"It is painful to say these things,
but it is painful also to stay silent."

(1)

I have been told erasure
is illusory. I have been told
there is a middle layer
between the front and back
of a single sheet. Whatever you
try to erase seeps onto that layer,
mingles with words, letters, punctuation
marks, doodles trapped there, and -
SOMEHOW - organizes a piece of fiction.
The two most recent results of this
most recondite process are two novellas,
that were secretly entered in the Booker
Prize: They both won! And no one knows
"what" the writer is. Notice that is not
"who? "; it is "what? "

(2)

I have been told if you break
someone's heart out of callousness
or spite, The Furies will haunt you
like a modern Orestes, whose six years
in therapy have achieved zilch. There
is irony here: These processes we call
"The Furies" are outside of causality,
so how can they impact our sensory world?
And what force or entity regulates
the moral balance revealed
in the suppression of the callous
and the spiteful? How are these qualities
recognized and measured? Is there an agent
behind the operations of things or beings or ?

(3)

An epidemic rages in a country separated from ours by a narrow isthmus. With stunning speed and efficiency, we have built a wall along our shoreline. Our navy patrols the coastal waters. They give refugee boats one long-distance warning, only one. This policy is sanctioned by our Supreme Court. Permit me to explain. By now, everyone should understand triage. We are applying it on a larger scale. We don't need all these people on one planet. The immense population probably causes epidemics. Rational politics sanctions this policy. Triage works - for the privileged minority. If God wants to do an ungodly thing, he can intervene and save everyone, we humans only save those humans who can benefit humanity. Our philosophers sanction this policy.

Daniel Brick

Defeating Gilgamesh

It wasn't difficult defeating
Gilgamesh. He is Lord of Uruk
no longer, his kingship in ruins,
no champion has arisen, not in the city
nor in the vast rugged plains circling it.
Once he fought his own battles, wrestling,
crushing, stabbing. Now he slinks down
with a weary sigh. Of his gory what remains?
Words... Words carved in stone, words
pressed into clay tables, words recorded
by historians, and, rarely, words spoken
passionately, spontaneously, preserved
in a chamber of your heart...

It wasn't difficult. Everywhere you turn
there are people selling services and things.
No one notices an old warrior or two, dragging
his clanking armor behind him. I saw a man alone,
in a pale blue jumpsuit, hunched for hours
his wheel chair, that blob was once occupied
by the spirit of Gilgamesh. The spirit left
its imprint on this man, you know he was once
a king, but now he is a man of memories,
they are immortal and weightless...

It wasn't difficult: a deep breath exhaled
and he totters; strike him with a furry reed
and he cowers. Defeat no longer troubles him,
victory will not elate him. Pieces of his greatness
clutter the room, they are scattered on the floor.
People passing by might examine a piece or two,
then discard them. But my soul knows better.

Daniel Brick

The New Muse

"ARE YOU THE NEW MUSE? ... THE ONE
who will approach each poet as a whole being?
It is a fusion of Flesh and Soul within The Spirit.
I know this union is imperfect. I know my self is
incomplete. I know these things. Why were they not
hidden from me? Am I meant to enjoy this life,
or should I loathe it? That is the Issue of Self."

"ARE YOU THE NEW MUSE? ... THE ONE
who doesn't teach an 'English Class'
in high school. She doesn't inspire a novelist
writing his first, or a muralist painting
all the Mississippi garden sites. She will lean
over the painter, and let him know in a net of words,
'These are beautiful words in line six. What word

will make line eight similarly shine? ' Is it the dark
magnet that brings the right word into the right
niche? Can words see the path of closure, and deftly
drop each one into its proper place in the meaning of
everything? Or must they rely on the Big People
bossing directions to anyone in sound of my voice?
Will we regret mixing poetry with politics?

"ARE YOU THE NEW MUSE? ... THE ONE
who needs no sleep. He contains a sun
in the cavern of his heart. Its light
does not blast with dawn eagerness.
It does not scorch with noon apogee.
His gentleness is legendary across
galactic distances. His speech is soft.

"ARE YOU THE NEW MUSE? ... THE ONE
who knows the pain of a love that festers
in a hardened heart. Will you reach
into that wounded heart and ease her passion
for the wrong partner. Give her eyes that see
deeper into a male heart, that sees what truth,
if any, resides there, for her to embrace or let go.

"ARE YOU THE NEW MUSE? ... THE ONE
who chooses to live with us in this world
of fallen gardens, besieged kingdoms,
betrayals and confusions, sacrifice
and hope. We welcome you to join our hymns,
to make our voices blend into your heavenly
beauty and so accompanied we will rise to the Empyrean."

Daniel Brick

A Winter's Tale (Ii)

Winter light struggles to lift itself
over the distant eastern foothills,
then it slides down the long sloping
hillsides to illumine the morning.
It is already a diminished day,
we can only expect more cold, darker clouds,
and piercing winds. But there is music in the air!
If you have ears to hear it. And then, here you are.
Bundled in a winter coat, a brightly patterned scarf
round your neck, you walk nimbly across the icy path.
Body and Soul, you are ready for today's merriment
and mission.

We reach the gazebo, I hold the door open for others.
A dozen people rush, ahead of us. We take our time.
We sit on cold seats in a cold room, our breaths
clouding our faces, and we drink steaming hot cider.
I am near you, but not next to you. There are
so many guests crowding and pushing, so eager
to meet you or be noticed by you. I withdraw
to make room for them. We will later, after lunch,
have our private time. This knowledge calms me.
How do I warn you? These people are not your friends.
They will drain you. Your essence will give them
renewed strength, and they will drain you -
without a backward glance at your fall. There are
those more worthy of your help. I know your heart.
Like the pelican that savages her breast
to bleed food for her brood. Oh, how quickly
our talk shifts to the subject of SACRIFICE.

Daniel Brick

Winter In The South

(I)

A feeble sun rises over foothills
in the high country across the desert.
It is already a diminished day,
cold, dark clouds, piercing winds.
And then there you are, bundled
in a winter coat and around your neck
a brightly patterned scarf. You walk
in brown leather boots with poise
and confidence, body and soul
equally geared for this day's task.

The way you trudge through snow
reminds me of classical music
that depicts landscapes. Some are
flat and barren, others with ragged rocks
half-buried in the dry earth, still others
are submerged in a moving stream taking them
over a falls into a quiet lagoon. You are
the observer, you take these landscapes
into your poetic mind and transform them
into the stuff of literature.

(II)

I stand near you, but not
next to you. There are too many guests
who want to be in the disc of your admirers.
The disc slowly rotates, rendering the scene
blurred. Be warned: these admirers will drain
you, they will take your essence and gain
renewed strength and age, but you will be drained.
Like the pelican who savages her own breast
to bleed the blood that will nourish her children.
You are that pelican. Oh, how quickly our talk
shifts to sacrifice.

(III)

It is required
That you do awake your faith...
Dear life redeems you.
"A Winter's Tale," Shakespeare

Are you the new Muse? ... the one
who will greet each poet as if
he were a whole being. It is a fusion
of flesh and soul within The Spirit...
It is a quartet of spiritual powers:
Mind - Body - Soul -Spirit.

Daniel Brick

Composition

You are made equally of Reality and Non-Reality. Sometimes I grasp your meaning only in the whisper-speech of dreams. Other times, in the clear light of early afternoon, your true being shines as brightly as the star Adelfirth.

You are made equally of Spontaneity and Reflection. Sometimes your actions swell out of silence, and you destroy the peace we have promised. Then you turn desolation into a teeming garden. You sit still, and green things prosper under your sight.

You are made equally of Flesh and Spirit. Together, we'll prepare your Love Ballad, with its defiant happy ending. Only the middle section contains conflict and grief. It ends happily as the lovers enter the world to re-shape it according to your Love Ballad.

Daniel Brick

Last Revelation

Imagine a universe of stillness:
when time collapses into eternity,
when change stops wearing new masks
to hide the monotony of its repetitions,
when Good detaches Evil from its nature,
and presides over its withering.
Imagine both Sun and Moon showering
us with spiritual light. Imagine
the prophecies of the End Time will be
fulfilled without the violence our seers
could not reason past. Instead of destruction,
there will just a whisper rushing through space
and confiding in our hearts:
"Fear not. Be at peace. Everywhere."

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Creation Is The Self-Revelation...

Threads lie disgarded everywhere.

A patient god could briefly visit some spot,
gather up an armful of threads, and
assemble with them the things we desire:
a chateau amid low forested hills, an oasis
with a caravan serai, river valleys, lakes
of the purest water, paths and dead ends
... or just turn the spot into a garden
and leave it for us to nurture. We will be
ardent gardeners of nature. Our labor
will release the spiritual power of
purely natural things. What is nature but
the ceaseless decay and absorption
of earthly things? Creation is not
a difficult concept to grasp: its code
is embedded in our lives: it begins
with the readiness of things TO BE;
it climaxes with God's self-revelation.

And the simple truth is each of us is
part of this process forever. Look,
a flock of blue and green birds sing their delight!

Daniel Brick

"The Dying Gladiator"

My Italian friends told me, "Don't leave Italy before seeing 'The Dying Gladiator.' It is so moving." And so, on my last day, on my own, I entered the Room of Antiquities of a small town museum. Sprawled on his back, his arms folded over his chest, his eyes - "his hawk-eyes" - fixed on the sky, the gladiator lay waiting for death to descend. He was dying the way he lived. Some claimed his death was unjust, murder really: he had refused to slay his young opponent whom he had defeated easily. So other gladiators slew both of them. He watched his brother-warriors, but did not resist them. And two streams of blood soaked into arena sand. Other claimed there was no special heroism: he was too bloodied to stand, and leave the arena. His doom was sealed, as if his death had been decreed by more than human agents. And what do I think some twenty centuries removed from the event? I want to see his death as redemptive. Some good must arise from his suffering even as his body is emptied of life.

Daniel Brick

A Gift

To _____

I've decided to let you
dream my dreams, all of them.
My past dreams will descend
the slope of my mind and
be washed in the waters of
consciousness, and then enter
your sleep with a gentleness
that will not disturb your rest.
Future dreams will flash by and
then hide in your mind until
the right night arrives.
Only present dreams are too shy
to expose themselves. You will
have to be patient until they
become past dreams...

If you had not seen my body
twist and shift in troubled
sleep, you would not believe
I have the character of a dreamer.
Only a dream can soothe a troubled
heart, only a dream can provide us
with the weaponry of dreaming.
So - accept this gift readily.
Take it into your Dream Treasury
to preserve the wholeness of your
Dream Life. Be at peace...

Daniel Brick

A Disciple Of Coleridge Experiences The Sublime, C.1825

By mid morning, as he bent his body
against the sleet, and he neared his goal,
the half day collapsed into winter -
temperatures dropping, ice as slippery
as polished marble, the sun a pale smudge
of blue, and himself both weary and excited.
Clouds were his walking companions, patches
of white swirling over the ground, and slowly
circulated in the wind. He had left the arguments,
resentments, hurt feelings back at the lodge,
in a dark closet no one would disturb.
Friendship was electric at close quarters,
even the games they played at night were tense and
driven, as if winning was important. It wasn't.
What mattered was learning to breathe in the thin
heights they occupied, what mattered was surviving
with less effort of the mind, what mattered
was giving the heart enough space to expand.
He was resolved. He would walk in this cold air
until his heart was frozen, and his mind felt
no grief, and he could see her fair face
without a stab of pain. The ground was slippery,
the world was slippery, his emotions were slippery.
He grabbed a tree branch to steady himself,
he took several deep breaths, and began to compose
a sonnet on an ideal beauty he would someday meet.

Daniel Brick

The Willow King

They say we have a great king.
They say he has won every battle
he engaged, and his armies swell
with volunteers. The autumn air
is bright with thousands of
glittering spears and armored men.

But after the soldiers marched
into a distance which diminished them,
I saw a sight others had missed:
the king dismounted and walked
awkwardly under the willow,
fully armored, and sat in its shade.

He was still smiling into the willow leaves
when courtiers arrived with documents
and more armor. "Blessed Willow Tree,"
enthused a court poet, "your roots, trunk,
leaves, rise skyward, as if you would
dissolve your weight and slowly become airborne."

We still live in a world of partial happiness.
We still live in a world that a great king must protect.
We still live in a world where only the rare willow flourishes.
But deep under earth, where all waters flow together,
where all roots are entangled in one life, where we are
all one immense soul, there, there is born Our Life Eternal.

Daniel Brick

An Unfinished Fiction

Is the man alone the hero
of this story? Does he perhaps
double as the villain? It would
not be difficult for him to play
both roles. On the surface
both characters are elegant
in clothing and conversation, both
pay a generous tithe to Mother Church,
both promise a full accounting
to the Office of Taxation, both
alternately stand out in a crowd,
or sink into anonymity if required.
One says: "We are masters of disguise
and deceit." His voice is firm and
secure. The other cringes, and remains
silent. Which of these responses
marks the hero, which the villain?
There's a mystery here, can we solve it?
Or should we declare there is no mystery,
and all of us go home. I don't know.
Let me think this through. I'm certain
I am the hero, and you the villain. Or....

Daniel Brick

When I Die

When I die, I must abandon
everything with weight, everything
with dimensions, extensions, details.
Will it not be exhilarating
to see all those useless things
falling away from me? Falling
steadily through the Dome of Inner Space,
until that immensity itself dissolves them...
Meanwhile I draw closer to canaries,
those small things that insert their
brevity into my care, because they know
no care. As nimble as air, as free as a song
in no known key, they wing through their
brief lives, giving us a lesson in beauty.
Ever devoted to the LIGHT itself, they
cling to me, going where I am going,
wherever that might be.....

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Joseph Of "Genesis";

Apollo is the god of cosmic Light, the presence of death, its darkness and decay, are inimical to his nature. Such is the rigidity of Fate. Providence involves human beings directly with God: there is God's Rainbow Covenant, His directions to Moses and other prophets, to whom He speaks consolingly, the Chosen People, His theophanies to individuals or crowds. This is the personal nature of Providence, both God's nature and human nature. In contrast, Fate plays out in impersonal terms. Zeus climbs to a higher realm, where he places Achilles and Hector on a scale, which determines Hector's defeat and death. Zeus wants Hector to thrive, and he may be disturbed by Achilles's almost god-like being. But he must submit to the Force of Fate, whose image is not a ruler or a temple or a war chariot. It is a humble scales

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Healing Broken Hearts

Dear friend, it is better to have
a heart broken than lost.

A broken heart still occupies
its niche in your breast, and casts
its broken light over body and soul.
That light, however imperfect, still
ensures each day's beauty, and beauty
will attract beauty again and again.

Let's sit for a while on the wood chips
ringing this leafless maple tree,
its branches wintry gray, no sap
bringing new life. It is enough
for now, until April rains descend
and release the green energy
locked in the ground, and earth blooms.

Antaeus-like, we will touch the earth,
and draw her strength within. All four hands
palming the earth, we will look deeply
into each other's eyes, and find
the true dimensions of Love.

Daniel Brick

The "Gilgamesh"; Poems(1)

It was simple to defeat Gilgamesh.
But first I had to build a figure of
Gilgamesh in my mind, a near-sentient
figure, that could change things and
be changed. Then the First Law arose
in my mind, like a column of destiny.
It said: Impose Your Will. Again and
Again. That is what the goddesses and
gods do, never reflecting on what they do,
until damage is done, people are suffering,
and the Great Wheel of Fate rolls over
and on. Awake, Gilgamesh, awake, stir
your mind-stuff into acts, which once
completed within become your worldly glory.

The "Gilgamesh"; Poems (2)

It's really simple in its essence.
But we are so divided from each other
that some hear nothing stirring, deep
or shallow. We do not recognize each other's
motives, deeds, because others hear howlings,
screams that crescendo into choked silence,
crazed pleas for HELP. Then sheer Silence.
Then the howlings return... This must be
a test for breathing, because when I tried
"circular breathing" I stopped the noise,
that causeless sadness in my mind was stilled.
And even our dreams keep us apart, dreams
rise and set, they are prodigal, display
themselves like Rodan's statue of Honore de Balzac.

Daniel Brick

It

It doesn't demand, extra space.
As for time, it takes what is given
and asks for nothing further. In this
it is like a flower, whose petals
spread perfume for all to smell. It is
like a comet. sweeping across the sky:
just a flash of light, and darkness returns.
It is like a bedtime story that summons
immediate sleep. It is like itself,
a bell ringing in solitude, or a wounded animal
recovering in seclusion, or a demi-god
taking one fateful step after another
until he reaches the edge of his divinity.
It's like all of that.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Invitation

Come softly to me
in the night. The darkness
contains no threat to us
when we are knit together
with the same fabric of courage.

Come to me disguised
or naked. The truth
will not be concealed
indefinitely. Eventually
we will learn to live without shame.

Make your visitation as serious
as a sacred ritual. Promote me
to the highest office of your hierarchy.
I will assume my duties, I will make
you proud you have chosen me.

Make me a promise you have
no intention to fulfill. Bind
me with false claims of authority.
Watch me flounder with uncertainty.
Withdraw entirely from our intercourse.

When we meet again, as we say -
accidentally, we will embrace,
despite our better judgments. We are
bound to a moving wheel which winds
our fortunes into one certain fate.

Come softly to me
in the morning. The light
illuminates and warms us.
We have no cause for fear
or hate. Come softly - I am waiting.

Daniel Brick

Nightward

from "When Night Nears" by Tom Hennen

Light leaves the earth a piece at a time...
It falls into darkness... What is left is the dark
that feels like a body when you reach out....

The Night spreads itself
over our sleeping selves. We fall
into a dream, and wrap ourselves
in its warm contours. The dream-story,
already on-going for centuries of sleepers,
sheds plot-details the way a tree in autumn
lets go of leaves ready to be on their own.
It's a jumble of images, fragments of a story
that began nowhere and now circles everywhere
sleep, dreams and unreality coalesce.

In daylight, my mind reins in its own racing thoughts -
broken pieces that do not recognize each other,
do not know how to reassemble themselves
into a whole cloth...

Even as I sleep, my Night-Mind detaches itself
from its daylight component, and simply soars
in blind flight over and around the expanse
of darkness. This is the other view of Night,
which is etched in my deepest self. No fear of
nocturnal monsters, no night-terrors, no collapse
of composure. There is something I cannot see, but
I know the Unknown looms ahead of awakening. Mental things
bunch together, thinking is paralyzed. The Night-Mind
soars again, free, untrammelled, seeing nothing,
moving by intuitions that have existed for ages
upon ages...

Let the parade of night-things proceed
to the limit of their unreality, let them dissolve
into the morning light. This is still the province
of Night, this is the impetus of darkness.

Reach out and touch the darkness. Something common and familiar will reach through the blindness, and grasp your hand in the softest, firmest handshake.

Daniel Brick

Interior Landscapes

I

Even if worldly things, unworthy things,
distract you, you will hear my whisper.
It will graze your deeper thoughts, and
they will fold it within their compass,
carrying it even deeper where thoughts
become a communion. And we are aware of
the sacred wrapped cocooned in the natural.
Perhaps it's what's left of Eden, scattered
everywhere, still audible in birds' songs,
still palpable in the wind's sweep, and
still growing in our pregnant minds, still
birthing the poetry of our souls....
Ephebe, don't expect a treasure chest to appear:
when you see the glint of lapis lazuli, follow it.

II

I've watched your face framed
by an ordinary room light up
with delight, and I've seen you
standing very still, turn slightly
to the left, away from the others,
as you entered some interior space
replete with your thoughts of repose
and repair. I've seen you leaning
against a threshold loosely holding
a sheet of paper and intently reading
what has just been written. It is
a poem written for you in beautiful language.
Ephebe, this intense awareness of her interior
being is the closest you can come to the Truth.

Daniel Brick

The Cosmic Scale

Cleopatra: I'll set a bourn how far to be loved.

Antony: Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

William Shakespeare

We have only time

to grasp Eternity.

Metamorphosis is required:

I will sharpen my mind

to a point so tiny

only a single truth

can occupy it.

Then we will speak the necessary

words, hopeful words, beautiful

word, words that connect.

we will descend to a well-spring

shining with crystalline waters,

all the waters of the world

circulate around us: they are cleansed,

we are cleansed. We are aware of

many others nearby, equally washed,

equally made ready. We know our fears

will be dispelled by fellowship.

Look, all the chambers of dissenters are

empty. All the offices of money-

lenders are closed. And the last lessons

by professors of science will be completed

by nightfall. We will enter Eternity

with incomplete knowledge. By morning

we will all be the same, candidates

for a new reality. We will listen

to light, we will hear lilac scents,

we will touch sounds of Scriabin.

There's more for us to absorb:

we will be bubbled in pairs, and slowly

rotate across the arc of space.

The cosmic scale is like a mountain

range we have climbed to the summit.

and breathless, realize more and more

summits ahead of us, below us, beside us.
Our silence the more shows off our wonder. (*)
With in our bonded souls we are told
it is required you do awake your faith.

(*)Shakespeare, THE WINTER'S TALE
V,3, l.24-25; 118-119

Daniel Brick

Dreams Of Ascent

(I)

I have no mountains to climb
to see visionary vistas
from its height. High hills,
to be sure, abound, take us
beyond ourselves, however briefly,
but they are not a passageway to
transcendence. Their grassy summits
do not jut into higher spaces, but
cling to planetary surfaces.
Mountains are rooted in deep earth
but rise high above the surface
and achieve those summits, whose towers
pierce the realm of the high heavens.

(II)

Today I climbed, with my younger brother, the highest
mountain in this region. The only motive was the wish
to see what so great a height had to offer... Then
a new idea came to me: I began to think in terms of
Time rather than Space...

The Ascent of Mount Ventoux, 1336,
Petrarch

The sky that late summer morning
was stained with a dull gray blur
that would not melt into the surreal
brightness just out of sight. So we
trudged onward and got exhausted
by early afternoon. Our guide, nimble
and fleet, laughed at our stumbling
gait, and prodded us forward,
despite the increased weight we carried
with each step upward. We persevered.
By mid afternoon, we stood, breathing
the shallow air, and looking over both

height and abyss. My brother and I
congratulated each other, as our guide
smiled over us. Then it was time to descend.
That night just before sleep, we confided
in each other, and discovered we had
identical thoughts on the the summit.
And we slid home on the same wave of feelings.

Daniel Brick

"All Hail Macbeth";

It was not regicide, however brutal.
It was not betrayal of a good king,
however treacherous. It was not his
subtle tongue, which slyly persuaded men
to join the evil party. It was not
drinking the witches' brew to see the future.

Look into the night sky, as he did.
Stare at that hot dark light until
you are dizzy with illumination.
Be patient as the wolf howls and
the night birds screech. Invite
fear into your heart and soul.

Now do you understand Macbeth's fate?
The ornaments of life - honor, love,
obedience, friends - he exchanged
for one glittering prize - The Crown.
He thought he was born to be King.
He summoned Hecate and the wolf.

He bloodied his knife with the sacred
life of a divine king, and blood flooded
his being, and choked every good impulse.
But his greatest sin, his unforgivable
offence, was to speak with a poet's golden
words, and make despair beautiful: "Out, out....";

Daniel Brick

Listening To Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto

To Mitsuko Uchida

The music is quiet now.
It's the slow movement,
an "adagio," not that phoney
&"andante," the real thing
this, and Mitsuko Uchida places
her fingers on the each key
with utmost precision
And we are convinced of its
rightness. We are persuaded
to follow her with slow thoughts,
to seek a peaceful mood,
like a summer day under a blue sky.
An image in opposition rushes
through my startled mind:
Herakles's Nessus-shirt,
infected with poison and jealousy.
I put on the cloth of sympathy, and
all is well again. It is so easy
to be a god doing good: to create
an expanding circle containing us,
and this music is the thread
that connects us. I feel I could
listen forever to Mitsuko playing
this music, slip into eternity
on the slow motion of this adagio,
sink into joy and remain there
with the others around me, strangers
no longer because Beethoven's music
relates us each to each. The pianist
slows the tempo, she will let this moment
of accord stop. I pull the cloth of
sympathy tightly against my body.
Mitsuko's right hand is raised.

Daniel Brick

The Lower Angels

You won't believe this, but it's true
Angels sleep, not because they need rest.
They need dreams... Their dreams are
neither memories nor prophecies. There are
moments when an Angel, one of the Lower Angels,
sinks deep within his ambient soul. Distances
and heights, silence and racket, doors and
walls, barriers and open roads - all collapse
as the Lower Angels sleep and dream. A space
of contingencies is liberated. It is here they
gather and read their dreams, all of them.
Joseph descends from his intimacy with Jesus,
and sits with them, and reminds them there is
little difference between dream readers and
common folk...

The Higher Angels, whose beings are matched
to the Throne of God, are puzzled, as they look on.
And a puzzled Higher Angels worries, and they must
dispel this worry. They speak in their thunderous voices,
they summon the dreaming Angels to wake up,
to rise up, to abandon earthly terrain. They say,
"Brothers, we will give you a second sight,
if you return to Heaven, and stay perpetually
awake, and deny your dreams. We know, Brothers,
this is best."

The Lower Angels are crushed, and turn to Joseph,
who smiles over them as he rises, and returns
to the bower of Jesus. He says nothing.
Both Jesus and Joseph expect the Lower Angels
to speak in their smaller voices to the Higher Ones.
One bright and fiery Angel named Melatron
raises his head, so his voice will pierce
the silence of this Sixth Day of Creation.
"Brothers, we will remain here below. We will
soon be needed to perform new tasks for Our Father
Look at the animals still dazed by their life,
look at the the plants and flowers, the trees and

swirling waterways. Everything is blessed with divine existence, and those of us who sleep and dream know there is another wonder about to be." And Melatron bowed deeply and all of the Lower Angels who sleep and dream bowed with him...

"And God created humans in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And there was an end to the Sixth Day."

Daniel Brick

It Is Time

It is time the stone made an effort to flower.
Paul Celan

A lone horse recedes
into the middle distance
without any motion. A mist
denies us further observation.
We trust there are other horses.

A man and a woman are walking
in the field, pressing their bodies
against each other. The mist pools
around their shoes. "Look, darling,"
she says. "We are walking on clouds."

An owl, no doubt one of many, perches
on a maple branch. The possibility
he might fly into the mist cannot be
dismissed. He is one of the Lords of Night.

Night itself holds whatever scents the air
carries. There are pine scents, lilac scents,
scents of crushed leaves, and some might
perceive the subtle scent of river water
swirling over rocks and roots...

The owl begins to hoot
because it is time.
The horse returns to his fenced yard
because it is time.
The scents dissolve suddenly
because it is time.
The man and the woman kiss
as night air cools their checks
because it is time.

I cannot object to any of this.
It happens because something
wills it to be so. Or perhaps

because nothing stops it.
I know this with the certainty of
the crow, perched in a dead tree.
He has no need for human knowledge.
He is aware only of necessary things
His time is the best time.

Daniel Brick

The Painter

The painter holds her brush deftly,
and paints a diagonal black line
across the canvas. She doesn't know
what it will become. Her gesture seemed
right at the moment of doing, as she takes
the line for a walk, as Paul Klee put it.
Suddenly, in the middle of the canvas,
she stops, or did the line stop itself?
She lifts the brush from the surface.
She feels an undefined mood within
that has become part of the process.
It permits her mind to roam freely
as it scans the white space before her.
She holds her brush loosely, it could
fall from her limp hand at any moment.
but it doesn't, because hand and brush
have become one. Her thoughts are arrested,
something older and mysterious brings forth
a memory: A woman and a man stand together,
intensely aware of each other's presence.
He leans toward her, into her space.
She leans also, into his space. And the two
become one shape. This is the moment
the painter senses the whole picture,
not in her mind, but in her hand. She trusts
hand and brush, and knows every stroke that
the painting requires. She hums snatches
of favorite songs as the couple take on
the reality of her remembrance. But something
else is happening. She can feel it but can
not name it. That is not important. What is
important is the life the figures will live.
She is in command now, or so it seems
as the painting comes into existence.
The light remains steady, no shadows mar
her gestures. The painter feels a mood
of calm enter her mind and the painting.

A Warrior's Poem - From Inner Mongolia

In summer flowers cover the grasslands,
and home thoughts are deep in my heart.
But I have a mission to fulfill for my Khan
and our people. May the Sky God protect our tribe,
as he protects the flowers blooming with life.

When snows come and cover the grasslands
like a shroud, the flowers die, as they are
born to. I will kneel in prayer for my Khan
and for our people. My journey completed,
my soul at peace, I will lie beneath the grass.

And above me, new flowers will sway in the grasslands.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Spring Notes

It doesn't matter
whether or not you show
gratitude. Spring will arrive
gradually or suddenly, and seep
into your awareness. You will
become one with its music, even now
swelling into a Song of Summer.
That green riot will bide its time.
For you, there is the work of remembrance
to confirm. The roads are slippery, and you
must walk them until you reach the place
where everyone understands everything.

The leaves twist and tumble
on their long branches. They blink
as they snap back and forth
in the sharp sun light of early June.
This is how winds sculpt the season
into being. Green energy surges
beneath green matter. It is time
to express your delight.

Daniel Brick

Springing Forth

These are such narrow channels we must negotiate as our craft comes to rest in its safe harbor. All passion spent, we can walk away from bodies of water that would otherwise hold us hostage to desires large and small, as one longing dissolves into another. Oh, the solvency of water may make this present desire disappear, but from it springs forth another desire, and yet another. What if all of these small desires coalesce into one giant Desire, and it challenges the Nature of Things? I have done my part to prevent this. I have established the Law of Things. You approved these principles: "Desire and Death are Siblings, " "Desire pretends to be the Future, but it's always the cold dead Past, " "Desire dazzles you with sudden illumination, in a realm of Darkness, " "D e s i r e - See how it vanishes into the neighboring nothingness."

Fix these principles into the currents of everybody's brain, let deep ruts in the brain's mental channels stall speed-of-light thoughts, starve the Mind of necessity and pleasure, dim the urge to know, abolish the light of conscience, fall into drunken sleep. It should be easy to eliminate higher categories of being: Just deny the reality of Soul, argue we are not soulful creatures, laugh as your soul withers and dies. Boy, think of the weight you won't have to carry!

Daniel Brick

How Soon...?

(The first stanza is unreadable.)

Scraps of bread are ripped
from their mouths.
They are too weak to resist
the theft. They bow their heads,
their eyes already closed.
They sink to the floor, and
curl together for warmth.

They are just children
who have stopped smiling, and
no person or thing provokes
their laughter. How soon will
death claim them, out of pity
for their plight? I lean forward,
and change the channel...

Because I've seen enough of this suffering.
I close my eyes and bow my head.
There is nothing I can do but pretend:
Is this a rescue? a closure? a withdrawal
into Self? This life I call my life is
a long asphalt road. My car is going fast again.
Is it completely out of control?

I did not sleep last night. I will not
sleep tonight. I will stare into a vast sky,
wishing the stars delivered knowledge
as well as light. I will park my car
in some garishly lit space, then walk
slowly, deliberately into the deepest
night space. Blind and helpless,

I will be one with the victims. I choose this fate.

(This poem was inspired by the Cable TV series,
TRUE DETECTIVES, Season Three, 2019.)

Daniel Brick

A Higher Silence

In another moment
we will ascend
into Heaven...
Just another moment...
Ah, it never happens

as expected. Why?
Why should it? My mind,
which tosses up desires,
thoughts, fantasies,
fears, promises,

all impartially, all
spontaneously, is really
a vast empty space, not
even articulated as prairie,
ocean-floor or outer space,

just emptiness, but
so vast it can pretend
to be the mind of a god.
It is a god's prerogative
to fully inhabit his spaces,

as if no boundaries
exist. Wherever
he sets his eyes,
boundaries stretch thin,
then vanish, that's

life in such heavenly
space we aspire to
reach in another moment,
in just another moment,
we will ascend, we will....

Daniel Brick

A Persian Rapture

A Poem by Paul Carrizales,
edited by Daniel Brick

Overtaken by that other mind
I sit beside myself - the eye
of flesh staring at the precipice -
wondering where you are:
Heart of my soul, where are you?

Behind these carnal eyes lies
the beacon's object, the still point:
the last weapon in the armory rusts,
poor people steal the tools,
No one objects when the osprey turns
into a swan. The rest stumble in slumber.

At coral dawn I awaken
from this world of dream,
water and West Wind at my face.
The questions were expected:
What is the name of the sun?
Does a fish know its appellation?
Can purple morning glory thank
new day's growing warmth?

I sit beside myself
wearing that other mind:
Beloved, how marvelous is your face!
The Face of faces, which fleshly eyes
have not seen. Who will tear the veil?

Fleet gazelles graze in a unseen garden
behind the eyes, where understanding
grows, and he who tastes knows.
Lovely women feel no obligation.
Khayyam learns what Kalabadhi knows:
the Secret of the Peacock Poet's silvered tongue.

I sit beside myself

watching the fine essence descending.
A Persian shepherd boy becomes
a soul in wonder, Jasmine blooms, fragrances
of Amber and Shalamar blend, water and
the West Wind stir things momentarily.
No fear remains...

After the rain, the rainbow mends the sky,
the day of colors appears again.
Heart of my soul, your sky bow waters my eyes,
and I know the name of the sun.

My friend Paul and I determined to write SUFI-inflected poems during the summer of 1986. To that end, we both bought copies of Annemarie Schimmel's THE MYSTICAL DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM, a beautifully written work of scholarship. For that summer Paul and I wrote, conversed, and drank wine from a SUFI vineyard. I cannot tell in a SUFI poem where the poetry ends and the prayer begins, they are so completely intermixed. And so it should be.

Daniel Brick

Twilight, Early Spring

(I)

She sits very still
in a grassy plot that will
soon be night, crossed with shadows,
pierced by shafts of piercing moonlight,
in the shallow darkness of early spring.

I am standing a short distance from her
in a grove of trees with pale green leaves.
There is no breeze. Every leaf is still,
even my breathing is slow and soundless.
Her twilight complexion is more beautiful

than twilight itself. "Turn toward me, "
I plead. "See me, greet me." To no avail.
I walk tentatively behind her, and enter
the edge of her grassy plot. Suddenly
I feel like an interloper, and leave quickly.

As I turn away, as I walk away,
her presence weighs on me. I feel motionless
air on my arms and face, I see traces of moonlight
on my clothes, even the silence touches me.
But that girl of spring touches me most deeply.

Why do moon and trees, air and heat, darkness
and fading light all acknowledge me, and yet
she is silent, self-absorbed, distant even
in nearness? We are sharing this silence.
We are of one mind. It should be a shared spring.

(II)

The air is moist with desire.
We are just beginning to become
"Spring People." The heaviness of winter
still holds many people in its cold grip.

"Look at the sky! " I want to shout at them.

The warmth washes over me with its pure air.
I am cleansed by it, I shine because it
covers me with illumination. This is as
close to the Garden as we can be, and
it is a wonder to be shared with someone dear.

Who is that guy who's been eyeing me
for two hours? He approaches me timidly,
then withdraws boldly. I hope he reverses
his actions. He is obviously a man of Nature
and Desire. Come over here. Speak to me.

Daniel Brick

Homage To Pablo Neruda

O Neruda, the twentieth century belongs to you.
Your whole life is contained within it. Your poems
aged like a precious wine over its decades,
and they grew stronger, even as you did,
in body and soul. If we placed your poems one by one
on the ground like pavement stones, they would
lead us to Isle Negra, where you lived with Mathilde
a life of love and service, of passion and poetry.
Your poems can abolish slavery where it still lurks,
they can relate history minus the lies of the victors,
they can create gardens whose flowers and flowering
trees send forth a fragrance that summons lovers,
they make birds swoop over our heads, they make
landscapes that promote harmony and hope.
Your name is a banner that reads in all languages:
"Poetry is the Truth of Life." Our voices are cleansed
reciting your poems, our hearts swell with pride
carrying them within. O Neruda, the loneliness of
this twenty-first century without your presence
is unbearable. Speak through our voices, be present
as the Spirit of the Age, the Angel of its Salvation.

Daniel Brick

Two Seasons

Everything winter is heavy
with itself. It admits no abridgement
of its length, and crushes the tender
wishes of spring. Spring is a locked room
on the second floor of a huge mansion.
The resident who locked it also lost
the key. This should have been foreseen.
Complaints are even now circulating
in the living room and dining room,
but little can be done, because of
the frozen condition of our lives.
The resident in question refuses
to show remorse, or even interest.
But a few of us crowd the warmth
of the kitchen, and vent our feelings.
We all know what is locked away
from us: Books with refrains of warm air;
pictures of tactile green fields;
a row of vases on a shelf, each of which
contains one flower aroma. And a collection
of songs written in the spring air
by composers bewildered by emotions
surging in their hearts, like unblocked streams
flowing freely in their channels. Will we be
so free? Or must we wait until spring releases us?

Daniel Brick

Anima

In a high-domed room -
streams of light pouring
from a clear sky into the interior -
six painters are committed
to the creation of beauty
out of beauty. She sits
in a simple chair in the center of the room.
She moves very little, her expression is a half smile,
her thoughts are so deep, nothing appears on her face.
The painters are the planets orbiting
her sun. She is no longer just a model.
She is whatever each painter finds
appears on his canvas. It will surely be
the truth of his art. Consider the possibilities:
She is a princess robed in privilege and pride.
She is a star everyone envies and praises.
She is the fulfillment of her lavish wishes.
She is a mystery to herself as well as to the others.
One of the painters has dropped his brush. He closes
his eyes tightly, as if he is praying. He thinks,
"It is enough that I have looked upon you.
You can return to the sea foam
of your origins." She remains serenely silent.
The glow of the afternoon sun covers
the room in pale yellow light.

Daniel Brick

Symphony No.8 By Anton Bruckner

III. Adagio. Feierlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend
The Great "Slow Movement: " Contemplation and Ecstasy

The conductor stands facing his musicians,
they face him. This will be beauty's high moment.
There is a silence as startling as a morning
without songbirds. These are the moments before
the runner bolts, before the chess player moves
her Queen, before four lips shape a kiss,
before the poet writes the word, t-e-n-d-e-r.
The depths into which these players can descend,
the heights which they can attain, are known only
to the highest Imagination: Prepare for the Vision...

It is like a woodland path just after a heavy rain,
the birds have resumed singing, raindrops glisten
in the restored sunlight, the scent of wet bark is sweet.
It is the sap running through the furthest branches.
It is the rabbit hopping through tall grass, it is deer
bounding in pursuit or in flight, it is my soul
rushing ahead to greet the woodland souls. We alternate
walking slowly or running nimbly. But listen now, just listen.

Bruckner's music is enveloped in Nature's Web.... and
Heaven's Glory. "To the greater glory of God, " he inscribed
in the score. Some claim, their eyes burning with sacred fire,
that angels descended and took Bruckner's soul to paradise.
And the old man, now a blessed spirit, rejoiced: "Now to teach
the Angels to sing my Te Deum, and to write a Symphony scored
for the Spheres themselves... "

* * * *

The conductor moves his baton in an apparent silence, so quiet
is the Adagio's opening. This is music of the gentle ascent.
This is music that, step by step, regains its ancient home
where stars shine and moons glow. It is as if an angel descended, and we were
afraid because his first words were, "Be not afraid."
Then folding his wings, he pointed to a golden staircase.

"The music will guide your ascent, and it will confer grace."

Daniel Brick

Recital

If I sit at the piano,
and make myself ready to play it
with simple gestures, perhaps
a dusting of the page of music and
a quick look at the last page,
and then I adjust the chair, once.
twice. Then complete stillness,
my hands folded in my lap,
my expression expectant,
will any of this draw the music
to me? Will it surge through the music-
saturated air of the auditorium, and
settle for a spell in my hands.
Wait, the length of a grace note,
and Stockhausen's Piano Piece V
descends from whatever empyrean space
it occupies and occupies my hands.
My fingers are taut with a knowledge
they have never known. My mind is empty,
it only listens. My fingers play
the first section of 60 quavers
in just 45 seconds, and immediately begin
the 104 quavers of the second section.
I am only dimly aware of playing. I want
to get up from the piano and kneel
at the edge of the stage, and cry out,
"Forgive me, friends of music, for deceiving
you. I am no pianist, no musician. I am just
one of you, but I so longed to make music.
Forgive me." But it is useless. I am still
at the piano. I am finishing the fifth section
of 84 quavers and launch - can this really be true? -
into the last section of 95 quavers... Piano Piece V
is over. I feel my fingers relax and my hands lose
a vital energy. But an audience is applauding, and
I hear a woman say to her male companion, "This was
better than Kontarsky's! " I bow deeply, and
leave the stage. I carry the moment of music
in my soul.

(Poet's Note: Should I have added a subtitle, "A Fantasy?"
Well, the technical data I found and borrowed from
THE MUSIC OF STOCKHAUSEN: AN INTRODUCTION by Jonathan
Harvey, 1975. This poem is make-believe, but even a charade
brings us closer to the music we love, and the composer we
revere. Any requests for an encore? ... Any?)

Daniel Brick

The Poet Today

I am the Poet of Today...

I can do no more: I am only a teller of tales,
a writer of poems, perhaps only a dreamer of reality,
always half-asleep, with inspiration revealing to me
only small epiphanies. And you, no doubt, are anxious
for some full, final wisdom.

from THE AGE OF STOCKHAUSEN

by Daniel Brick

Daniel Brick



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Reality

We are anxious, my friends, when we
should be astonished. How do we anchor
ourselves in the flow of wonders
that at every moment pass and surpass us?
Start now with serene resolutions:
Stretch your body to its full height
in the blaze of noon, plunge it
into the cool abandon of evening air.
Make your love of moonlight as transparent
as your love of daylight, and make it a reflection.

We live through a chaos of forces...
Summer smears its hot constitution over every
landscape. Nothing can resist its searing impact:
trees, dreams, polished gems, lakes of all sizes,
the ravine in the South, pathless forests, fountains
of sweet water, even a comet burning into the atmosphere.
And the deepest impact overtakes day and night, making
the bright light and the dark light release revelations
that will blend into a wonder for our souls.

And then Winter arrives with its prior claims
over our serenity. Winter freezes everything
into an impossible stillness, and nothing grows
or moves or feels. So we must descend into
The Interior where thoughts contend over issues
of Good and Evil, Love and Apathy, High and Low,
and create a friction that opposes its mental fire
to cold paralysis, and keeps a channel of freshness
ever flowing before our astonished gaze.

Daniel Brick

The Good News

A week later, when Jesus had withdrawn with the Twelve to the far side of the River Jordan, my younger brother shouted my name from horseback. of a fifth horse...

My father sent me to supervise our vineyards in the north. My brother was delighted we were living and working together. The grapes harvested that year became a superb wine that made our father proud of us. How could I abandon a father so fulfilled in his eldest son and a brother for whom I was the image of the man he was becoming? I stayed with my family.

A year and a half later, I heard rumors of unrest in the south. Jesus had been accused of blasphemy. Travelers told me he was betrayed and dragged before the Temple priests, and humiliated at King Herod's court. Three Zoroastrian priests quietly arrived and with suppressed emotion told me, the Romans intervened and crucified that best of men. I cried for three days and nights. On the morning of the fourth day I awoke before dawn, and I saw a sign: a perfect circle of brilliant yellow light, within a nimbus of flowing white. I knew in a flash of truth - My Redeemer lives. And I knew the days to come would be sweeter and harder than ever before.

He dismounted and fell into my arms, with a cry of joy that shook my heart. Three servants nearby stayed on their horses, and one of them held the reins of a fifth horse.

Daniel Brick

Epiphany

arrive, listen to Jesus and become disciples.
I no longer lived in ordinary time, all places
were made holy by His presence. Was this the life
I expected? Once from a hillside, I watched
Jesus, far below, address a crowd of five hundred.
Suddenly I was in a trance and what I saw was
the purest landscape ever. It was simply earth
newly created, it was Peace on Earth, it was -
the Kingdom of Heaven. A brilliant white light
was shining everywhere. At its center, a bright
yellow light blazed. . . Suddenly, it became
the figure of Jesus, whose right hand was raised.
And Jesus blessed me. . . A moment later,
I was in the midst of the crowd at the base of the hill.
And the voice of Jesus was sweet in my hearing.

Daniel Brick



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The Disciple

It was easier when there were fewer of us. Sometimes there were just half a dozen of us, mingling with the Twelve and Jesus himself. Like brothers, we linked arms as we walked, and no one complained. Jesus pointed to a flock of birds overhead, "Be like them." And it was easy to get shelter for the night: servants of big estates led us to the extra beds, or we slept on the straw-softened floors of a barn, or on a cushion of grass with starlight swirling above us. In the morning servants greeted our Master with proper respect, and they fed us fresh bread and fruit. Some went to the gate with us.

As we walked to the next village, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and we prayed to our God, the God of Abraham, and Moses, and David. He said, we are all part of the Kingdom of Heaven. He called Our God "Our Father," and so do we.

Of course, my father had different ideas. I knew he would one day summon me home, but he seemed satisfied I lived according to the Law... I witnessed more strangers arrive, listen to Jesus and become disciples. I no longer lived in ordinary time, all places were made holy by His presence. Was this the life I expected? Once from a hillside I watched Jesus, far below, address a crowd of five hundred. Suddenly I was asleep and what I saw was the purest landscape of my life. It was simply peace on earth. A brilliant white light was shining,

at its center a brighter yellow blazed. Slowly
it became the figure of Jesus, whose right hand
was raised, and He blessed me...A moment later,
I was in midst of the crowd at the base of the hill,
and the voice of Jesus was sweet in my hearing.

Daniel Brick

The Soul Is Always Naked

Why, what should be the fear, for my soul, being
a thing immortal?

Hamlet

The soul is always naked.*
What mortal weapon known
to men can wound the soul
whose armor is the truth
and whose life is integrity.

The soul is always naked.
How can it be otherwise
when the world is clothed
in deceit, and honesty
is a disdained fabric.

The soul is always naked,
because it is transparent:
the light from above flows
through it and joins the light
of its own sweet will.

The soul is always naked.
Rich men, ever jealous
and insecure, want to rob
it blind, to leave it
to languish, and cover up
the shame of it with explanations.

* "Naked" has a two-fold meaning:
unprotected and unclothed.

Daniel Brick

Summer

Summer smears its hot constitution
over every available landscape,
Nothing resists its searing imprint:
trees, dreams, polished gems, lakes,
the ravine in the south, a passing comet.
And the deepest impression overtakes
day and night, making the bright light and
the dark light both release revelations
that will inform the very notion of seasons.

It's early, my anxious friends. The stage is
still empty, and the best actors are still
learning their lines by heart. Fame means little
to them. They simply want to inhabit summer
with rest of us, stretching to their full height
in the blaze of noon, plunging into the cool
abandon of evening air. Remember! Moonlight
is as fair and transparent as sunlight...

Do not tremble. Keep body and soul receptive
to the gentlest breeze. Smile more frequently
Make room in the medicine cabinet for the Elixir
of Summer; divide the potion according people's
needs. Use morning light as your beacon of success.
Nestle into the dim glow of what is left of moonlight.
Say a prayer or two so that the sun will rise tomorrow
just as the prayers of the madonna with black tresses
released today's sun, which now fades into its eternity.

Daniel Brick

Finding You

for a bold dreamer

When I find you again, it will be
in the high country you have wandered
so long that clouds recognize you,
and bunch together to greet you.
They are in awe of your journeys
over the hard rugged surface,
whereas they glide through open space
on winged air-currents, under the dome
of Heaven. They consider you Heaven's
rare gift. Have I been blind to what
clouds know out of their pure instinct?
And what of me? I must look deep
into and eyes, and fall into the meshes
of your soul. I have so much to learn
when I find you again...

Daniel Brick



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An Experience Of Grace

Once when we were camped on a hillside, and
Jesus was speaking at a great distance,
I stretched out my body and let sleep
command me. I suddenly awoke and felt
a fierce scarlet light scorch my head.
I covered my face. Then I opened my eyes
to a cool white light inside a shimmering
yellow halo. And I was speechless because
the face of Jesus was staring at me, and
his right hand was raised and blessed me,

Daniel Brick



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Haunted

Why do other words crumble
after I say your name?

What is this salt
that fills my eyes
when I close them
to draw your smile closer?
What good is remembering
if you can no longer play
your role in the flesh?

I was the one Fate chose
to stay alive: to speak your name
at night, to show your smile
to the sun, to wait for you
to sing a song neither of us knows,
to embrace a figure of air shaped like you.

Daniel Brick



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Divine/Human Communication

Prayer by George Herbert

Prayer the Church's banquet, Angels' age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth.
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heaven and earth;
Engine against the Almighty, sinners' tower,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days' world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, love, and bliss,
Exalted Manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

EROS = human love, based on passionate attraction;

AGAPE = spiritual or idealized love; the love of benevolence, friendship of the spirit

Daniel Brick

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Preface: A Man Alone

An Unfinished Fiction

Is the man alone the hero
of this story? Does he perhaps
double as the villain? It would
not be difficult for him to play
both roles. On the surface
both characters are elegant
in clothing and conversation, both
pay a generous tithe to Mother Church,
both promise a full accounting
to the Office of Taxation, both
alternately stand out in a crowd,
or sink into into anonymity if required.
One says: We are masters of disguise and deceit."
He speaks in a loud firm voice. The other cringes.
They found it: the tiny detail that makes each unique.
We can go home now. There's no more Mystery....

Daniel Brick



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The Night Sky

I once read the night sky
like a favorite book that
needed neither note nor
gloss, so well-remembered
were its images, spread
across both mind and sky.
I read the stars and
the words with equal felicity,
and knew the messages hidden
in both. I made it so that
all was clear, all was known.
And then suddenly a double eclipse
darkened my prospects far and wide.

A M a n A l o n e

Poems by Daniel Brick
Woodcuts by Franz Masereel

Daniel Brick



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Reading The Sky

I once read the night sky
like a favorite book, which
no longer needed notes or gloss,
so close to my heart lay the book's
meaning. I stand, hatless and thought-
less, beneath those cosmic letters
riddling my fortune, measuring
my years still in earth, ever ready
for the shallow sleep at night, or
my deep sleep once and for all.

A MAN ALONE

Poems by Daniel Brick
Woodcuts by Franz Masereel

A M A N A L O N E

POEMS BY DANIEL BRICK

WOODCUTS BY FRANS MASEREEL

Daniel Brick

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Friendship

I sought a friendship with the wind.
I merely stood at the center of a circle
I imagined into being. I slowly rotated,
bowing briefly to each of the Four Directions.
At first, I felt only that heavy emptiness
within that makes you choke on your own breath.
I saw, in a suspended moment, a dry, brittle
bush wave in the air, its green swiftly returned
to leaves and branches, and it flourished before me:
I knew what Wordsworth had tried to teach me in verse
now revealed in the humble bush's renewal, that Nature's
soul overspreads time and place. Immediately I felt
a soft breeze touch my face and cover my body
with lilac scent. The wind had answered my summons.
She had witnessed my renewal and displayed her
welcoming "Yes" to our friendship in touch and
truth. Henceforth, we travel the earth as one being.

Daniel Brick



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Peace

December 31,2018

Jessica sits very still
in a spot that will soon
be Night, crossed by shadows,
immersed in a silence far
far greater than her own.
She accepts this silence
because all that must be said
was already spoken by all of us
this morning and early afternoon.
Further speech would only cloud
those words of sufficient light,
now dimming, flickering, soon to
vanish, just as they should.

I can just barely see you
approach this still spot, and
sit beside Jessica. There is
a pause in Night's passage.
Jessica's right hand clasps
your left hand, and both of you
tighten the grip. It becomes
the gesture of prayer: you are locked
in a single appeal for grace...
The darkness widens, as more light withdraws
into the sleep all of us needs. How can we
say, "Darkness has fallen," without also
saying, "Light has risen over us?"

Daniel Brick

"My Angel... "

for Sonja

My Angel, I know you
will never abandon me.
You sit wholly encased
in your frame, exactly
as Sonja intended. Your will
and your fate mesh perfectly.

You look to the left, your gaze
turned upward. Are you looking
into my future? Or is something
in my past on which you fix
your sight? Whatever the object,
I know your concern benefits me.

My Angel, you are my other self,
my parallel being. We share both
surface realities and depths I can
barely grasp. I am only half-alive
unless your spirit unfolds itself
throughout my being, body and soul.

You cradle either a narrow rapier
or a frail cross near your heart.
Which one you use depends upon
the challenges you face in protecting
me. My Angel, let us pray together
that only the gentlest measures are required.

Daniel Brick

The Silence

Dimly in my dreams I hear a children's
choir singing a sweet song: their music is
heard in the heart and resonates in the mind.
Let us listen together: There, under the oak tree!

* * * * *

One night changed everything: I listened as the traveler
told about his journey across three continents,
searching for five minutes of silence. Everywhere
was the clamor, the clangor, the sheer noise

of the world. Is there a niche somewhere of silence?
Just five minutes, and if there is five minutes,
could there be... No, let us proceed slowly,
deliberately like a robin scuffling for food in winter.

* * * * *

One night I listened to an old wanderer
tell of his journeys across three continents
searching for The Silence. Everywhere he turned
he felt there were promises but they slipped away.

Once, a lifetime ago, he had stopped at a caravan serai, expecting to find a measure of peace. Surrounded by exhausted animals and despairing men, he surrendered to sleep, and fell into an abyss of dreams.

His first dreams were nightmarish. He was paralyzed, but he dreamed on and dreamed himself past winter, into spring, and even tasted fresh water cool his lips. He rose out of the dream-depths, and woke up to a festival

of villagers and travelers at the caravan serai. It was not the peace he desired, but it was not the turmoil he feared. It was a middle zone, an open place that extended past what he could see or imagine. It was sufficient. He knew

his journeying was over. His quest had failed. The silence he had found was soul-silence, only a subsequent life of care and prudence could preserve its benefits. He had nothing to give to others - he could only rescue himself...

I left him and we were both in a rare mood of hope. As he sat in reverie, he knew his quest, no longer his affair, had been passed on to me. Within me was a vibrant spring, all my inner strengths were washed clean, and joined together

in a wholeness of readiness. I would have gifts to share with all the others in due time. There was no need to rush. Ahead of me was the Shrine of Silence I would find soon, or perhaps it would find me. Its healing will rescue and redeem.

Daniel Brick

Our Master, Robert Bly

Robert, you are still the teacher,
and I am forever your pupil, sitting
on a log in a sun-streaked woods
or on a hard metal chair at a formal
reading, or sprawled on a living room
carpet. Anywhere or everywhere, you raise
your baritone voice and regale us with poems.
You separate us from our usual comforts,
make us squirm and wonder, "Is he still
talking about that same subject from last year,
and the year before, or the time, remember it?
when the last glacier sliced through southern
Minnesota, and in an impromptu poem, Robert
named the three new lakes it had carved."
But a silence greeted your latest poems
about grief as the flip side of joy. Where did
you first find grief and joy so perfectly
meshed? At your other house on the far side of
the River? Where you live with badgers, deer,
a great horned owl, unfettered horses, stray dogs,
even a lone wolf, who howls when you recite.
And what is that dark creature sunning itself
on your front porch? Robert, when will you stop
surprising us? I saw your writing tools on a table
in the Great Hall of the Poetry Building. A pen
was spilling blue ink wantonly over piles of
pure white pages, a PC was furiously revising
new poems, even an old typewriter was making
an inventory of past poems. And then I saw you,
walking swiftly through the tall grass, pausing
only long enough to write in a small notebook.
But the Book, Robert, the Book! Some say it can't
be closed. You keep expanding it. Others say
it has burst into spontaneous life. Imagine that!
I remember meeting you over fifty years ago
at a Poets Against the War reading at St. Cloud
State University. An exchange student from Vietnam
was in the audience, and he came to the podium
and recited one of his English-language poems,

imitating your vocal inflections with pitch-perfect intonation. It was very moving. Even five decades later, that memory brings tears to my eyes. That brave young man, his country ravaged by war, still trusted poetry, and he chose you as his master. Poetry was the Joy, War the Grief, and the two were knotted together like Fire in the Lake.

Daniel Brick

Birds And Humans

I am awake at dawn, the earliest light,
because my heart needs the green air
filtered into its interior space
by my unforced breathing. I am ready...

The male cardinal flies over me
and deposits his songs in my heart
the way his female deposits eggs
in their nest and broods over them.

And I brood over the vexed affairs
of humanity. The cardinal pair
will hatch fledglings from their
brooding. What will mine create?

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Contentment In Old Age

It was Cloud Realm
my mind entered, effortlessly,
like breathing in pure
mountain air. My wife and I
glided into a deeper intimacy,
and we housed our happiness
in a simple middle-class home
nestled in a woods, a calm lake
half-circling the yard. That is
our "terra firma," our domestic
peace, the place more than any other
that confers a sense of wholeness.
So when we embrace in the morning
kitchen, or the living room criss-
crossed with afternoon sun shafts,
in the bedroom or gazebo, we live
for moments as if this place is
down the block from Eden, or just
ahead of Paradise...

Deep in sleep, when my body loosens
and my arms flail in search another
warm body, I am not myself but some
other being, sui generis. But if I wake
suddenly and see her asleep beside me,
see the darkness hides absolutely nothing,
I slip back into sleep without a second
thought. And my released thoughts disperse
into the Cloud Realm in which my sleep
floats, and my Intellectual Life is transcended.
I become a pure spirit for the duration
of nightly repose... And deep, very deep
within, I hear my voice saying again and again:
"Thank you... Thank you... Thank you."

Daniel Brick

"Winter Has Descended... "

I am moved by...

The notion of some infinitely gentle

Infinitely suffering thing.

T. S. Eliot

Winter has descended into
our company like an ornery guest
who will share no hospitality
but just piles snow and more snow,

and spreads sheer cold over our bodies
and souls. Shivering outside and inside,
I write you a letter to feel your warmth
I use the word "love" three times,

twice on page two and once on page four.
For me all of it is just words on paper.
Forgive me, I did not realize the vibrancy
of your heart would be so touched, so aroused.

The first time you read the word "love"
on page two, your sleeping heart awoke and
spread sweetness and light throughout your being,
and things dark and harsh within became radiant.

The second time your eyes encountered the same word
on the same page, you rejoiced to see "love" in flight,
circling in freedom, but staying close to its home -
a gesture of hope, an act of kindness, a blessing.

You paused. You asked me why I was so unmoved, but
I was heavy with wonder, and I was as still as a tree
drinking in an excess of light. You smiled, and it was
another of light that nourished my inner being...

Then you read the final "love" on page four and
declared it was "agape" love that immediately,
at the speed of light, circled the globe with
radiance that outshone briefly the dawn's brilliance.

And then it was over: we stood together, amazed
but content, in the afterglow of a shared vision.
And we simply accepted the common light
of an ordinary day....

(This poem is a response to a beautiful but bitter-sweet poem by
Nosheen Irfan, "We vowed to stay together....")

Daniel Brick

"Mountains Into Clouds" (*)

(I)

Eyes reach into a distance
no body can attain, and place
a mark at intervals of space
and time. Eyes inhabit a region
in which descending shafts of
darkness momentarily blend with
ascending shafts of light, and
they both illumine and darken
the world. Then they vanish
from each other's presence, and
disappear into their particular
colors and shapes. This is our Reality:
to be alive to sensation and wonder.

(II)

The magic begins at dusk:
spiritual eyes have been
patiently blind, and now
they assert their traits:
being soundless, weightless,
scentless, they glide
through the heaviness of Nature,
like a Vedic priest's knife slicing
the sacrificial butter. They stretch
further into the Night, and arrive
on immense plains where they envision
cities rise up against the power of
Nature with the power of Humanity.

Nature is a stream of both physical
and spiritual lights, united to make
both Night and Day prosper in their
alteration. Then Humanity enters this Reality:
under the branches of the sky, they rush
into love and hate, learn true lessons,
and try to make to make two become one.

Above the roots of the ground, they gather together,
possessed of love and hate, and make a dwelling
for both solitude and company. And they become
One Reality, sometimes dark and sometimes light.

* This phrase from A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM reveals the ambiguity of
how and what eyes see.

Daniel Brick

"When You Read My Poem.... "

When you read my poem, let the words
be like the flashes of light you love,
and are just as brief as the light they cast.
Read my verse rhythms as if they were
parallel to the warm breezes that caress
your flesh in their passage. And if a phrase
strikes you as especially truthful or an image
as especially lovely, pause your reading so that
it can sink into your heart...

What are these words but air breathed in and out,
with their sounds carrying into the world
this stumbling eloquence, which arrives as poetry,
goes deep within your being, and disappears...

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

"Images Abound! "

A Poem for Baharak

They say the music plays
without a destination.
They say the Heaven's Gate
is shut tightly and locked.
They say six converging paths
enter a huge meadow in the lowlands.
You will lose your way, and blind
with fear, huddle in an unforgiving
darkness. They say the hill you climb
the next morning will trap you in a pathless
forest occupied by a murder of crows. They say
by the second day's end you will have lost
resolve to find the Chapel of Beginnings.
They say your faith cannot withstand these tests.

My friend, do not listen to their terrorist words.
Their speech is meant to defeat you. They are
lapsed pilgrims who have lost every tendril of
faith that once connected them to shining hope.
Stragglers have broken free of their control,
and have left behind this company of despair.
They greet you with famished hopes, they share
their meager provisions with you, they sing
in cracked voices of their escape. "Join us! "
They cry. "We are the self-rescued ones."
Not even rain clouds massing overhead can
dampen your high spirits. Soggy ground makes
you stumble again and again, chill air bites
your face, but you rejoice in your success
in the company of the self-rescued ones.

The French song you sing softly in the twilight
will reach my hearing like a cherished memory.
A pair of angels will reassure you the Heaven's
Gate always swings open in a celestial breeze.
All six paths lead to the welcoming homestead
of the Green People, who will tenderly give you

sweet water to drink and magic mushrooms
to eat to ease your stress. When you enter
the Dark Places, courage will not abandon you
and the light within will guide you unerringly.
Crows will scatter at your approach. And nestled
in a green valley you will see the Chapel. The air
will resound with welcoming music sung by your
new friends who greet you from your new home.

Daniel Brick

If You Asked Me...

If you asked me, "Is Spring the fairest season? " I would answer, "Yes, it is the fairest, but Autumn is deeper and broader, and gives the soul ample time to enjoy a season of wonder."

If you asked me, how do I survive a night of despair I would touch your cheek and say, "I would not: I would die before midnight, but in the soft morning light, I would be reborn."

If you asked me, "Why do friends, even the best among them, betray us and abandon us? " I would be silent a long time, "I do not know how to answer you. They are only human like me and you: Forgive them."

If you asked me, "Am I beautiful, or is it only the other girls who possess beauty? " I would hand you a sprig of lilac in its season of bloom, and say, "You do not possess beauty like the other girls: You Are Beauty."

If you asked me, "How can I know you are telling me the Truth? " I would smile suddenly. "You know my words are truthful, deep inside you know this, because you trust me as I trust you in a double bond that cannot be false."

Daniel Brick

The Perfect Arc Part One

Kais! Kais! Do you know
who you are? Do you know
at least where you are?
You are standing on a ridge
overlooking a cliff. A few
careless steps and you will
trip, falling to rock-covered
shoreline below. You can't go on.
You must change direction.
Will you stay in this one place, and
let nature batter you through seasons
of cold and heat, scarcity and plenty?
You have entered a wasteland, you have
become an unthinking dweller in wilderness.

Kais, is this hapless figure before me
really you? Haunted by loss, bereft of
family, torn by impossible desires,
you are dying from the inside out.
You are gaunt and speechless, the bloom
of your youth has withered, your former beauty
vanished like the final decay of a once resplendent
rose. I am your loving elder brother, Kais, and
your silence breaks my heart. Is there not left
within you some flame which radiates your identity?
Reminds you of your duty to our parents and
our tribe? Rumors abound that a mere woman
has reduced you to this... I can give you
a harem of women who will smother her memory.
Why is this woman so particular to you?
Step backward, Kais, and take my hand.

(This poem is the first in a series of poems which will be a
MAJNUN AND LAYLA REDUX.)

Daniel Brick

Two Poems Inspired By Moon Light

I

The pale glow of the Moon
enters my night space.
I summoned this visitation
by my fidelity to the Night,
and she has responded
in a gracious display of
nocturnal readiness.
Massive clouds swirl above.
but a corridor remains
for moonlight to descend.
I look up, the Moon looks down:
ours is a partnership of
visions meshed together, sealed.
a single reality. The colors and
shapes of Moonlight convey something
akin to words. And tonight
the message is: "Expect nothing."

II

Doubt spreads itself everywhere
in a vast field of mist admitting
no light. Many, no longer willing
to resist, surrender to this
gradual darkness; they are pleased
by the comfort of not thinking
things through... I have learned
how to move in this dim landscape,
I have learned how to wait for
the return of light, I have learned.
Perhaps, in some mysterious way,
I am a part of this return, an agonized
witness to the increasing darkness,
soon to become a herald of the arrival.
Those who are more sensitive, and
see more, see further, saw this:
"EXPECT NOTHING AND ALL WILL BE GIVEN."

(This poem is a response to "Confabulation, " Baharak Barzin's Address to the Moon.)

Daniel Brick

Envoi: A Day In The Life Of Baharak Barzin

You will awake early to a morning
neither sunny nor cloudy but simply
a new day for you to color and shape
as you wish, and the Light will shine

within you brighter than any normal day.
You will wander at noon through bazaars
and stores, where money spills from hand
to hand, and people cradle new purchases

as if they had soul-value. But you are
unmoved until you see your friends
sitting serenely in a pool of sunlight
at a table festooned with flowers.

Smiles flit across your faces for hours.
Later, visiting your relatives, you will
sense your younger brother needs help.
When he sees the kindness in your eyes,

he will unfold his heart's truth just
to you, and he will feel a sudden peace.
You too will feel this peace as if you traced
a butterfly's flight over a patch of flowers.

Images abound! Your mind is a net which holds
them loosely until they connect with other images,
fecund, lovely, conveying impressions that resist
being attached to words at this time. But you know,

in some mysterious way, they are the beginnings
of your future poems. They make no demands on you
yet, do not nag at you for embodiment in words.
For now they occupy quiet caverns in your mind.

They even sleep. They even dream, and when one
of their dreams meshes perfectly with one of yours,
a poem is being born in the crucible of your
imagination, and its birth is imminent. This is

the ideal repose before the clamor of creation takes over.

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.11: Inspired By Attar

Your eyes watch bright winds sweep away
the day's debris, or they watch as sun rays
sparkle the lake's surface. It doesn't matter
which happens first. The order of time is suspended,
so that everything can be fulfilled at once...
It is the same experience when you take things
of the world into your Interior Being:
They are cleansed and returned to the world.
Every problem can be resolved through your
heart's generosity. Attar watches over you,
his love for you will last for centuries...
Forgive me! I had doubts, unworthy doubts,
and did not trust you until this very moment
of shining obedience. I am kneeling at your
left side. It feels good to pay homage with you.

(This poem is a response to Baharak's gift of a poem by Attar, Poet of Nishapur.
About himself, Attar wrote,
Attar, you've scattered with each breath
musk-scented mysteries on earth.

* * * *

You've thrilled and excited lovers.
You've strummed your music in the key of love.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.10: A Special Rose

We were walking through your Rose Garden
on the same day the West Wind was spreading
its warm health over flowers and people.
We walked through the same heat, the same
pure air, the same fragrant happiness.
But never did our steps take us to the same
place of delight in same moment of delight.
You failed to find me, I failed to find you,
our double efforts were futile. The "old garden"
was a labyrinth disguised as a place of promised
union. But are not gardens well-known for preserving
their secrets? They are not human, they know nothing
of desire... And indeed a higher purpose was
our purpose: you had sensed "devils" present that day,
prowling the garden, seeking to kill its fragile beauty.
We were summoned to a higher purpose than our simple
delight. And together we preserved this natural beauty.
It was a day of gain rather than loss, we preserved
the air, the breath, the double column of prayer ascending
and grace descending, the myth of time: the abundance,
the myth of space: the fulfillment, the myth of the rose: the beauty.

(This poem is a heart-felt response to Baharak's generous poem, "The Rose.")

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.9: The King And The Willow

Who is this "great king"?
Is he a worthy king, who deserves
the power he has been granted?
I know he is worthy, because you wait
for him, through bright autumn and
"cruel winter". I trust his grasp
of power, because I trust you. When you
bow to this king, I will bow too...
But more than kings and their power,
we have love: I love the "weeping willow"
in your garden. I know its loneliness is
really its desire to love all loving things.
It will not be a whole thing until we declare,
"O blessed willow, you are the emblem,
the symbol of the holiness of our future
existence." Its loneliness is the impatience
of a love that cannot yet embrace all that it loves.
We live still in a world of partial happiness.
We live still in a world that a great king must protect,
We live still in a world where only the rare willow flourishes.
But deep under the earth, where all the waters flow together,
where all the roots are entangled in one life, where we are
are all one immense soul, there, there is born Our Life Eternal.

(This poem is a response to Baharak Barzin's wonderful
visionary poem, "Attesta.")

Daniel Brick

A Song Of Heaven And Earth

A Prayer-Poem for Anna,
daughter of Emma and Angel

Dear Anna,
because people no longer listen
to the morning and evening concerts
of song birds, we have lost a glory
the was once shining in the world.
There was a time when whole villages
awoke before dawn. Families and friends
clustered below a wide opened window
and listened to the birds' carillon.
Some even went outside, wrapped in robes
and blankets, and sat close together
and watched the birds swooping overhead
until they settled on branches to sing.
People and birds were bonded in the sight
of God and His angels... But things change,
passions weaken, and most people found sleep
sweeter than song. A glory passed away from the earth.

The birds then put their faith in children.
They knew that children must develop
a very tough skin to live a human life.
So they began to sing songs which touched
their hearts before they were hardened.
Oh, how wondrously birds sing within
the hearing of children! And, hovering above
them in the Middle Heaven, the Angels are present...

Dear child, I will tell you a great secret:
Angels and Birds are cousins - It's true.
Some even believe birds taught angels
how to fly, that cannot be true. But they
surely taught them to sing! And for ages,
the songs children sing joyously on earth
the angels repeat in heaven. There is always
a column of song raised by children, then raised
higher by birds and then even higher by angels.

Finally, this song enters the perfect
silence of the highest heaven and reaches the hearing
of the Lord God, the Creator and Protector of the Universe,
who loves the angels and the birds and the children.
With equal fervor His Love unifies earth and heaven. Amen.

Daniel Brick

A Memory Of Prayer

And what was my experience of prayer?
In a small side chapel in the vast
interior of the Church at St. John's
University stood the only sacred image
other than the crucifix: a small wooden
statue from ninth century Byzantium of
the Blessed Virgin holding Baby Jesus,
whose right hand is raised in blessing.
I prayed silently, fervently before an image
of the holiness present everywhere and always
in this world of flesh and spirit: I knelt
in wonder at the Mystery of Incarnation.
It was just my lone human self touched
by Grace descending as my prayer ascended.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Echoes No.8: Our Opened Hearts

Today is just an ordinary Tuesday,
in Fall, partly bright and partly dark.
The wind rips leaves from their branches
before their time to fall, and they paint
the lawn red, yellow and gold. I rake
the leaves into piles: they resemble
dull fires that need to be fed by fresh flames.

Later, inside I play Mozart. His orchestra of
twenty-four musicians is a crystal sky
from which the solo violin descends into melody
and the solo viola adds harmony. It is a poised
and steady beauty which only human beings create.
For thirty minutes I neither think nor reason.
Even memory stops as "allegro," "andante," and
"presto" rhythms replace the procession of time.

Thoughts and memory return to my refreshed mind,
both focus on you and your thoughts and memory
as you wander across your "paradise" island.
I see you standing on an elevation, looking over
land and sea, your face upturned to receive
the light, your arms outspread to embrace the air.
Everywhere you go the island is alive and responds
to your presence. It is a mysterious union,
you are both witness and participant. Person
and place, Baharak and island are a single reality.

(This poem is a response to two landscapes, for me it is southern
Minnesota, for Baharak it is an island in the Persian Gulf.
The music of Mozart is his luminous masterpiece, SINFONIA CONCERTANTE
FOR VIOLIN, VIOLA & ORCHESTRA, performed by Gidon Kremer, Ula Ulijona
and Kremerata Baltica.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.7: The Island

The Island you desire
is neither near nor far.
It is both accessible and
completely out of reach.
If you try to get there
by air, the seasoned pilot
will fly in wider and wider
circles, searching for this
green spot in a blue immensity.
He will readily admit failure
and ruefully smile when you
ask for a second attempt...
On a destined morning, you will
sense a different light has covered
your sleep, you will smell sweetness
of an alien fruit, and you will know
you have attained the Island you desire.
Don't think of this poem as a riddle,
don't think of your journey as a miracle,
don't think at all. This is a place you
are meant to be. Your future good deeds
depend on your timely arrival. Even events
leading up to your marriage are intertwined
with your experiences here and now. You may
even cross paths with one of your future
children. She will recognize you immediately:
"Mother, mother, I see you, and now my life
can really begin." And you two will shed tears
of absolute joy in a timeless embrace. And then
a moment later, you will be in Tehran, sitting
in your favorite chair, your mother in the kitchen
fixing your favorite food. And all of this will be
remembered as a dream, or dreamed as a memory.

(This poem was inspired by an email from Baharak as she visited
an island in the Persian Gulf for the first time.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.6: Failure

I am just a common man, one of
the teeming "hoi poloi," a man of
ordinary desires, sometimes hot,
more often cool, even their satisfaction
leaves me bereft, anxious for a greater
fulfillment. I sometimes dream I am a winged
creature, but when I awake, my wings are
pressed into my flesh and cannot unfold,
or they hang uselessly, stirring slightly
in a passing breeze. Often I look out
a high window at the wide blue sky. It is
emblematic of your summons, "Come Here."
If only I could pump vital energy into
my wings, or stir my mind to grasp
some natural energy flowing freely
around my stale existence, then I would
surprise first myself and then you and -
Sometimes I move forward until an invisible
resistance halts me, Then I move backwards,
fall backwards and feel a rare excitement,
until fear halts me, fear the sentinel
that frustrates impulse and keeps me trapped.
I am after all just a common man, so why
should I aspire to change my condition?
The day has sunk into darkness, the high
window is blank. Why should it be otherwise?

(This poem is a response to "Come Here" by Baharak Barzin.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.5: The Re-Creation

"Descend upon me like the Lord's shadow upon Jesus" So you prayed throughout a recent night of wounds and wonders. The pain inflicted on you was real and threatened to leave scars in your soul; the wonders you witnessed lifted your soul past harm of any kind. And so it is: every hurt calls forth its healing. I can only offer a purely human comfort, and the wonder of it is it is entirely sufficient...

What is it you most desire now? Whatever it is, you know I share in its full measure. So you can let go of any clinging and let yourself fall and fall until you arrive at a summit unbelievably high where day and night blend into a perpetual twilight or an endless dawn light. We will fulfill even unspoken promises as I ascend to reach the depths you occupy, and you descend to arrive at the heights I command. It doesn't matter which happens first or second, because being there together is a destiny we fulfill by making neither effort nor resistance. We will stand side by side in a blue space spotted with trees, sliced by streams, and more of our kind will arrive with each moment of wonder we register. And so there will be a garden at the end as there was in the beginning....

(This poem is a response to "Descend Upon Me" by Baharak Barzin.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.4: Baharak's Voice

"Today is the Festival of Hafez!

All of the people in Shiraz,
residents and visitors together,
celebrate the poet we most love.

Flowers bloom in gardens, along
streets, in the hands of lovers.

Everywhere they bloom, as if each
were a poem made of fragrance
instead of words, and we breathe
that enlivened air. The only thing
sweeter than this air is the poetry
of Hafez... Everywhere people
recite and sing Hafez's words, some
even dance to them, like the Sufis
in the ecstasy of love. It is as if
no time separates us from Hafez's
presence in the city he loved.

Hafez said, Shiraz honey flows
in Shiraz streets. Hafez said,
Khidr's stream is hard to find, hidden
in the land of night, but Ruknabad flows
down mountains slopes into Shiraz, and
gives us the purest water. Hafez said,
O Poets of Every Age, listen with your
eternal hearts, sing with your immortal
voices and leap into lasting ecstasy!

"At this moment, I feel only the goodness
of life, only the generosity of my friends,
only the kindness of my mother, only the joy
of this day. Where does all this goodness
come from? Who is the Giver? That question
contains its own answer. Surely, this goodness
descends from Heaven as God's gift to all of us.
All of it - Hafez's poetry, our celebration,
the flowers and the streams, work and wonder,
the various loves humans shower over each other -
all of this is blessed by God. And as He watches,
His eyes are pleased by what he sees! ! "

(This poem is a response to Baharak's email about the National Day in Iran which celebrates the great poet, HAFEZ, in his beloved city of SHIRAZ.)

Daniel Brick

Echoes No 3: In Early Fall.2018.

Today is a nondescript day
in early Fall. It is not a day
that will inspire a Nature Poem,
or any poem of merit. A carpet of
fallen green leaves covers
the pale green of the lawn. Both leaves
and grass seem exhausted by their abundant
life throughout summer, and are resigned
to an early death or a long sleep until
spring. I felt this lassitude in nature
invade my soul and pull me down all day.
I felt a kind of despair in the midst of
this season of harvest and decay. Why did
the negative side of the season overwhelm
its positive elements? Then I read your poem
which names "Love" seven times, and each time
I heard your voice speak that blessed word
I was lifted out of my melancholy. Or rather
I became one with the poem, and both hope and
happiness mingled in my heart, and a day I had
considered lost found its proper identity
as a time we shared in a flight of delight.

(This poem is a response to Baharak Barzin's poem, "Can You
Ever Feel My Feelings.")

Daniel Brick

Echoes No.2: Shadows

Shadows mean us no harm.
Their meager thoughts cannot
connect to our subtle minds.
Still they occupy our pure flesh
and invade our radiant souls,
desperately hoping to become
real beings like us. Their presence
causes us distress. How can we help them
in their distress without harming our selves?
What sacrifice can we make to give them
at least hope? I spend sleepless nights
wrestling with this need to help them.
I know you share this frustrated charity.

(This poem is a response to "The Shadow" by Baharak Barzin.)

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Echoes No.1: Under A Dark Sky

I rose early today. I waited patiently
for the sky to unfold its glory and
spread its light. But the sky remained
stubbornly overcast and no golden light
poured over me. Still even the faintest
morning light traces a single path
to discoveries. To walk that path is to be
a man or a woman who lives the living truth.

The morning arrived in its due time. It knows
its place in the world is modest and transient.
And it does not need to promise us more than
that time we spend together when the world allows
us to be together You may not believe this yet
but the promise was revealed by an angel
who descended from the moon in a sacred mist,
and then returned fulfilled to the hidden king.

The sky today was just a locked room, hoarding
its beauty. No light came forth into our selves
from that blank expanse. But your words, alive
in your poem, released a rescuing light that
brightened this day of gloom. And my poem caught
fire from yours and now it is poised to inspire you.
You may not believe this but you will because it is
simply your heart which rises every morning to spread its light.

(This poem is a response to "Where Has the Angel Voice Gone?"
by Baharak Barzin.)

Daniel Brick

Dream Visitations

On an early spring night
I dreamed of a young man
in a red tunic who simply floated
down a sandy ridge above my place
on the beach. He passed me quickly
in a heavy silence. Then he turned
back and stood before me, his arms
akimbo, his face smiling with welcome.
There was a flash in my brain - it almost
woke me up - and then a truth I had been
pursuing for weeks suddenly flooded
my brain, pure and whole. The young man
in the red tunic was gone, and no foot prints
in the raw sand traced his departure...

I dreamed of a young man in a red tunic,
who got lost in his thoughts, He was braced
against a palm tree, as he slept deeply,
occasionally stirring as if he were on a mission,
other than bodily rest. When he finally woke,
he spoke without surprise, as if we were -
friends on an outing. "The road above us leads
to a wicked city. We will not cut through it,
but circle around it. As you are fond of saying,
Daniel, 'So it goes!'" It's true - that's what I
say. We spent the day together, and I cannot tell
when the dream ended (if it did) , nor when my reality
took over (if it did) ...

Night after night, he visited my dreams,
the young man in a red tunic. Sometimes
his visit was a silence, he was like a statue,
and I was not inclined to speak myself. I slept.
Other times he spoke at length, eloquently,
vividly about "de rerum natura" - he was
a latter-day Lucretius, revealing to me
quantum realities completely new to me.
When I awoke from such dreams, I wrote
what he told me in a notebook. On the cover

I wrote only a single word: "EUREKA! "...

It is winter now, a mild winter this year,
blue skies abound, no heavy snow confines us,
makes driving difficult. It is an easy season.

The young man in a red tunic has been absent
for sixty-two nights. I will keep counting,
I will be vigilant....

Daniel Brick

Eyes: A Poem In Two Parts

(I)

Eyes reach into a distance
no body can attain, and place
a sign only inner sight can read.
Eyes inhabit a region in which
descending shafts of darkness
momentarily blend with ascending
shafts of light, and together
both illumine and darken the world.
Then they vanish from each other's
presence and disappear into their
particular colors and shapes.
This is Reality as we know it.

(II)

The magic begins at dusk:
spiritual eyes have been
patiently blind, but now they
assert their traits. Being
soundless, weightless, scentless,
colorless, they glide through
the heaviness of Nature,
like a Vedic priest's knife slicing
the sacrificial butter. They stretch
further into the Night and arrive
on immense plains where cities rise
against the power of Nature and
assert the power of Humanity.

Nature streams both physical light
and spiritual light, unites them
to make both Day and Night prosper
in alternation. Under the branches
of the sky, we rush into love or hate,
trying again and again to make two one.
Above the roots tangled under the ground,
we gather together in love or hate,

and make a dwelling for both our company
and our solitude. Are we not One Reality,
sometimes dark and sometimes light?

Daniel Brick

Ascension

In Memoriam:
Rosemary Morin

On that Wednesday of her departure it was as if darkness had descended and smothered the daylight. It was as if grief pulled us from a long sleep of happiness to face fully Rosie's change from one reality to another. For us agonized witnesses it was a confused and angry night which severed us from her goodness and beauty... Or so it seemed. But when we raised our heads, bowed in sorrow, we saw there was sufficient light: a sliver of the moon was shining. distant stars glowed, and in our midst an Angel stood and burned with holy fire. She had stepped forth from heavenlight into earthlight. The Angel folded her massive wings, and reduced her size to human proportions. Even her voice became intimate, and it did not pierce the air but welled up within us slowly and softly: "Look upward, and restore your hope. Eternal Life is granted to those who are elated by God's presence in all things. You must know what your Rosie knew throughout her life: The Golden Rule binds every created thing with themselves, with their neighbors, and with the three-personed God. And the fibers that bind the whole of Creation are animated by this Love. Look upward and you will see The Ascension, as souls who lived a life of Love return to the Source of All Love...

A thousand souls were released at once. They floated slowly upward, gently rolling in a circle, as they rose into the sky. Their eyes were shining from some source of light not visible to our mortal eyes. They looked

down on us with compassionate eyes, the tenderest expressions flitting across their features, and we were speechless, in wonder, that so much Love could radiate from human beings. The last thing we saw were their eyes, even more strangely illuminated than before, blinking again and again, as if they could not believe what they were seeing. And each of us saw Rosie rise, blessed among the blessed, and go beyond the limits of our sight. We felt her presence settle deeply in our hearts... And then it was over; the vision closed. The Angel had vanished, and it was just the blue sky, and the endless depths of space, and a passing breeze which refreshed us as breezes are meant to do.

Daniel Brick

At Lake Lucerne - August 2018

for Kathinka

The day began as if it had
no promises to keep:
the morning sky frowned
over a darkened lake shore.
The air was chilled
by the early departure
of summer, and the only
warmth resided in human hearts.

The day began as if it had
no gifts to give or receive:
Song-birds were reluctant
to sing, and withdrew into
their leafy sanctuaries.
Forest creatures stayed seep
within the shelter of trees,
matching their movements to the stillness.

You paused, leaning against
a rock, and meditated, eyes closed,
and an invisible door opened.
When you opened your eyes,
two huge swans were next to you.
They were combing their feathers,
slowly, majestically. And when they spread
their wings, they almost touched you.

How close you came to flight
at that moment. How close to thought
they came at that moment. You
and the two swans shared a moment
of union as you mingled your live
into the larger life of nature.
An invisible door had opened, and
neither animal nor human has closed it.

The Third Day

The Man Speaks:

It was during the Seven Days of Creation that we fell in love. It was probably only the middle of that week, because everything was still moist with its beginning. Of course, we didn't plan any of this. No one in those days planned anything, because God was still laying foundations: wherever he rested his almighty hand, there was a turmoil of creation, and something came forth, something new and never seen before came into being. She and I know so little about our origins, but angels on divine missions stop to refresh themselves, and they tell us stories. How he created this garden of plants and animals by his divine word, how he created the two of us by his divine word. And then he departed without a word to us. Where is he? Will he come back? The visiting angels know nothing, they smile but can give us no words of his whereabouts. The woman and I discovered love in his absence. The angels wish us well and depart....

The woman speaks:

We were close by each other for a very long time, under the big light in the sky and under the small light other times. It was under the small light, when our eyes locked, and we stared into each other's being. Under big light, something more happened. We tumbled together, rolled over the grass in a tangled, and then, then, we were suddenly one being. For a long moment, and nothing else mattered. We have repeated this long moment again and again. The angels told him this is called LOVE, and he told me it is called LOVE.

The angels ignore me, our eyes never lock, they never speak to me. It does not matter to me: I live and love in the garden with him. We roam and the animal roam with us. We share the long moment often. We must find a name for what we are experiencing....

Daniel Brick

A Birthday Poem For: Loretta

September 13,2018

Birthdays remind us of
of what we try to forget
every other day of the year,
that Time burns through
our lives, consuming the fuel
of youth, vitality, Life itself.

We would rather our friends
and family celebrated the date
among themselves, and left us
in a peaceful space in we can
both reflect on things passing
and hold on to things eternal.

Time is the enemy of Lyric Poets,
destroying what we cherish, just
because Time imposes limits, or
enforces those limits with events
like birthdays and anniversaries.
We would make delight last forever,

but it weakens to a whisper of passion.
We would like a flower to bloom
brightly, but it knows its season
to shine and its season to droop.
We wish our life could swell to biblical
lengths, and remain fresh and wholesome.

We rely on such beauty to fill
our earthly days with glory,
a glory not seen on Earth
since we lost the Garden and
have become acquainted with grief.
But our faith in beauty persists,

and we sense a lasting beauty
visible to our inner sight and

nourished by our inner strength.
Your birthdays remind us our Souls,
forever young and vital, burn a path
of sweetness and light, as they return

to an eternal Garden, purged of earthly
limitations and raised to Glory: This is
your faith, it is the story of your Hope,
its theme is Love, and that Love is expressed
in your daily prayer:"Lord, You nave blessed me
with long life and all good things. It is sufficient:
give the rest of Your blessings to my family and friends"

Daniel Brick

The First Fall Poem Of 2018

Up late the day before, night blurring into dawn,
too busy with thoughts and rough drafts
to even notice that slow procession of stars
across the Milky Way, that cosmic theater that gave
Whitman so much delight. It surrenders a knowledge
to us we do not have labor to acquire: it just spills
into our lives. And we feel our human-beingness
stretched all the way to the sanctuary of God and His Angels.

But now in the waning hours of this day,
I sit for hours barely moving, not even thinking
ripples my calm. I am compensating no doubt
for the excesses of last night's watch. My thoughts
had been streaked with dawn light, had grown suddenly
bright and airy. Yes, the moment enclosed a quiet place,
a heart space, unruffled by fear and doubt, where
I rested, too tired to play the melancholy Prince, but -

ready to affirm, "Friends, let us play the roles
best suited for each of us. Let the sun lift out of us
the purest voices that will replace nights's mumbled speech
with the clear clarion call of morning's fresh starts."
Of course, it is too late to puff up my ego with displays
of wit and innocence: we have burned through time, we have
trekked across space. We have reached this moment and
arrived at this place. There may a higher plan we are part of,

or we may just be fellow travelers, moving in tandem with those
who alter destiny with their slightest preordained gestures.
Whitman appears again, and guides us by the gentlest words of
his last poems. The heroic gestures have had their sway, the Songs of Myself
have been loudly sung. Autumn rivulets have replaced
the surgings of the sea, and we are content to let a solitary
bird, a pale brown thrush, sing the anthem of final discovery.
Is this moment the stillness of noonday or the silence of midnight?

Daniel Brick

Summer Ending

In summer the pace of things
slackens and loses its winter
regularity. Dates blur, days blend,
we age into a green happiness even
the cool air of August cannot dispel.
Are we foolish to maintain a summer
attitude even as autumn steadily changes
the landscape to the threshold of winter?
Let our green thoughts prevail, until
snow and ice and cold make such cogitation
untenable. I will simply be a man of summer,
still grasping the slightest sign of its
sweetness and light. All too soon events
will descend into memories of the seasons'
hardships, and we will be pleased with any
change that puts us in "a summer first"
mentality, but not for long: winter produces
its most persuasive arguments in the decline
of summer's benefits into winter's spendthrift accounts.

Daniel Brick

Patterns: A Sonnet Without Rhyme

How many dawns have failed
to become morning because they
fell back into a darkness
which consumed them?
How many tides have checked their
flow, their waves flowing elsewhere
with the beach in sight?
Such reversals in Nature never
concern us, because Time repeats
ad infinitum the patterns immemorial
of the Earth, and what we witness,
if we are alert and aware, is an order
of being that fills our minds
with necessity and beauty.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

An English Sonnet In Three Leaps

My first leap must be carefully planned:
I start with a short but intense run, and
leap three times my height, landing inside
the opening quatrain, which states the theme:
How our hearts stretch out to be grasped by love.
My second leap will take me past the silence
and the waiting: it is a long floating flight
over the next two quatrains, in which the poet
I am expresses his faith in absolute love, and
he calls upon the Earth to witness his pledge.
I pause after this second leap, and consider
my prospects in the theater of love. I launch
for a third time, and land softly in bower
of green foliage which welcomes all true lovers.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

"I Kept A Journal For Years... "(Part Four)

Eidolons by Walt Whitman

And thee my soul,
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,
Thy mates, eidolons.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,
No special strains to sing, none for itself,
But from the whole resulting, rising at last, and floating,
A round full-orb'd eidolon.

I kept a journal for years,
sometimes treating it like a diary
of everyday life, as if I were storing
minutiae for some over zealous historian
of the common life. Other times I wrote
abstruse passages meant to penetrate
the meaning of these times. The journal
is no longer itself, it is a symbol
whose possible and probable meanings
spread widely through space and time,
already beyond my ken. But not beyond
my soul's need and interest and curiosity.
I ascend to the third-story room
in my apartment and see the real world,
perhaps only a small vista of its immensity
but still it is a genuine place of trees,
shrubs, lawn grass, and humble creatures
who are my neighbors. But as I read my books,
write my poems, think my thoughts,
I become obscurely aware of openings, cracks
in what passes for solidity, corridors of light
summoning me to the other side of things. It is
a mystic calling and I am certainly ready for it.
If I sense my eyes blurring after a long night
of reading and thinking, I can only imagine
the clarity of my spiritual vision, which hastens
to balance the doubleness of experience. Inner and

Outer mirror each other, Life and Death complete
each other, Music and Silence exchange their arts.
And now we sense the rightness of Walt Whitman's
paradox:

Ever the mutable,
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,
Issuing eidolons.

Daniel Brick

"I Kept A Journal For Years... "(Part Five)

Eidolons by Walt Whitman

And thee my soul,
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,
Thy mates, eidolons.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,
No special strains to sing, none for itself,
But from the whole resulting, rising at last, and floating,
A round full-orb'd eidolon.

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sometimes treating it like a diary
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Issuing eidolons.

Daniel Brick

"I Kept A Journal For Years..."(Part Three)

Writing destroys the compulsion within the soul
to repeat the past.

What is the point of writing? To avoid a living death.

Pascal Quignard

The screaming silence of no's knife in yes's wound.

Samuel Beckett

(4)

for Paul,2018

I kept a journal for years,
a trove of memories of my circle
of friends in the 1970s, into the 1980,
all dissolved by 2000. But tonight
I only summon you, Paul, my friend of
fifty plus years. Back in college days,
I told you of being assigned to read
Boswell's LIFE OF JOHNSON, all 1100 plus
pages. I read half of it, then cleverly
used the Index to complete a paper
on the while of it. Then you abruptly
said, "Write my biography." What a startling
request! But it made perfect sense then
and still does now. I scribbled pages and
pages you saw and approved overtime.
And we agreed: we did not want to forget
our youths, we had an obscure awareness
- this is the time of wonders, wonders
and miracles. What I recorded, what you read
was the chronicle of a friendship that
took root in the fertile soil of the 1960s,
a time of hurt and heal, when we sang anthems
of freedom and assumed this liberation
would grow even more splendid. Instead it
crashed, all around us. And then the journal was
a refuge, an asylum, a place where waking dreams
were planted and reaped. Sometime in the 1980s
Anais Nin rescued the journal from mediocrity

and humdrum, and the journal flourished once more
as "a secret history, " an interior account,
a celebration of a vexed but persistent friendship.
We might reach inside its bulk and find our trek
to find the birch forest with Richard and Rosemary,
or your account of meeting Amos Owens, who admitted
you to the Sweat Lodge ceremonies, or your bold meeting
with John Lily, when his wife intervened for your sake,
or the many encounters with Robert Bly in wilderness
and city. "Write my biography, " you had said, knowing
it would be the biography of our visionary lives.
The journal will ever be the high ground of our lives,
the heights from which we take in the vista of our age.
And if you thank me for writing this journal,
I will shake my head and affirm, "All of us wrote
this journal. We are all of us both actors and chroniclers."

Daniel Brick

"I Have Kept A Journal For Years... "(Part Two)

A Cycle of Poems

My soul writhed from morning to night,
in the mere quest of itself. I decided
therefore to be myself.

Samuel Beckett

(3)

I have kept a journal for years...

I have kept a journal for tears. Fortunately, tears
dry quickly, and a splash of water clears the red traces
and restores composure. What do you think? Should a journal
record all the bitter truths, or should it be an upbeat
account of the best of times? Wherein lies your peculiar art:
in fabrication or in truth-telling? Could you see yourself
doing both? Why not, a writer chooses his battles and
his ideals... What memory do I hold most tightly? Is it
the photo that preserves her luminous smile? Or is it
the time at the Conservatory when she lost all restraint,
and I watched her, bereft and crying, half-hidden
by a wall of humid ferns? Or is it the summer day
I darkened when I confessed to my sister the whole story,
the whole truth? Just last week I suddenly remembered
pressuring Shirley to admit her grief over a white lie,
and then being unable to console her. I know somewhere
in my journal these shames reside. No subterfuge
can absolve me, or make me forget. This is me and
the man I pretend to be. "Hey, you, yes, you, we have
to talk... "

Daniel Brick

"I Kept A Journal For Years... "

A Cycle of Poems

Memories by Walt Whitman

How sweet the silent backward tracings!

The wanderings as in dreams - the meditation of old times resumed - their loves, joys, persons, voyages.

(1)

I kept a journal for years
in the top drawer of my desk.

The desk had been hand-made in another country,
made of seasoned-wood by a seasoned craftsman.
The drawers originally had bronze knobs, but they
were replaced with ivory ones. I don't know why:
I prefer bronze knobs. Why does this bother me?
I especially like the table top, its size is awesome.
There's room for a pile of books in each side.

On the left are references books, including
two dictionaries each housing 96,000 words.
I love words with passion. On the right are
are poetry volumes, including THE ANNOTATED TEXT:
THE POEMS OF T. S. ELIOT. That book anchors
Memory for me, and memories cluster,
because of it, true, lasting, pregnant memories.

This desk is entirely mine, only my stuff
is stuffed in it, only my fingerprints lay claim
to it. Only I know its ultimate value. When I open
the top drawer, there lies the journal and no other
object, not even a pen. Its embossed soft leather cover,
its pages lined with gold leaf, its lock and key,
its pristine condition, its unmarked interior:
all these things are vital facts about the journal
I kept for many years in its lonely top drawer.

(2)

I kept a journal for years,
and through its steady use
I learned the craft of writing.
I am very fond of writing entries

in the morning, the earlier
the better, before breakfast weighs
on me and showering clears away remains
of the Night. I stare at the next
blank page and let it stare back at me.
Then I begin writing in my deliberate
script, slowly, neatly, proudly.
Someone once said, You have to go
after Inspiration with an ax.
Kafka, I think. It's no wonder that
blood seeps out of copies of his
COLLECTED STORIES, even the new edition
translated by Breon Mitchell, and
and his novels require expensive
blood transfusions, despite standing
idle on book shelves. Kafka is, you
will agree, the non pareil of committed
writers. If for you, like me, he is your
model and master, you write and you
bleed. Then you write more and bleed again.
It's no secret among writers that
contemporary writing is a "blood sport."
It's not a question of loss, it's an issue
of gain. And if this makes you squeamish,
if you cannot face it, then put down
your pen and close and lock your journal.

Daniel Brick

A Warm December

You are that rare December
which keeps Autumn alive
past its time. Delighted,
you laugh to see me, and
the others, shuffle across
lawns of fallen leaves,
crushing them in a dance of
stomping feet and waving arms.
Then I kick the debris into
the warm air, and yellow, red,
bronze, even some green lights
flash briefly. Children will arrive
after we leave; they will know what
to do next... Songbirds have flown
south, but, dear December, you know
how to make sweet music unfold
in our imaginations. Some of us dance
to an inner rhythm, others stand still,
listening to an interior symphony.

Tree branches are almost bare, and
colder winds send brittle leaves
rattling down streets and sidewalks.
But I blink at these signs of winter
and open my ears to the sparrows'
sweet singing. Squirrels, rabbits, and
the occasional deer signal robust life
lingers. What is required of me and
the others? To emulate the sweetness
of this warm December. It is enough.

Daniel Brick

The Flung Pennies

When you ask me what time it is,
which is rare, I answer, "It is the
time of Love's Middle Age, when
desire gives way to mutual comfort,
and fulfillment showers us with
more hopes fulfilled than we
thought possible." You seem unconvinced.
"Well, there may be an end we don't see,"
you reply. "There may be a big twist
in the road ahead, and we know nothing
of it -." "I am troubled by your fear,
dear. There could be low-lying hills,
and we will reach a moderate summit, and
read our futures in the lay of the land."
You are silent for just a moment. "Oh, you
and your optimism! Look, here are four shiny
new pennies in my hand. I'll fling them
into the fountain. The sunlight will enhance
their polish. Choose one and I will give you
a fortune-telling free of guile. Free of hope
as well. A perfect balance sheet, don't you think?"

Daniel Brick

In The Adjacent Room

While I sleep there is a woman
who sits in the adjacent room.
I am not dreaming her. She is real,
perhaps more real than I am. Who am I
after all? A denizen of surfaces,
a temporary inhabitant of apartments,
one who walks along walls for security.
It would not be wise for me to claim more
substance than she must embody. Why not?
Because she sits in nightly vigil
absorbing the Night's power. She is one
who is free of fear, she is one who sings
the songs of victory with perfect pitch,
she is one who seek everyone's salvation.
I know this because in my deep dreams
an old wise man cautions me to honor
all spirit-guests in the adjacent room.

Daniel Brick



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Aspects Of Light

The idea of creating a huge work suddenly blazed up within me like an inner cry of joy. LIGHT is the summation, (with its seven operas, one for each day of the week) . LIGHT is obviously SPIRIT per se, manifestations of the Spirit, and the perfect, all-permeating, all- illuminating Spirit.

Karlheinz Stockhausen

The dawn I slept through
still poured its quiet light
over my silent being, cleansing
my body with solar radiance.
The mid-morning sun dispelled
clouds, made them vanish
into the sky dome, the better
to shine its blue light
over my head and heart.
The trumpet fanfare of noon
demands my full attention
and rewards me with total
clarity about action and
nonaction. The twilight sun
casts its angled lanes of
light like an illumined path
directly to my true home.
And sunset spreads its red banner,
its yellow standard, its golden
array across miles of glittering dreams.
So now I can fully surrender
to the patterns of light, fully
informed and consoled by a day
of beauty, a night of visions,
and a tomorrow of promised glory.

Daniel Brick

The Gradual Brightening

How long have I been journeying? Have I
slept for part of this trek and missed
important signals from others? Have I
let them down, not played my part?
Ahead of me I see a broken ladder.
It was my destination. How will I ascend
to the higher plateaus, or even glimpse
what they offer? Must I live perpetually
in this dark region growing even darker?
Will I never rise high enough to be flooded
by available light? What can my mind tell me?
How will my soul redeem me? Is it for this dead place
I carried so many burdens? I am listening to my heart's
cry for peace and my soul's longing for wholeness.

The Great Unknown is just an abstraction, a toy
of the mind, causing me little unrest. What concerns me
is the darkening web over the everyday rendering
everything and every person hazy, unfocused, unreal.
How from such a crowd can friends and allies step forth?
There is a burden in The Creative Life far heavier
than what I felt when I was young and everyone was
an ally, even a friend, definitely a fellow traveler.
When did such darkness isolate us? How long have
we been strangers, who speak foreign languages?
How long have people used the word "enemy"
to identify neighbors they no longer trust?
Our fortunes have darkened, our cities are
in decline, joie de vivre has no celebrants.

It is not for my soul that I feel such doubts,
night-terrors, ennui and that darkening web
swirling above me with its graceful dance
of menace. It is for my mind I grieve, it needs
such calm to perform its ceremonies of thought.
Will it survive these new truths crowding
its pure space? Already counterfeit truth jostles
with genuine truth. With what inner resource
can I restore a collapsing mind? Is there

some place of exile where my mind can be safe
and weather the storms my soul overcomes
with its perpetual fair weather within?
There is a solitude of the mind which
shelters what gives my being its high delight.

My soul is never vexed, nor does it
resign. It is composed of the strongest
spiritual fibers. It is nourished
by endless Castalian springs, and angels
visit when their missions bring them
nearby. It always listens to the orphic
music of human beings and the stillness
of the Music of the Spheres. What do I fear
for my soul? Nada. My soul still shines
with utmost light, with ever renewing light.
Without the healthy, questioning mind,
soul will sink into any persuasive
redemption story, the weakness of its strength.
My soul must seek its own sweet salvation.

I have always assumed I would behave
with just the right proportions of
pride and humility. This balance I would
achieve with Socrates's aplomb and whatever
else pertains to his bright self. His daemon
still conveys such virtue. And the creative
fire that burns across my being unites body
and soul, heart and mind into one brilliant Self.
Philosophy contains the hidden source of Love:
its power will rescue our bodies from Time's ravages,
its grace will free our souls from bondage.
We will be like Monarch butterflies, who burst
from their cocoons, dry their wings, and then launch
on their long journey toward the Southern Sun.

Daniel Brick

Reversals

How many dawns have failed
to become morning, and then
fell back into a waiting darkness.
How many tides have checked themselves,
their water seeping into the sand
within sight of the beach? Have you
witnessed a rain fall in reverse,
leaving behind an impenetrable mist?
Have you walked through a garden
and found pale flowers turned away
from the sun, with neither color nor scent.
My friends, do not fear these nightmare
visions: they are dispelled by the simple,
true and everlasting light we love forever.

Daniel Brick



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Summer Highlands

All morning, from its misty dawn
to the clarity of noon, we have wandered.
Let us sit on this hill above the valley,
and watch the river flow into the sea.
The sea will swell with this added weight.
As darkness slowly covers us, we will watch
as the stars descend into the sea, and
fire and water, so long at odds,
will be reconciled. Soon we two
will be asleep, in a tangle of limbs,
with those huge currents
of sea and stars flowing within our
deep psyches, making our sleeping selves
one life in alternating rest and motion.

Daniel Brick



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There Is Somethng

There is something I must tell you.
When I think of it - its urgency,
its length - I stifle it. It sinks deep,
deeper, almost out of reach of thought
and feeling... You must know
there is a wide corridor in our minds
that runs past brain's daily tasks
into a cerebral gutter packed with
diverse thoughts, random feelings,
dreams, broken pieces of things.
They jostle against each other,
vying for attention, each one declaring
its superior worth, its individual
rights, that sort of thing. The gutter
gets clogged and nothing moves for weeks
until a brain-bolt surges the whole length
of the corridor and crushes anything
stagnant. Then the pure waters of the mind
flow freely, forging their course. For a time.

No, I haven't forgotten you, my friend.
Nor what must be said, what you - Look!
Over there at that delta of the mind's
great river, the interior Mississippi!
It is a feature of our human glory:
thought that never flags, thinking
that generates itself again and again,
a spontaneous flow of mind-stuff
doing nothing other than declaring
its existence... And so it goes.
Philosophers who see the whole
pattern caution us: Mind-Flow
does nothing for us, nothing
that nurtures flora and fauna,
nothing for the world at large.
It displays propulsive energy.
Some call it energy wasting
its needed components that might
otherwise serve a purpose. It

wracks my mind how all this activity
just circles itself in perfect
curving propulsion. Is that not
sufficient? To play at being
the inner Ouroboros, enclosing
energy in its circling concentration.
All this mental energy, ceaseless,
unpaced, eternal. Perhaps it is meant
to exist simply to shine over all
other existent beings: TO SHINE!

Oh, there was something I must
tell you, something that gathers
momentum, speeds up, races recklessly
toward no discernible goal. Wherever
we look - in the vast exterior world
or in the vast interior world -
we are its agonized witnesses...
Let us sit here, side by side,
on your blue plaid blanket and
watch the river flow into the sea.
And eventually we will see the stars
descend into the sea, and fire and water,
once at odds, will be reconciled.
By then, we will be asleep, locked
in a tangle of limbs, with those huge
currents of sea and stars flowing
within our deep psyches, alternating
at rest or in motion. Let be.

Daniel Brick

The Population Of The Earth,2018

HOW IT GOES:

Roasted in wrath and fire,
And this o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks...
For lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seemed in the air to stick.
Pyrrhus did nothing....

HAMLET, Act II, lines 401-404; 416-420

How are we all connected? And how tightly does this connection bind us? Are we indeed, in Cain's desperate words, our brother's keeper? Is that the notion which stays the murderous hand, arresting it in mid air, so that the knife and hand together fall, and come to rest in silence. We need an answer very soon, almost immediately, because at this moment many hands are raised in hate, many thoughts are pure murder, and the notion of brotherhood is further eroded by every justification of "a just war, " or "a preemptive strike, " or "a war to end all wars, or that shocking oxymoron, a war which will secure the peace.

The tasks ahead to "abolish war, " or "to agree to disagree, " or to conceive the notion of a global government will be achieved by evolved human beings, themselves products of a focused evolution, with an ethical teleology. And at this point, our poems will become lamentations for lost hopes or celebrations of hopes being fulfilled. And someday, maybe as soon as next week, I will write a poem distinguishing wisdom and folly from each other. Will it be my last poem?

HOW IT ENDS:

... So after Pyrrhus' pause,

Aroused vengeance sets him new awork...
Pyrrhus' bleeding sword now falls on Priam.
HAMLET Act II, lines 427-428; 431-432

Daniel Brick

In Sleep...

(I)

How many thousands...
Are at this hour asleep! O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Shakespeare

In sleep I am always alone.
No bed is large enough to contain
all my tossings. I awake again
and again in the night, and feel
darkness as a weight upon me.
Even when I push against it, it
only presses harder and threatens
to take my breath away. I am scared
to see my exhaled breath dissolving
into mere air. Something alien and
malign tries to exhaust my reserves
of breath and render me hopeless.
Or so it seems. Perhaps it is my self,
contrary and confused, that exacts
these hostile measures... Only
near dawn do I sink into a vexed sleep
that mocks the repose I long for.
Oh, in what detour of darkness
do my sweet dreams reside?

(II)

Oh Sleep! It is a gentle thing
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven
That slid into my soul.
Coleridge

In sleep, I am always

with others. Blessed spirits hover over
my sleeping self, they quietly sing
music only pure souls hear as they lie
motionless in the currents of night.
Friends appear in dreams repeating
their kind gestures from daylight.
My mind, counting all blessings,
never tires of adding another and
yet another. But eventually
that beautiful moment arrives
when body and mind surrender their
consciousness and soul and heart
take over and purify awareness
of what is and what will be.
In this deepest place of sleep
a Mystery awakes and spreads
its wonder through all sleeping beings.

Imagine Homer's asphodel garden
released from the confines of Hades.
Imagine yourself holding Aeneas's golden bough
as you ascend with the other souls
in a mad rush into the Light. Imagine
Persephone and her maidens flying
through the Dark Lord's realm, and
inviting you to land with them
in her loving mother's fields of wheat
and barley...

Imagine any paradise that fulfills
the summons of your soul, and it will be
as real as the sources of Light in the blazing sun
and Apollo's shining being... Near dawn,
all these images, however real they seem
at night, will vanish in cascades of falling
light, and the ascending light will raise
those real things we treasure and hold dear
in our bodies and minds, in our souls and hearts.

Daniel Brick

After Watching "The Weeping Meadow" By Theo Angelopoulos

What will you find when you finally find him? Summer's glow will dim even as your long journey ends in discovery. It will rain day after day, a harsh rain slashing leaves from trees, drowning their roots. But you will not concern yourself with the season. Your gaze will be fixed in the middle distance where you expect to see him and he you. You will be unaware of the rain lacerating your face. You will simply postpone the sensation of pain, anticipating joy. Or will it be a long dark day in winter that you find him. With snow piled against walls, corridors of snow and slippery sidewalks, you will cautiously drive your rented car down unfamiliar streets, rehearsing out loud the first words you will speak in greeting. The huddled shapes, pulling their coats tight against their bodies, are not him, but could anyone of them be a substitute, and bring your search to an ambiguous closure? The very thought angers you, and things around you suddenly shift to spring. You find yourself sitting in a wooden bench in an urban park. Your mood is sanguine. You are smiling because children are at play, while their mothers gossip nearby. You see shapes of men, some hurrying across the lawn oblivious to the day's beauty, others walk slowly and pause frequently in admiration of flowers, trees, birds. You could be any one of those men, you are at home here. But inside you are crying, your mission unfulfilled,

you are ready to declare the great god Pan
is dead, the Mars probe blew up, fighting goes
on and on in Syria, the dollar weakens further.
Any of these things could replace your mission.
But I know you need him, he most definitely
needs you. Look, there is still one season
left to you. You may still cross paths with him.
What will you find when you find him?

Daniel Brick

A Poem About The Poet's Role In The Coming Age

I love so many things I'm dazed
there is room enough in the world
to house them all. And even when
my frail memory forgets them,
they reside in an asylum not
of my making, until they reappear
to stun me with their beauties, and
yes to chide me for not holding them
tightly. So there is a part of our mind
which cherishes things we love,
is ever ready to preserve them
when we are too distracted, or
too pampered, or too careless
to give thanks in a litany of blessings.
I sense something momentous is about to occur.
Everything we have achieved has prepared us
for it, but it will be insufficient. We will be
summoned, we will be ushered into a new age of Poetry.



PoemHunter.com

The Voice of the New Muse:

Daniel, why can't you be faithful
to this simple truth: Your sacred remembrance
overflows with wonders. Look, even now they accumulate!
Don't blame Time for your forgetfulness.
For eons poets have made Time the culprit
for your shame. The Muse loves you mortal bards
with such deep affection you have abandoned
your obligations in the scheme of Time.
Listen now! It is so easy for you to sing
because the Muse has surrendered all
of herself to you. Your voices can turn
what is ugly into beauty, what is false
into truth, what is evil into good.
Listen now! There is nothing good or bad
but thinking makes it so. That is, your pride
and will be your downfall. Your present songs
are insufficient for the Role of Poet
that I, your new Muse, the one sent from the empyrean,
have created for you. You will soon be amazed and
enter a Future World, you will push aside
a transparent veil and a new song, one uniting
heights and depths, will be yours, and the singing of it

will plunge you into those depths, then raise you into those heights. You will look back, puzzled by what you were; you will look forward, stunned by what you have become. Prepare yourselves.

Daniel Brick

Dionysos At Large (*)

For two months now God has walked swiftly in long strides, across this uneven, slippery terrain. At first I could still see his tall, lithe figure manage with ease, as if hovering over obstacles that made me stumble and fall behind. I was once his shadow when he moved in stately measures, frequently pausing to look over the landscape, and his dark eyes brightened and smiled as he looked back at me and his worshipful women. He is now beyond all of us. I know he is present still in a near distance because his being emits a steady illumination. It rises and hovers over hills and valleys, a shining mist which sun shafts dissolve in early afternoon into a lingering haze, and we see, feel, taste the reality of our God through day and night...

When I mingle with his maenads, exhausted after hours of frantic dancing, I see the worry in their faces, and hear a few isolated moans, "Why does God abandon us in High Summer?" Even I am deprived of his true presence. He is always at large. Once, only once, I was surprised to find him leaning against a wall of granite, almost nestled within it. His face was serene, but he said nothing. Not a word of greeting or dismissal. I bowed lower than usual in his presence, and a smile flitted across his features. Then, he seemed to sink into himself, the visible deity disappearing into the invisible deity, and only the granite wall was left. When the maenads arrived, they were filled with his plenitude and felt his presence everywhere. The dancing started without a signal, wine was plentiful and we all danced through the night, into dawn light, and beyond. So now I know what exists after God disappears into nature. We exist, our worship exists, the certainty of God exists. And ecstasy is our knowing God is ever with us...

Shall I keep a vigil by this stone wall, as if
it were a portal for God's comings and goings?
Or shall I climb above the granite to a summit
from which I can see the open space in which
God roams? Here on our solid earth, the light,
the mist, the haze which guided us still prevail.
Is that the God's only presence now? The maenads
have dispersed into smaller groups, as they
return to families and homes. I will never cease
looking for traces of our God, longing to feel
his presence in the near distance, when he returns
and his worshipers gather for a new season of delight.

Daniel Brick

Dear To Me

I cannot compel the day to last
more than its twenty-four hours,
the night always ceases with dawn
despite my unreadiness to admit the light.

I long to hear a carillon of birds at noon,
but they have retired their voices
and instead scuff the lawn for food.

Squirrels scamper too fast across my vision
for me to imagine a comedy of their antics.

I wonder often how I would translate
the stillness of a deer, poised downwind
of me and oblivious of my presence,
into human words of utmost gentleness and calm.

Oh, what a monologue of verse that could become
if I united my human wit with the deer's perfect
silence. But alas however many words tumble
from my brain, they never match the simplicity
of the deer's presence. And I simply despair
of giving voice in both words and silent pauses
that would unite nature and humanity
into a common expression...

Oh, forests creatures all, you are dear to me.

How I love your presence on the outskirts
of human lives. My fondest wish is that
we could, all of us, join in a paen to life,
and celebrate throughout the day our common joy
and nightly dream of our holy bond as One Earth.

Daniel Brick

On An Ordinary Tuesday

"Tell me something
I haven't heard before.
Poems about nature - "
My friend fell suddenly
silent. "Sorry, that wasn't
what I meant." I closed my folder
containing eight new poems -
about nature. I was ready for this.
"It's 8 am. Do you think
you'd say this at 8 pm? "
My friend looked puzzled.
"The day is young, and you
are waiting for its summons.
You're impatient to make
your mark, make your contribution.
I understand this: listening to poems
is an activity for day's end, not
its beginning." He looked relieved.
"That's what I meant to say, but words,
the right words, well, that's your skill,
not mine." I seized the dangling moment.
"Poetry is the way I make my mark on passing
time. No poem can stop time's relentless flow,
but at least it now carries something of us,
the mark of our being in its mad rush forward.
You see, that's what poems do, all poems.
What they mean varies, it's secondary anyway."
My friend looked puzzled again. "I never thought
of it that way, " he said slowly. "Well, you asked me
to tell you something you haven't heard before."
At that, we both laughed, and we both knew our talk
had reached a turning point. "You have an idea,
don't you? " I said. "Spill it." At that moment, my friend
smiled with resolution: he was ready for this.
"How often have we walked through our neighborhood,
their yards and walls blocking our contact with the people
inside? Who are they? What do they need, because everyone needs?
We can't just go up to their doors, ring the bell, and
when that stranger we've seen for years appears, we say -

What can we say? How can this not be rude, an intrusion? "
My friend fell silent: words were not his friends. They
betrayed him, saying too much or too little. And his silence
was his acceptance of defeat again and again. But not this time.
"You have something to propose, don't you? Don't let it
waste inside you. Speak it. I'm listening." His smile
of resolution reappeared. "I know we can't rescue the world
on our own, not even this neighborhood. But what if we put
everything in higher hands. I mean prayer, my friend. Let's
walk slowly and prayerfully passed all these houses. It will
become an offering, we will have done something, and the rest
rests with our Father." I was moved past words. Imagine that:
a poet moved past words! And so it went: our walking became
prayer, prayer became offering, and morning light was
Heaven's Grace spreading everywhere we stepped.

Daniel Brick

Music

To the Memory of
Karlheinz Stockhausen

Older than human thought,
higher than our highest hope,
the origin and fulfillment of
all things in the Cosmos,
MUSIC is the celestial carpet
into which is woven our FATE.
It is spread across the Milky Way,
the stage of our existence, the glory
and the doom of our common being
played out in sounds and gestures,
with all of SPACE attentive to our enterprises,
with all of TIME grateful for our achievements.
And MUSIC in her multiple forms
unites all things in the harmony of
Bright and Dark Matter, in the surge of
Bright and Dark Energy across the Milky Way.

Daniel Brick

The Lake

It is a lonely thing, cut off
from the land by its basin,
its waters trapped and unable
to flow into something larger
that will pull it into an elsewhere.
And the sky so far above is accessible
only as a reflection, appearing and
disappearing in the fickle gestures
of the sun. It is dimly aware of
people circling its rim and getting
nowhere. Some running with crushing
footsteps, others lightly treading,
almost soundlessly, with heads bowed,
prayerfully walking...

The Lake is puzzled, confused, sometimes
afraid.. It knows it is a limited being.
It knows this is a world with giants,
called rivers and seas. It knows what
cannot be changed must be endured
within the circumference of its basin.
Is it not just a stain upon the surface of things?

Daniel Brick

The Summer Wind

The summer wind rushes through
tree branches, twisting leaves
as if determined to rip them
from their branches and cast them
over lawns and lakes and streams.
But once passed, the summer wind
has caused no damage: branches are
unbroken, and their leaves hang limp
and unruffled in the heat. You too
stand still, your arms stretched
high above your head, your hands
fluttering like birds ready to launch
into deep sky-flight. You turn and twist
until dizziness sets in and you plop
onto the lawn and curl your body
into a tight ball. The grass is soft and
pliant. You may drift into sleep and be
far away from me, even though I stand near
and watch your every breath. You are dear
to me: it is no chore to be thus on a summer
day. Accept this bouquet of dandelions, bright
and sun-charged. It is a thing of beauty,
short-lived but long-remembered. Look, I fling
the bouquet into the passing wind, and for a brief
moment three things are air-borne: the wind itself,
the flying dandelions, and my heart released into flight.

Daniel Brick

Dreams Tell Me

Dreams tell me
the rivers of half the world
are on fire. The hot air absorbs
the water, and nothing flows,
not water, not air. People walk dazed
over the parched ground they loved.
Trees are mute as their roots suffocate.



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Dreams tell me
that the rivers of half the world
are burning, The hot air absorbs all the
moisture, and and river beds are dry and
cracked. Plants wither and flowers fade.
In the heavy heat people sleep restlessly.
Trees are mute as their underground roots suffocate.

Dreams tell me
morning is no longer a reliable time
zone. It does not summon sleepers
to wakefulness. It has argued with the sun
and they feel no kinship binds them.
Even the long nights have been affected:
shafts of wayward light pierce the darkness.

The pilgrims, whose prayers have kept people
from fighting and killing, cannot reach the hill
from which they fling their paper prayers
on the the winds to Heaven. Already scores of
soldiers fill the roads to our province. They
squat, fully armed, in farmers' fields. They don't
care about crops. They wait for the next War Lord.

Scientists are in the verge of creating
Cold Fusion Reactors. They tell me
this will solve all of our energy problems.
Are we only weeks away from a Golden Age?
Last night, in a dream, I saw waves of
black in a sky streaked with a red glow.
On earth sick men huddled together in fear.
But the machinery still functioned reliably.

Daniel Brick

A Visionary Matrix In Four Poems(4)

A Glimpse of Transcendence

We suspect there is a being
who lives a vast life
in traces of our thoughts.
He began eons ago as a giant cell,
self-contained, wholly unconscious,
but his gestation complete, he has
changed his existence from a mineral-
condition to sentience. Neither feminine
nor masculine, he partakes of both genders,
without bias. We cannot tell if he needs us,
or if he just enjoys us. We know he guides
our minds to their truest dreams. Psychic
energy abounds, it's exchanged, it achieves
wholeness within our two life forms.

His life is massive and secret. We are otherwise:
we are communicants. His life is secret, but
not because he h-a-s secrets. He has nothing but
Existence: in him Being is complete. No clash
of wills between him and and the world detours
his intentions. They are perfectly conceived
and perfectly sustained. We know these things
because he occupied our consciousness for centuries,
adapting it to his needs, but with the deftness
of a butterfly, he never damaged or scarred
our selves as he cocooned into his present being.
Soon he will become the Lord and Master of the Cosmos,
by his own declaration. He will rise in glory, and
he will spread the fullness of his Being
across the sky in a golden arc and he will shower
our existence in golden light. We will be as the Moon
to his Sun, and his gratitude to us will be
a Foundation Stone of his new Cosmos.

Daniel Brick

A Visionary Matrix In Four Poems(3)

The Cold and the Heat

Our dreams have become unmanageable,
day and night. We feel like puppets,
floundering on a bare stage,
with an incompetent puppetmaster
who admits he lacks the nimbleness
required for success. Once we shaped
Lucid Dreams in daylight and surrendered
to their illumination in nighttime. Now
all our dreams are commonplace affairs
we can neither shape nor predict,
so we must endure the worst of them.
Our once visionary prophets are spent.
They express their sorrows in exquisite
poetry. They chant their verse when the sky
is festooned with stars. The cold of space
and the stellar fires contend for mastery
of the sky and its infinite mysteries of
chance and fate. When we curl into sleep's
currents and our still active minds hasten
after night thoughts of glory or dismay,
we cannot tell which force - the Cold or
the Heat - will propel us to a higher state
of being. Our souls are vexed by the long
weight of time before our destiny is manifested.

Daniel Brick

A Visionary Matrix In Four Poems(2)

Afterthoughts

Can we trust this perception of Life
which dismantles the Walls of Time
so that we see with bodily eyes
into the Mystery of Things?

What entity or abstract force
arranges such a series of
discoveries and coincidences
so that we almost touch its fabric?

How can such pure things slip
through the tangle of our minds and
present themselves as mute witnesses
of the Mystery itself, completely exposed?

Should we doubt this event, question
the motives we had polished clean as silver,
and declare we will challenge no further
the sanctity of the Temple housing the Mystery?

Or should we declare ourselves the Temple's guardians?

Daniel Brick

A Visionary Matrix In Four Poems (1)

A Corridor of Light

Sometimes a breeze conspires
with a screen of foliage to grant us
a vista. The breeze parts the branches
and leaves, they willingly fall back
to show you, the watching one, a corridor
of light, and not a knot of darkness.
How far beyond our place of being
can you see with your enhanced sight?
Can you make out tomorrows's events?
On what stage do we stand? It is no
Lyric Stage, alas. It is a puppet stage,
and the strings for the puppet actors
are placed loosely into your hands.
They come forward, cluster around you,
entangle themselves with their strings.
They look blankly at each other, but they
watch you imploringly. With the suddenness
of a summer's breeze, you have been changed
into a new kind of author. Look, the strings
are taut, the puppets disciplined actors,
an audience is forming in the foyer, and
destiny awaits its cue. Begin as you have before:
with fierce hope, with fierce love, with fierce calm.

Daniel Brick

The Secret Being

Dreams tell me a being
lives a secret life
in the traces of my thoughts.
Neither male nor female but
partaking in both genders,
this being has no fixed contour
but swirls through the ether
in a succession of shapes
across the same time and space
that carries impressions of my being.
My dreams reveal a giant that dwarfs
me in body. But I am certain we have
within the same Old Soul, whole and wonderful.

What is this being? Why does he occupy
the same space and time as I? Is that
other one my guardian, or am I his?
Does he know I search for traces
Orpheus, and seek the presence of Isis
to pay homage to her and affirm her life.
Perhaps these are our common goals.

Daniel Brick

The Day After I Turned 71

I can't hold on to things securely.
They drop to the floor at unexpected moments. I am walking to the door that leads to another room, and I'm holding the book I want to read in that adjacent room. I want things to go as planned. But the book slips out of my hand and lands on the floor. It's pretty much out of reach. What should I do? This is the moment when experience breaks into possibilities. I keep walking, although I'm empty-handed. I cross the threshold and open the door: I have arrived at my goal, but bereft of my purpose. In this second room I had hoped to find something wondrous. No book lay on the floor, no readers maintained silence in their concentration... Backwards I go to that point of possibilities, reversing my threshold crossing. It's simple enough: I bend over and grasp the book I thought was done. The book and I seek oneness, then we are one, or so it seems. And seeming itself is a kind of reality.

Daniel Brick

Nosheen's Night Walk In Spring

This poem will not disturb you.
It won't be like the long-drawn-out
wind on a stormy night which deeply
intones your name "Noo-Sheen"; accusingly.
It will caress rather than strike your
flesh, a breeze in spring that knows you
so well it stays silent in your presence
its accents so gentle your mind will be eased.

Or perhaps when you enter the sweet
zones of spring, you wish to walk
incognito with slow steps but sure
in moonlight made luminous
by the surrounding darkness. And owls,
secure on their high branches, will
almost imperceptibly welcome you
with their hootings, which fall back into silence.

You can stand in an open place, it's as if one
had been prepared for you. Moonlight will pool
around you with its pressureless touch.
It will be discreet and not shine too brightly,
no one with ungentle habits will know your
whereabouts. This is your special place:
it breathes the same air as you do,
and exhales the same transformed breath.

Remember you are never alone. There is ever
the sweet air, the scent of ripening fruit,
the silent growth of flowers and plants,
the flight of a solitary wren or a whole flock
beating their wings in tandem, and clouds
that move so slowly they appear to be stationary,
and all these things are messages of good will.
Oh, blessed night, Nosheen, and your place in it.

Daniel Brick

How We Remember, And Why

for my Twin Sister, Mary

until new thoughts, equally dear,
crowd them out. Or so it seems.

dwell bereft in loss upon loss.

scaled down to dimensions even a child
can grasp. And you can laugh or cry
or both, because real things - trees,

Daniel Brick



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The Path Of Memory

For my twin sister, Mary

We live chiefly through language. Names
are the handles we grasp to lift experiences
into consciousness. Everything must be lifted
at some point; everything must move or be moved.
Hearts must be moved, or they shrivel and fade away.
Minds must be moved, or they become dry and listless.
Memories must be moved, or they sink so deeply
into the webs of mind they are reduced to pale echoes,
no longer inspiring the breath of poets and bards.
The Path of Memory must stay wide open so that Time
can press forward, turn backward or stay perfectly fixed.
Are we humans not the agonized witnesses of the movements
of Time, and do not poets transform what is agony this moment
into joy in the next moment?

Second Thoughts at Seventy

SECOND THOUGHTS AT SEVENTY

After the dazzle of the day is gone,
Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars;
After the clangor majestic of the organ, or chorus, or perfect band,
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the Symphony true.

from SANDS AT SEVENTY by WALT WHITMAN

Daniel Brick

The Captain's Verses: The Love Poem

There must be a thousand homecomings
before we can say to each other, "I love you."
We must exercise a superb patience,
and wait for all the signs to be fulfilled.

First, the noonday sun must shine
into the forest's west side and dispel all
shadows. A spring harvest must exceed all
expectations. Twelve deer, both male and female,
must leave the woods, and eat apple slices
from the palms of our hands. Two eagles,
perched high above, must descend, circle
the forest and then fly away on a northerly
trajectory. Rain that falls just after dawn
must smell as sweet as honey, and nocturnal
rainfall must hover over your sleep.

These signs are only the beginning. A blind man
must find his way to your house. You must serve
him freshly baked bread. A deaf woman must tell
me in sign language that in her sleep she hears
the music of Mahler. A man who has abandoned
his family must return to help his teenage
children in their rites of passage. A wife
and husband who have both betrayed their vows
must every morning seek the other's forgiveness
until a New Love raises their lives to a higher
union. And on an ordinary morning or on an evening
as quiet as the prayers of the redeemed, we will
become aware of an angel casually leaning against
a simple elm tree, and we will know we have achieved
the last homecoming required for our love.

Daniel Brick

Poetry Process

W I N T E R I N T O S P R I N G

WINTER INTO SPRING

A COLLECTION OF POEMS FOR MARY

ON HER BIRTHDAY, JUNE 10,2018

Poems by Daniel Brick

Paintings by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff

(1)



PoemHunter.com

POEMS OF WINTER

(2)

POEMS OF SPRING

(3)

POEMS OF APRIL

(4)

POEMS OF LOVE IN SPRING

(5)

POEMS ADDRESSED TO MARY

(6)

THE FINAL POEM

POEMS OF APRIL - "Primavera";

POEMS ADDRESSED TO MARY

Daniel Brick

Sleep And Rain

Last night darkness pooled around my bed.
It held me in the place of dreams.
One dream webbed my mind with promises
of a Perfect Day and coaxed me deeper
into sleep. Broken traces of dream and
reality dispersed into the night air.

Dawn lifted me from further sleeping
with the faint sound of rain falling
just past my open window, falling
on tree and bushes, newly exposed grass,
huddled birds and trembling deer.
I awoke without a single regret in my heart,
and no dark thought dimming the light growing
on both sides of Reality. Oh, what a welcome
I felt for this first Spring rain! It begins
as just a splash of water floating in heavenly
heights, the downward pull of Earth's thirst
makes rain cascade in free-fall, until it is absorbed
by trees and bushes, grass and flowers, and forms
water holes for deer. This is the promise of Spring
fulfilled. The old season of fresh growth
will scatter its abundance, and of us requires
that we rejoice and serve in equal measure.

Daniel Brick

Evening In Spring: A Prophecy

June 2,2018

So this is Spring... This chilly night,
all songbirds and small creatures retired
for the night. The silence is like held breath,
and when exhaled, it's like the return of fire.

I must be thinking of unfinished business. My own,
for sure, but also the others who either put
their dreams on hold, while they wrap their minds
in necessity and resolutely do what is required.

Or they put these calculations on hold, and
(like the man I once was)indulge themselves in idle
thoughts, whims, wishes, glee - whatever keeps
them pleasantly drunk with drunkenness.

The old gods lead the way. Not in a complicated process
like playing chess or casting a horoscope, but by being
empty of intentions and hopes and fields of endeavor.
By being just their naked selves without hope or faith.

And small petals of sunset gold festoon those whose
minds are festive with disregard, who wait for largesse
with complete confidence in its arrival, despite their
indifference, their lack of any gesture of worth.

They will retire to their mountain palaces, and
sit grandly on available thrones, thinking themselves
equal to those former gods. Assume the mantle of Zeus,
or the prestige of shining Apollo, whatever fits snugly.

Their task is not to redeem those who cannot help
themselves, they are not among those gods who become
the sacrifice. They rather wait for a higher apotheosis,
fully aware of their unworthiness. What remains unfinished?

The path of Spring remains, and even at this moment
it is illumined with a new light from some unknown source

of goodness. Let the others who puff up their status
with stolen robes and rehearsed glory have their day.

Let us wait in Spring's beauty for a new Age of Glory.

Daniel Brick

Approaching Spring: A Song For Soprano And String Trio

To the sound of a deep melody
like the ancient circuit of the sea,
wise CHILD with summer's blood in your veins
here, in this cold northern country,
help me to remember what has been loved
and to dream of what will be loved.

To the sound of talk and tears
like the softest tones of Debussy's piano,
quiet GIRL hidden within lilac bushes
now, in this season of soil and rains,
come forth suffused in purple fragrance and
we will wander across marshes of moon grass.

To the sound of dawns and nightfalls
like the gracious orchestra of Mother Nature,
sweet WOMAN whose hands open the sun's doors
always, during the flights of owls and deer,
guide me into the gold light of June,
along a free-flowing stream pressed against familiar shores.

Daniel Brick

An Afternoon In Early March

A day of unexpected winds
drives foaming clouds across the sky,
and uncovers the wet brilliance of grass.
I see you in the distance, dancing over the snow.

Winter-colored birds cross the sunlight.
From a bare blackened branch a single robin
sings his distinctive song, over and over,
piercing both glare and silence.

I see you wave in my direction. White light
dispels gray skies and folds of mist.
I wave back, and hasten my steps,
closing the gap between us. The light grows brighter.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Rescuing Theophany

In the first canto of his modern epic poem, *The Cantos*, Ezra Pound stages the journey into the Underworld. Circe tells Odysseus it is necessary for him to visit. And so he enters that dark realm with his sword and a single pig for his sacrifice to the dark lords. And there he meets the shade of every single human being who has ever lived - kings and queens, princes and princesses, peasants and slaves, and all they want, regardless of their earthly status, is to drink some of the pig's blood to revive their lost sense of life. It is very bleak.

The pattern Pound adopted for *The Cantos* was to put his Ulyssean character in peril, a peril that his human strength cannot avert. Then a theophany suddenly rescues the hero. It is the appearance of Aphrodite who saves Odysseus, but her rescue is not a narrative element. Rather Pound shifts attention from the warrior hero to the scholar-poet, detailing the literary sources that gave him knowledge of the ancient past. And those sources evoke vividly the presence of Aphrodite as the calm, unruffled rescuer.

Take we the Goddess, Venus:

"Venerandam, Aurean coronam, pulchram, etc."
Light on the foam, breathed on by zephyrs,
And air-tending hours. Mirthful, "orichalci, " with golden
Girdles and breast bands.

Here are two theophanies I wrote for my poem, "The Double Woman," but

I could not fit them into the finished poem. I print them separately here because Aphrodite deserves the homage.

(1)

It is dawn when Aphrodite alone enters
our world. Time and Change scatter before
her august approach. She stepped forth
from a mirror, and strides across a marble
floor, whose pattern suggests the movement
of water in its restless grace of motion.

She stops at the edge of the portico, and
looks up into the vanishing stars. Her eyes

connect the stillness of things above and below,
whose calm, ultimate calm, puzzles humans, expecting
every moment only turmoil....

(2)

A silence had descended over the bustle of morning
in the palace. Servants fell silent, some fell
to their knees. The old men of the Council had
witnessed such divine piercing of the fabric of
the world. Oh, some among these graybeards
smiled and felt no fear. What they saw, what everyone saw
was a benign presence, gentle, pure, kind. Aphrodite
rose out of a hive of honey, she glided across the mosaic
floor, and people later claimed it was a music of total
beauty that accompanied her. She trailed sweetness
wherever she went, and when she reached the painting,
she touched it with nectar and ichor....

Daniel Brick

The Double Woman

Moment by moment a life-size image is being made in a room adjacent to the Tuesday soiree, a room others do not enter, a room others do not notice. Mysteriously, daubs of paint cover the canvas; colors adjust themselves; lines and shadings multiply. An impasto has built up over the hours and the weeks a lone man watches a woman appear twice in adjacent rooms, a double woman, each native to her place, one of flesh and one of paint. I alone know the double woman is one, but I am pledged to silence, and I witness a double reign of beauty reduce my friend to grief. He is so fearful he will be discovered, and humiliation will fill the place of desire. I ask him, "What can be worse than a double woman who cannot be touched as flesh or spirit? Choose one and live a life amplified by pleasure or hope." He ignores me. I tell him only poets are drawn to such a room, only those who live lives guided by poetry would be able to enter it. These secrets are sacred. A sincerely harbored secret, he tells me secretly, can bring an ancient deity to earth and sky. And now I understand his heart. He will love the double woman in the tragic orphean way in which he will be a perfect victim, forever a singer singing of perfect love. Happiness and pleasure count for nothing. Only perfection matters. And that is the riddle posed by the double woman. I am close to solving it. Just a few more songs, just a period of suffering further, and it will be solved. Unless Aphrodite chooses to manifest

herself from the foam of the sea or the blaze
of an exploding star, and solve this riddle
with the graceful ease of an Immortal who nurtures
in her single nature both compassion and love.

Daniel Brick

Liza's Future Poems Complete Their Pilgrimage

We have climbed many staircases, and
shoved open many heavy doors, but so far
none have taken us closer to our goal
of an angelic conversation. We find only
only deserted apartments, or even worse,
they are trashed before abandoned.
Sometimes new tenants are squatting
there and they are moved by our suffering.
They break bread with us, despite their
poverty, and bless us with their tears.
Others are gruff and bitter. "Oh, you fools!
On a fool's errand, no less!" shouts one
prematurely stooped and gray man. "You, ever
desirous pilgrims, always seeking a spiritual
rapport with the Lord God. In His massive,
slow indifference, HE does not see you.
Your precious time is wasted." What can
we do for one so sunk into his despair?
A few of us stay behind and recite ourselves
in his hearing. We also summoned the Angel of
Rescue for his soul. We continue our mission:
it is the completion of the composition process
which began when you typed your rough draft
and smiled because you saw it was good. And now
you know your just written poems must complete
a pilgrimage to the angels who serve the Spirit,
and they will bless and polish your human work
with their spiritual grace. And then your poems
will enter our troubled world, and accomplish
what good they are meant to achieve.

Daniel Brick

Lost Stanzas

What difference would it make
that I lose hope in writing poems
because trash talk on TV and foul speech
in the streets have cluttered the Paths of Poetry?
And you will answer, None at all, because
our poems will ascend to a purer realm, where cleansed
they will orbit the ancient spheres of harmony and hope,
and thus enhanced, they will descend in their full glory
into the hearing of those who most need this rescue.

What difference would it make
that I abandon my apartment
in Inver Grove Heights, and went to live
in my niece's cabin inside a Wisconsin forest?
And you would answer, None at all, because
you are still with us whether the place is
Inver Grove Heights or the Sonoma Desert in Arizona
or some fabled place of myth. So with good graces
go to your Wisconsin forest and renew your imagination.

What difference would it make
that we are tired of our endeavors, lose
our focus, wander in circles instead of proceeding
resolutely to our shared goals and end results?
And you would answer, None at all, because
we will always lift each other's spirits,
and the poems now buried in our souls
will lift themselves of their own accord, and greet
us at the crossroads where poets and poems unite.

Daniel Brick

The Delivery In Late Winter

I would be lying if I said
to you, "This is just a job to me."
Week after week, with snow still
piled high on both sides of the walkway,
I bring supplies to your house, and you
tell me the mounds are so tall you can
only see my black fedora when I approach
your door. "It's funny," you laugh.
"We only see a black hat bouncing
above the whiteness. But we know it's you,
and that's reassuring." Oh, yes, I'm thinking
later, it is reassuring to have one person
who never fails you, even in small matters.
It almost brings me to tears to be so trusted.
I distribute the supplies you are entitled to,
and give each of your kids an extra bag of
chocolate hearts. I often wish I could give
you a gift of candy hearts, a heartfelt gift
I mean. But that is not the way things are.
We live in times of survival, not happiness,
and I must be content to be your rescuer,
and not your special friend. Do you linger
at the door watching my fedora vanishing in the snow?

Daniel Brick

Father Barron's Foolish Happiness

Scene One

Father Barron could not think of a new subject for Sunday's sermon. He looked through his files of past sermons, all carefully typed, the margins filled with annotations. His eyes blurred and he set them aside. He paused in prayer. Those moments in his prayer-world cleansed his mind: he felt his spirit released from moods, those ever distracting interruptions to his life of service. He rested, in an emptiness of flesh he waited for the arrival of the Holy Spirit ease his soul.

That afternoon Fr. Barron performed two baptisms. For the first couple, it was their third child. The other children were old enough to participate prayerfully. He gave them small tasks to perform. The second couple Fr. Barron had married just the year before, and they were baptizing their first-born, a son. Their reverence and excitement were heavenly manna to Fr. Barron. Late in the afternoon, a teenage boy, troubled by his sex life, came for counseling. "I think the Holy Spirit through me set him on a new course," he mused. Vespers with the faithful few closed his day of pastoral duties.

Scene Two

"This day was no different from all the others this month, so why do I feel this foolish sadness?" Such was the intrusive theme of this night's meditation before his final prayers before sleep. He sat tensely in his old leather chair with Luke's Gospel in his hands, his rosary nearby. He assembled all of the day's scattered pieces into a prayerful whole... "How do I deal with this current of sadness, which flows unimpeded, muddying the surface

with dark flotsam and discarded waste? "
His internal river should flow like streams of grace.

He opened Luke to a favorite passage, and read,
"Jesus said to his parents, 'I must attend to
my Father's business.' They did not understand
his words. And his mother kept all these things
in her heart." Of course, that is what mothers do,
make their hearts a treasury of their children's lives.
And when sorrows come, as come they will, those stored
memories flourish. There is something sacred in a mother's
memory. The images of Mother Mary and his own mother
reflected each other for a single golden moment.

Was the world made eons ago to house our sufferings,
because the promised ease of The Garden must be postponed
again and again? Simeon's prophecy to Mother Mary of
Seven Swords of Sorrows came unbidden into his mind.
If the mother suffers, will not the child suffer too?
And what of the suffering we bring upon ourselves,
because we do not bend to God's will? Must we always
carry the weight of sin? Fr. Barron rose and fell to his knees.

Suddenly, the freshness of Mother Mary's prayer flashed in
his troubled self: Blessed be the Lord, for he guides
our feet into the way of peace. A dark veil had been lifted
and divine light poured over him. He grabbed a pen and wrote
excitedly: "The world was made by God for his good people
to enjoy. We fulfill God's plan for his Creation through Joy!
Our daily prayer should be a double Thanksgiving: Father,
we thank you for pouring your goodness into the world
and into our hearts." Fr. Barron, giddy with the delight
of his discovery, knew his sermon would be for weeks to come:
THE FOOLISH HAPPINESS OF BEING CHRISTIAN.

Daniel Brick

The Last Hours Of Autumn

Whoever is alone will stay alone,
will sit, read, (and)write long letters
through evening hours....

Rilke

There is a light drizzle falling. I can hear
it tapping a broken rhythm on the awnings
like a novice drummer trying to find a rhythm
which eludes him. When will he stop trying,
and like me join the silence? Soon the drizzle
will change to snow, and lie like a thick coat
of white paint over all I can see of earth.
But not yet: it is still the autumn prelude
of winter. An hour ago, I ventured outside and
saw muddy streets almost shining in the white rain,
almost - because darkness prevailed. It was intensely
quiet. I looked up into the cloudy sky, and felt
I felt warmth from distant stars. I am like a pilgrim,
who has journeyed long, and suddenly sees the outline
of the holy shrine he seeks in the very near distance.

Daniel Brick

A Night Journeyer Reflects Upon Returning

My time of Descent is finished, or rather it is fulfilled. It is never that place we attain which is changed: We are changed. We descend to fields of riches. Often the air glitters with gold, silver and multi-colored gems. If we scooped up those riches and ascended with them, would this place be plunged into greater darkness? Would our daylight world be transformed into pure wealth? I can only repeat what those of us who descend say again and again: Down there, in that primal calm, desires are changed into spiritual hopes, and as my colleague, Emily says, "Down there we enjoy the Light Show. We don't want to disrupt it. And when we return, we travel light, we are fleet." Eventually, all of us make a pledge to return from the depths empty-handed, weighing less than when we left. What we love to do is to mock gravity and greed and gluttony! You know how I recover from the hardship of descending? I play music by Haydn, because it carries no baggage, it is so light in weight and it moves so fast, it lifts itself into the air.

It flies. That is the experience of The Descent... Don't envy us. What we do is hard and dangerous. Look up into the Night Sky. Don't you see it is already morning there! It's only dark and gloomy down here. That sky bursting with the light of the universe, that is your sky, your world, your home. Treasure it....

Daniel Brick

Stars And Souls

(II)

The awakened dreamer speaks to you in your sleep.

"I will protect you from the real beasts,
the ones you don't see, they are so cunning.
With me at your side, you will never need a disguise.

"I am the song performed only in your hearing.
I am the green wings of the garden in which you rest.
I am the hummingbird's silence.

"Stars and souls exchange places.
A warm glow shines in every breast.
The nights have never been so pure."

Daniel Brick



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Blind Swimming By Max Ernst

The painting, *Blind Swimming* by Max Ernst, is in part his metaphorical illustration of the process of creativity. We see a portion of a river with a very strong current, running from the top of the painting downward. An object or entity which is traveling with this currents moves swiftly and elegantly downward. Another object with a bullet-like shape is struggling and at the whim of the current. Yet another object shaped like a blade of some kind is slicing its way upwards.

Daniel Brick



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Preface

What is NIGHT? Is it primarily a physical fact or a state of being?

From my perspective as the writer of these poems, Night is indeed primarily a state of being, conditioned by our human psychology with its complex interplay of emotion and reason and the equally complex interplay of Self and World. Symbolist writers and artists of the late 19th century used the term "soul-state," which expresses my understanding of the Interior World. It suggests the experience of NIGHT is limitless, dimensions of time and space collapse before it, and night become porous, offering many points of entry and exit to and from its Mystery.

If we define, that is, limit night to the time frame between 6 pm and 6 am, we have thereby made night the realm of darkness and made day the realm of light, and they are equal in length, namely twelve hours each. Such is the language of physical fact, but it does not reveal the night, merely points to it. The experience of night requires a more poetic use of language.

I love summer nights because darkness doesn't fall, it encroaches. It permeates the atmosphere as much as the landscape. It slowly absorbs the light and creates twilight from the mixture. Twilight is like a finely textured Persian rug that softly guides into the deeper depths of night. When darkness has spread itself across the landscape like an opaque carpet, I do not want to flood it with electric lights, but rather live for a while in that absence of ordinary light, which summons others senses - hearing, touch, smell - to make sense of the world. When John Keats follows the nightingale's flight into the dense woods, he uses his sense of smell to guide him, following a path made by the scents of white hawthorn, pastoral eglantine, violets and other flowers, and he experience the darkness not as an alien presence, a fearful time, but rather he exclaims "tender is the night" and rejoices in its beauty.

But the night hold many things of wonder in its dark estate. There lurks what peasants call the "Hour of the Wolf." There are legendary transformations of human beings into terrifying creatures. And humans who lose their way because they are blind to the dangers of this alien experience may be trapped in a labyrinth for the duration of darkness. Then dawn will descend like a column of light and raise them out of their nightmare.

The poems of this collection contain a range of encounters with the Night Realm. It is reminiscent of a message given to one of the medieval Grail Knights who is about to enter upon a dark road: "Here begin the Terrors, here begin the Miracles." The Night Journeyer needs a similar faith, or call it courage, that the region of danger is also the region of rescue.

I did not know where my poems would take me when I began to write them, but when I finished writing "The Awakened Dreamer" and read the last line - "The Nights have never been so pure." - I realized my Night Journey as a poet was over: there is no other line of verse that could provide a better closure than that one which came naturally, suddenly, unbidden but welcome to the page.

I hesitated to include the final poem, "Morning Light in Spring," because it takes the reader out of the Night Realm into daylight reality, like the "column of light" referred to in this Preface. Then I remembered a late poem by Wallace Stevens which gave the larger context of Reality, of which my poems are only a portion:

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
On one another, as a man depends
On a woman, day in night, the imagined

On the real....

That is not the theme of my collection, but it is the truth of things expressed clearly and forcefully. I may myself linger longer in the Night Realm, but when I must depart for new places, to answer different calls, these words of Stevens may be my rescue. Or at least my transport. Until that time, I am a blind swimmer in the River of the Night Realm.

Daniel Brick

The Ultimate Reader

Interlude

Interlude

Interlude

Interlude

(III)

Six (VI) (VII) (VIII) - Seven

Further Poems of the Night World

FURTHER POEMS OF THE NIGHT WORLD

by Daniel Brick

PAINTINGS

by Rene Magritte and Max Ernst

Daniel Brick



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The Awakened Dreamer

(I)

The awakened dreamer no longer dreams.
She composes dreams for everyone else.
And her sleep now is a perfect state of being.

She looks fixedly into mirrors. Mirror after
mirror she tests for its truth-telling.
The mirrors are faithful and resolute.

Clocks no longer tell time. They invite time
to loaf in the backyard, hour after hour.
The awakened dreamer joins them in lethargy.

"I will protect you from the real beasts,
the ones you don't see. They crawl soundlessly
and occupy your neighborhood. I am your shield."

(II)



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The awakened dreamer speaks to you in your sleep:

I am the song performed only in your hearing.
I am the green wings of the garden where you rest.
I am the hummingbird's silence...

Stars and souls exchange places.
A warm glow shines in every breast.
The nights have never been so pure.

Daniel Brick

A Love Poem

I am writing the simplest love poem
my imagination can conceive. The beloved
whose being this poem celebrates has not
yet appeared. There are rumors come our way
of a distant woman who rules over hearts,
a likely candidate in terms of sheer beauty.
But is that sufficient? Is beauty, however stunning,
a sufficient thread to bind us over time and space
in a wholeness of being? She draws lovers into her orbit,
she assigns each a speed and trajectory to prove
their love, or to be exposed as impostors. Either way
these lovers, one by one, crash against the possibilities
of love. Their debris, their dashed hopes, their crushed
souls will be the fundament of a New Age of Love.
I myself, who so long to summon love to my presence,
will set aside that personal quest, and write elegies
for those martyrs, whose sacrifice highlights
the simplest act of love. I must pause in homage.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

How It Happens (I)

AT ONCE I knew she was
a novice, probably her first
solo descent, nervous and tired;
the Recovery Phase of sleep and
dreams was summoning her, but
she was distracted by my psychic
proximity. She had gone astray
in the vast asphodel(*)fields
in the hinterlands of the city.
How many sincere aspirants have
gone astray because of these fields?
They flounder and fail, or do they?
All things eventually recur, there will
be the sweet-scented repose she missed
today, and its opposite will be carried
by parallel streams at the same moment.
(This poem is only concerned with
How It Begins. Isn't that enough?)

When I approached her, my left arm
outstretched, my left palm facing
down, she was relieved. This gesture
affirms Good Intentions, its power resides
in a pure mind. (It is the way two pure minds
recognize each other and connect.)"They told me
back there, where I began walking, that I would
meet a helper. Tell me quickly, are YOU that helper? "
She was smiling brightly, I was moved by her immediate
bravery. I nodded, also smiling. "Do you have a name?
I'm very grateful." She spoke with simple honesty,
I replied in kind: "Call me Aaron as I call you Rebecca."
And that was a kind of seal between us, for the time being,
as we say in English. And we were content in our disguises.

(*)Asphodel is a variety of lily, symbolic of moving across alien
realms of being; for example, Homer describes the dead wandering
in asphodel fields in the Underworld.

How It Happens (II)

A mysterious force nudged us across the Threshold of Beginnings into a wider world of expectations. It was not a physical touch, but it moved us physically. And we sensed we were breathing a different air, more abundant, more invigorating. Rebecca said this in words, I nodded silently, and we both breathed huge breaths. Our lungs filled with possibilities, that spilled over their capacities and flooded our whole body. What could I do but quote Rilke's "Spanish Dancer"? I shouted in broken rapture:

"Her dance begins to flicker in the dark room. And all at once it is completely F-I-R-E."

But you, you became the fiery dancer, right there, standing stretched upward, fully extended, fully aroused, you were a column of fire, twirling, wildly twisting yourself into the thinnest of forms, your arms reaching upward, your index fingers joined in an arrow of fire that blazed the sky itself...

Or so it seemed.

"This is only the beginning, Rebecca." She looked at me with a gaze that asked a thousand questions but could not abide even one answer. I put my hands on her shoulders, I could feel the tensile energy of her dance now cool within her. "This is good, Rebecca. This is what it should be. You are not Passion's slave. Remember that, even if I forget it, you remember it..." I fell silent, and she accepted my silence. She was growing in Nocturnal Strength. Soon (too soon?) the ordinary nights will not hold her.

Daniel Brick

The Turnings

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine.
Shelley, "Hymn of Apollo"

The year turns and we turn
with it. It is always ahead
of us, we never see its face.
We can intuit its moods from weather,
we can know its nature from climate.
This knowledge is a current from the stars.
The turnings put our lives in order.

The earth rotates and glides
through vast solar spaces. We must
acknowledge we are the children
descended from APOLLO, whose radiance
ignites our minds and hearts to glory.
APOLLO stretches his existence
across the Milky Way: Oh, Great Wheel, turn!

None of this is gambling for a god.
Prescience makes a god immune to events
in ordinary time. The Ascent is followed
by the Ecstatic Moment, and sometimes
in this unfolding is the Expectant Moment.
APOLLO approaches our vicinity: Radiance
streams forth out of his being.

We sleep and dream about the lives
of our ghosts. Are they not remnants
of fulfilled existence? Even in suspension,
we can calculate to our advantage,
and turn all turnings into a vast cycle...
In a flash, I will enter APOLLO'S
consciousness, or he into mine.

Daniel Brick

The "Father" Issue

Orpheus, are you perhaps fatherless,
except in the myths, those stories
we can just barely trust to be
true. Some have given you the greatest
honor any man born out of the Greek-shaped
world can receive: the paternity of Apollo,
the bloodline of the God of Light,
the source of both Poetry and Music.
Others claim a King and a Muse for
your parents. Either story tells why,
even as a youth, you stood every morning
at the highest point in the landscape,
erect, playing the lyre, motionless
as the Light flooded your outer being
and your inner being poured forth
song-poems of worship that ascended
on great shafts of light backward
to the shining realm of shining Apollo.
Was not this indeed a son's doing?
Or perhaps Apollo adopted you as a son
out of love for you, but forgot to list
it in the Olympian archives? And so you
were at once a favored son, a boy orphaned
by a god, a mere mortal. What a complex fate!
But each day you rose in darkness, cleared
your throat and practiced your high notes
as you climbed, flexed your fingers
so they moved nimbly across the strings
of your lyre, and so prepared, you offered
Apollo, whom you loved, the purest worship
of a man for a god. Only the nine Muses
witnessed your sacrifice, and they wept,
even as they joined you in dance and song.

Daniel Brick

Winter Solitude

for Anne Yun

And so it happened again, my friend:
I borrowed deep into winter solitude,
seeking warmth in depths but there
its heavy sleep subdued me. Earth walls
collapsed over my hibernation with the weight
of snow, isolating me, no communication
forthcoming. Words are frozen things in winter.
They lose their human warmth, become icicles
blocking speech. Even our thoughts become sluggish,
and we must endure the wait of winter before
emotions asleep are released to their green
swiftness. Oh, how I dream of that loud crack
of ice breaking which will wake us from Winter Sleep!
And then, as green things sprout and flourish around us,
our spirits also green with refreshed life, we will rejoice together.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Our Family In Spring

for my twin sister, Mary

In English when we miss someone
we say, You were on my mind,
as if this person stood upon a platform
called MIND and witnessed our thoughts
in the very instant of their origin
straight through their existence,
until new thoughts, equally yours,
crowd them out. Such is the fate
of the metaphors we invent and use.

Other times it may be a deceased
loved one who occupies our minds.
And so a sister and a brother,
even in different cities,
will feel the almost living
presence of their mother.
Perhaps both hear an echo
of her chiding wisdom, or they
recall in their separate
realities a flash of humor
that made everyone at the table
laugh. Or a long ago vacation
at a summer resort returns
in bits and pieces, until you see
a stand of aspens behind the family,
and Mom is not hiding from the camera
for once, and trees and people are whole.
Memory evokes her presence, and it is
a presence that still lives inside us.
Isn't it remarkable
such miracles still occur?

Still I wonder, how can our small
memories, even when we combine all of
our separate strands into a mental treasury,
overcome Time's fleet progress forward.
We stop and look backward into the past,

when both Mom and Dad were with us,
and reality was one and whole. I mean,
our family was one and whole, and joy
was manifold. Even as I say that remembrance
Time has taken its huge steps away from human
lives. And we must once again use
memory when reality is Time's hostage, or
dwell bereft in loss upon loss.

But recall that platform of MIND. It is
a kind of playfulness with reality
scaled down to the dimensions of childhood
delights. And you can laugh and cry
or both, because real things - trees,
photographs of picnics, house keys, knitting,
old clothes, grandma's black-bead rosary,
Dad's fedora he never wore, Mom's house-dresses
she always wore - all these things become infinitely
malleable in memory and each has its niche
where your mind welcomes it. And then the heaviness
of events lightens, even dissolves in remembrance.
Isn't it remarkable such miracles occur?

Daniel Brick

Spring Thoughts

for my twin sister, Mary

In English when we miss someone
we say, You were on my mind,
as if this person stood upon a platform
called MIND and witnessed our thoughts
in the very instant of their origin
straight through their existence,
until new thoughts, equally yours,
crowd them out. Such is the fate
of the metaphors we invent and use.

Other times it may be a deceased
loved one who occupies our minds.
And so a sister and a brother,
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presence of their mother.
Perhaps both hear an echo
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recall in their separate
realities a flash of humor
that made everyone at the table
laugh. Or a long ago vacation
at a summer resort returns
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she always wore - all these things become infinitely
malleable in memory and each has its niche
where your mind welcomes it. And then the heaviness
of events lightens, even dissolves in remembrance.
Isn't it remarkable such miracles occur?

Daniel Brick

Open Reading / Midsummer Night / (Ii)

The Heart's Song

What can you add to the Heart's Song?
How do you warm the sun's rays on a cold day?
How do you speed up the wind or the river's flow? .
Friends, this is nonsense: Just add your voice and sing!

You should know by now there are no such words, and reason fails when a simple beauty is perceived. But if you echo that beauty by singing its melody in a clear lyric voice, the world will skip a beat, and all - all will be changed!

His name is Jeremy, and his emblem
is the painting by Odilon Redon
of a young man with his eyes tightly
shut, who seems to be viewing
an inner panorama that holds him rapt.
Can you tease out the threads that
connect the man blindly swimming,
the chorus Pierre Boulez conducts,
an afternoon in a Paris studio, and
the immense unease felt by everybody
who follows the precious fleeting sounds
in the air we breathe? Jeremy can do all
of this. And here's the rub: Jeremy has lost
faith, he has lost face, he has lost his place.
He wants to help create a new world, but
he is too guilty to live in it. Why must he
carry such a weight all alone? He echoes
Stockhausen: "Humanity is one immense body,
moving through soul-states on its ascension
to spirithood. The common sadness of being human
makes us give comfort to others and receive
comfort in turn. It is so easy to live a blessed
life!" Jeremy's veiled poems will yet save the world.
Who will add an AMEN to that?

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Nightmare - Five

(V)

The Final Premonitions

There are peals of thunder getting ever closer. Brief flashes of lightning blind those who are unprepared. They will see again in due time. The tall man, dressed all in white, carries a small box across the threshold, and enters a room which dwarfs him. He places the box carefully on a silver table, and leaves the room walking backwards. The good boy helps his mother until everything is finished. He is the last one to leave the library. The door locks automatically.

The thunder is upon us. It's the same old story we've heard before, but this time we're living it. The fear of earthquakes is genuine. People kneel and touch the earth just to be reassured. Some claim to have found seams which are opening. Others look up into an empty sky with blind eyes, and stretch out their arms in a mute appeal. To whom are they appealing? The Prophet who lives next door shakes his head. He looks fixedly at the earth, and says without emotion, "It's the same old story: we are the most ancient bloodline. Our responsibilities are manifold. We must drink the whole cup of milk before it turns to blood." Lightning punctuates his words. He gropes forward with apparent purpose, passed a barn with doors wide open and no animals within. They left weeks ago, their whereabouts unknown. The earth is rumbling. Has the time of earthquakes arrived?

Daniel Brick

Waldemar's Praise-Song Of His Beloved Tove

You and I are a single
entity, a circle circling
itself, a place that exists
everywhere, a holy silence.

This poem was inspired by Arnold Schoenberg's great neo-romantic cantata, GURRE-LIEDER. The text was drawn from the poem by Jens Peter Jacobson. King Waldemar's beloved Tove has been brutally murdered by his jealous Queen. Waldemar cannot accept the nightmare reality of losing her, so he fantasizes a dream of their continued intimacy.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Book Of Nightmare - Finale

Or was this simply an occurrence
in that zone where night vision
has merged Dream and Nightmare
into one experience, in which
nothing of either is fully lost,
in which the extremes of both are
occluded, and we humans are given
a respite from the life of the heroic
endeavors and the compromises of
comic sleight of hand. Enjoy this
intermission while it lasts. I am
once again holding many things
tightly in my clenched grip.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Open Reading At The Hungry Mind Bookstore

Midsummer Night

(I)

Her name is Tracy, and she was very apologetic about her appearance, which was neither chic nor grunge, but something displaying her essence. She spoke at length about being nervous, but showed no trace of it - until she announced her first poem. She fumbled with several pages, two fell on the floor. I retrieved one but she waved it aside. Finally she looked straight into our eyes, and said resolutely, "The poems I once wrote had their origin in my cranium." She pointed her right index finger at the side of her head, as if it were a pointer, or a revolver. "I call such creations Poems of the Cranium, but now I write Poems of the Heart, that are born and reside in my deepest Self." She deftly lifted a blue pamphlet so that we could all see it, and placed it next to her heart. "My first poem is an Aubade*, by a trobairitz** in love:

Stars, fading fast
behind the sun's morning sheen,
shine a little extra light
on us, before we part.

In time, our love
will burn up our lives,
and return to you a tiny measure
of the light we borrowed today. "

The room was very quiet, Tracy was smiling,
"I'll read it again, this time slower." And so she did,
and so we responded with the fullness of our hearts.

* AUBADE: the morning song of lovers who must soon separate in the daylight.

**TROBAIRITZ: a female troubadour, singing of love and desire.

Daniel Brick

Splendor Of The Night - Late In June,2018

Already this night is a poem.
Heavy clouds overtake blue metaphors.
They convince the sky
its crystal heart must bleed.

Rain searches for its analogies.
Dark water
mixes with dark earth
and through the air

swirls their wet black smell.
Night looks at herself
in the black mirror
bordered by a million stars.

In a jade palace
the Princess of Night
watches her lover smile
in a cloud of stars.

 PoemHunter.com

VOICES FROM PORT TRAKL

Poems by Daniel Brick
Photograph by Lee Miller

These poems were inspired by the characters and scenes
in PUERTO TRAKL by Jaime Luis Huenun, Chile,2001,2008.

Daniel Brick

Orpheus In The Night

(A Friend's Remembrance)

Memory, that blessed goddess, helps us to conquer time and make the past live again in the present whenever we summon her power of recovery. How fresh still are those distant days and nights when Orpheus and I, two callow youths who felt themselves immortal, joined the doomed Argonauts. How we swelled with pride when Jason said to us before the whole crew, "Neither of you will wield an oar against the resistant waves if we are stalled. Instead you will raise your lyres and lift our spirits, as your voices cut through the sluggish air to the hearing of the gods, who may grant us fair winds." Oh, how proud we were of Jason's high regard! And in response Orpheus sang epic verse of the primal war of gods and giants and Zeus's glorious victory... My friend and I have been blessed by our skill in song and verse. Orpheus's eloquence swayed the iron will of the Lord of the Underworld, but that victory was bitter in its aftermath. And now we sing, if we sing at all, in a minor key. And our listeners seem to appreciate an art that helps them carry their sorrow-load. And so it is that we take sad themes and shelter them in nocturnal music. Orpheus is as always our leader and we follow him into dark realms of sorrow. "She lives every night for a few hours in my sleep," he tells me in confidence. "She does not speak and I never see her whole form. Often I am aware only of her listening. My friend, lately I have been exploring the mixed condition of half-sleep and half-wakefulness. Which will prevail? Have I any control? Often I cannot hold the balance and I tumble deep into the Night Realm, and all is oblivion. But I sense I am getting stronger, and shafts of the Day Realm shoot past me and

illuminate the depths. And Day and Night are equally
benign." When Orpheus spoke these words to me,
I saw many birds alight in tree branches, cock
their heads to the side and listen intently.
Perhaps the gods are listening too and may send
a blessing to Orpheus, that will spill into our lives too.

Daniel Brick

Orpheus In The Daylight

(A Friend's Remembrance)

After his wife's death Orpheus spoke little. He still sang his songs, and those of us who loved him, both his friends and fellow artists, both the relatives and servants who lived on his estate, all of us were daily regaled with the double beauty of his art and his presence. The gap between writing and composing and then performing had narrowed dramatically. He wrote words on paper in the silence of early morning, and we kept our distance, pursued our own arts or household duties, until he stirred, left behind the solitude of poetry, and joined the rest of us. He was very sociable, talked impartially about serious or trivial topics, even teased the servants out of their labor and pulled them into frivolity. What this generosity of spirit cost him was rarely evident, but at times we could see waves of grief surface and darken his features. Then he withdrew into Eurydice's garden, with only his dearest companions, among whom I was blessed. There, leaning against a cypress sapling, rested his lyre. And for hours he played just the absolute music of strings, sometimes so softly we had to squeeze our hearing for the sounds to enter our rapt souls.

Fragrances of dozens of flowers that Eurydice had planted and nurtured rose into the afternoon heat and mingled with the mellow lyre sound, and aromas and tones became one sensation. And the sun, in its apogee of glory, sent shafts of hard light over us. Orpheus led us in prayer to Helios Sun-God, but within our hearts worship unfolded for the primal god

of Light, shining Apollo, the Master Singer, the Father of Orpheus.

Daniel Brick

A Denizen* Of Darkness

Minutes dissolve into hours, hours dissolve into twilight, and I am barely conscious of having crossed the threshold of Night. It is simply a homecoming to my truest self. It is my natural condition. I stir myself, my mind detaches itself from humdrum concentration. It will be guided tonight by my soul's vision and open wide its chambers of thought to the wonders of the Night.

I must prepare myself to participate fully in the Nocturnal Music, all of us composers and listeners in the same unrepeatable moments. We will share flights of fantasy, and mountains will bend down and catapult us to different regions. I will dance between stars on the thin ropes of poetry, and dedicate an impromptu epic poem to the Angel of the Night. I will soar into the dome of the sky with Gabriel's borrowed wings and pronounce annunciations to all of Mother Mary's eager female devotees and summon all brave male warriors to complete the "jihad" of the soul...

I will return to the precincts of earth imbued with stellar knowledge. I will lean against trees and feel their sap fill my veins with green energy. Rocks I sprawl over will fill me with mineral strength. My eyes will applaud two moons: one floating amid clouds, the other coasting over the waters. The rain promises to refresh me and the winds are serious about my comfort. When I walk forth, I carry the Immanence throughout my being and I stretch out my arms to embrace the Transcendence almost within reach. Near me owls swirl in a protective circle, and impart their language to me. Just barely visible high above, a lone night hawk calls my name. My nocturnal landscape is an enormous happiness.

*DENIZEN: an inhabitant; resident; a being, animal or plant, adapted to a new place or condition

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Nightmare - Three

(III)

The Rats' Parlor

My disguises have been make-shift, nothing to dazzle your eyes, nothing to make you think twice about me. Ignore them entirely. They are meant for me, not for you. I must disguise myself or despise myself. And to that end I deliberately dress for the rats' parlor, in clothes salvaged from a trash can on a private estate, and assemble my wardrobe with no regard for fashion. Or self-respect. You understand in matters of the self, I make no contribution... Indeed, I accepted their invitation. The rats were surprisingly hospitable. They poured me a second cup of Assam tea and put more tea cakes in the table, where we sat for a leisurely two hours of chatter and laughter. I think I made a good impression at the rats' parlor. Perhaps I can build on this success. What do you think?

Daniel Brick

The General Dance

The choices I make puzzle people.

A woman, who watches over me, clutches
her favorite book called "Reality";

It conveys in plain prose the truths
of daylight reality, its thesis being
there is no other viable reality

in which human beings can prosper. It is
so committed to its thesis that the book
shuts itself at twilight and remains dormant
until dawn has scoured the last fringe of darkness
from the roof of the world. "It's a Smart Book,"
she tells me. "It knows when a new threat appears.

And it takes action. Isn't that reassuring?"

I nod my head, not wanting to be seen by this
sentient book. Another woman, closer to me in age
but less in character, chides me, "It's unnatural
to love the Night with such passion. The Night

is simply the realm of Darkness, it is at war
with the Light." She pauses and searches my face
for agreement. "The Light will prevail," she says
with Sarastro-like calm. "Those who hide in darkness
will be discovered, and...." She does not finish.

She turns away from me into an empty space, I am
negated. I know this gesture, she means the Light is
everyone's story, it fills the air we breathe
with its familiar triumph, but it is stale air to me.

I crave something new, or at least renewed. I keep
my face hollow, revealing nothing within. More people
arrive, more like-minded people. They cluster

in small groups across the square, preparing for
The General Dance. It is ten in the morning. The sun
shines down on the orchestra and assembled citizens.

The familiar strains of Ravel's DAPHNIS AND CHLOE
summons people to their daylight brilliance, and they
surrender to the music's wild wonder, and dance
with high steps and sheer abandon. I cannot resist
the rhythms and join them in a paroxysm of delight.

The Book Of Nightmare - Two

(II)

Nocturnal Concert

The concert was a black-tie and formal attire affair, by invitation only but it read like a summons more than an invitation. No smiles decorated the crowd's appearance, the mood was a heaviness of spirit. I was escorted to a waiting area, where others already stood, sunk in inwardness. And then it began - a curious blend of pretense and abandon. The mood of inwardness was dispelled, we were engaged. A gruff master of ceremonies bowed awkwardly and told us, "Be of good cheer." I could see his uniform pants and military boots beneath his formal black attire. He was frowning as he scanned our male group and checked names off of a clipboard. Or so it seemed. An elderly man stepped close to me and whispered, "The paper is blank, there are no names, only random checks." His fear was now my fear. I raised my head and looked around. There were twelve equally scared men. What does this mean? Should I dare to run? Electronic music slowly increased in volume, became strident, then faded. The military man began clapping. We did too. Forty minutes, we stood there, alternately applauding and keeping a confused silence.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Nightmare - One

(I)

A Night of Reversals

In the Night of Reversals

all is revealed,

nothing shrouded will stay shrouded.

No one holds back and sits removed

from all these bloody things, everyone

experiences the same threshold arrest.

Even dreams simply fall into random depths
of sleep and affect everyone everywhere.

This is what necromancers fear most:

when the floodgates break and dreams

rush pell-mell across the inner community

and crush order, credit and identity.

Have you stood paralyzed, unable to escape

from your own demons? It is the ultimate betrayal,

forever after you are divided against yourself,

mere toys threatening your composure.

This does not last, hopefully you will...

There is still another reversal: In the vast

interior Sea of Love, you will plunge, or

be plunged like Max Ernst's Blind Swimmers.

We feel exhausted, breathless, clumsy.

Still we keep striking and kicking, we assume

or are given a unique rhythm. The waves churn us,

and then we churn the waves. This is all that

remains to be revealed: how you excel as a water-

creature. Maybe your double blindly swims nearby.

Maybe you will swim in tandem. Maybe you merge into

a single Blind Swimming. Maybe nothing will happen,

and you will blindly swim without purpose or direction.

Daniel Brick

The Appointed Day

The Appointed Day arrived without accompanying signs. Some observers said, "It has arrived today because today is neither yesterday nor tomorrow. It simply arrived in its calendar slot." Others agreed, and were gratified their point of view was spreading through the growing crowd. It looked like a "done deal." But one eager believer kept talking, "Just because it has not revealed its arrival strategy doesn't mean diddly-squat." He meant it to be a "closure line" and a funny one, as well. Seasoned members knew the damage was done, a few left quickly, the others slouched around, twirling their fedoras, waiting for the ax to fall. It fell twenty minutes later. There were no survivors

The nay-sayers were now in charge and they made the most of it. They executed warrants, purged files, assigned duties, increased some wages, and eliminated 932 jobs effective immediately. It had all the marks of victory. Even the nay-sayers who were not drinking were intoxicated. Then at 9: 00 pm, they voted for a new Appointed Day, for some time next year. The next day the halls and corridors of power were empty. Everything was already in place. And no one among the nay-sayers spoke out of turn.

Daniel Brick

Family Life

for Liza

All of us, every single
one of us will be an orphan.
We will remember our parents,
recall the spring morning
our father showed us the yellow
beginning of each blade of grass,
just where it arises out of dark
ground into the light. We bent closer
to see that sunsplash of yellow, hardly
believing a field of green could harbor
such a secret. That is a happy memory,
I smile when I recall it. Don't you too
smile? And then there was the Saturday
I helped my Mom bake two loaves of thick
white bread. I don't remember what I did,
probably just chattered about childish
things as she labored in the kitchen.
Still my smiling presence made her happy,
and that night at supper she told Dad,
"Your son helped me make our daily bread."

Our family life begins at that moment
when mother's cries are surpassed
as the new life suddenly slips
into the world and her pain becomes
rejoicing. This is not the last time
pain and joy will overlap. Such is our
human fate: we live within opposites,
and choose the sweeter of the two.
Father looks on in pride, and mother
laughs as their new-born cries his need
for their love.

So begins the cycle of life in love,
parents and children sharing the most basic
family bonds of growth and education,
of happy appointments over time and,

yes, disappointments, too. Time will rush us through our mortality so much faster than we desire. Still in our hearts' depth we will say, "My father filled my mind with purpose, my mother listened to me in a room free of worry."

But a poet I love and trust has already written, "There was never a parent kept alive by a child's love."
How will I, no, how will WE cope with this blunt truth? Do we make ourselves as hard as fate, or do we surrender to the sorrow of loss?
Oh, we must be choose the sweeter choice: our parents rejoiced in an abundance of love when we were born; let us rejoice in an abundance of grief when they die. The circle closes and ascends to some higher space of being.

(The poet is Louise Gluck, the poem is "Adult Grief" in her early collection, THE TRIUMPH OF ACHILLES. I have followed her throughout her career, for the past five decades. Her poems are luminous, whether they deal with the dark fate or the light fate of being human. She has written the necessary poems for my life to be complete.)

Daniel Brick

I Did Not Know

for Baharak, Spring 2018

I did not know how young you are
inside, where growth happens slowly,
thoroughly, with no error caused by
human error. Things move forward toward
some predestined good set up ages ago
by those whose pulse matches nature's pulse,
and nothing so guided will fail to reach its
appointed future in its own sweet time.

I did not know you are so beautiful
inside, where beauty does not age and
collapse, as it does in the world of
fleeting time. In your interior world
beauty is linked to moments that are fixed
by multiple blessings to their most youthful
moments and no one shoves you down those
corridors of aging others suffer routinely.

I did not know how friendly you are
until I saw you standing under a cypress tree
on which three owls perched and watched you
intently. The middle one hopped closer to you
and settled deeper into his niche of awareness.
The next one, the largest, preened his black feathers
flecked with gold and opened wide his huge wingspan.
The last one pretended to be asleep but he opened
his eyes often to ascertain your presence. And then he rested.

I did not know how much you love the world
until a wanton, wandering soul traduced it, calling
its beauty vain, its people unworthy and the whole
of it doomed to an immediate Apocalypse. As you listened
tears glistened on your face and they were redemptive tears.
The wayward man bowed his head, fell silent and quickly
walked away. Had he been changed by your silent defense
of the world? Had your grief made him see the world
for what it is? Our place of residence and hope.

Our era of perception and love. Our gradual knowledge
of who we are and a wild, universal gratitude that sweeps us to JOY.

Daniel Brick

Always Nearing Home

Homage to Jack Kerouac

Jack, I cannot claim to know you.
That's the simple truth, and would it
were otherwise is my current lament.
You were born a half generation
ahead of me. Your journeys were ending
just as mine were about to begin in earnest.
What your journeys discovered and passed on
I will let historians of the adventurers
of the Beat Generation relate. What you achieved
in literature those deeply moved by your
novels and poems can best proclaim. I will
listen and learn from them: they carry
your spirit in their lives and impart it
to the world. One of them, who calls himself
The Roncesvalles Poet, a Frenchman like yourself
in background, Richard Wlodarski, keeps your being
fresh and living. He embodies your service to
The Open Road, your commitment to truth-telling,
your quest for a golden scripture that will light
our ways. Jack, we see this clearly now, forty-nine years
since you lived among us, you were the modern Odysseus:
again and again you launched on new voyages,
always nearing home you kept venturing outward,
seeking new spaces those coming after you could
occupy, new homelands left in the wake of your
voyaging. We sense you still, out there, summoning
us to match your adventure to seek a Golden Eternity.

Daniel Brick

The Poet Of The Lyric Voice

Interlude

sorrows

me

Nighttime is A Homecoming - A Sonnet

children, vexed intimate relations, and infected

The ice lake we stand on

If you wonder,

stay with me? Then let us share

for my family and my kingdom. I want to sit

to grow our meager living. Compared to the Solar Glory
of the Olympians, we live a nocturnal existence.

Let the Moon shine its dark glory into our lives,
and they will shine with the deepest glow of Darkness.

you and me. Where we find these ancient

I hear a low hum of music nearby.

that place from which Lord Odysseus fled in fear. We feel

The Right Moment

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night - Eleven

(IX)

Orpheus

The whole Night I spent searching
for you within the four walls of Sleep.
I sang the Song of Love,
the shining ebony walls parted, and
my body floated above the bottomless floor
of Sleep. Although my eyes were closed,
I saw clearly every object clinging to
its own nightspace, fearful that
a random light shaft might loosen its grip,
and it would fall down the vast vertical
length of Night... I searched
the Eight Chambers of Sleep, shared by
the living and the dead in the Night Realm.
Only the Fourth I avoided where creatures
that hate humanity lurk in readiness.
In two chambers I sensed your recent presence,
traces of color and sound still came to
my senses. In the awesome sobriety
of this dark realm, I was intoxicated
by this awareness. My resolve was as tight
as a stretched bow, and the arrow of expectation
was released. It showed me a path to the Fifth
Chamber. No further magic flight aided me.
I had to climb the high plateau of this immense
chamber. An exhausted man reached the top,
refreshed only by the ambiguous night air
swirling around me. But you were not there...
I slid down the opposite slope into
the sloshy ground between Chambers Six and Seven.
In the turgid air, I saw our spiritual rival,
Melatron, sitting on his golden throne. Even in his
disgrace his beauty is startling. He knows me, but
he greets only those who stoop to beg for his unholy
help. Your image shining in my mind, swelling
in my heart, gave me the strength, and I left him

in his regal solitude. I arrived at the hinterlands
of the Eighth Chamber and witnessed a dire sight:
a burning lake or river sent columns of fire
into the blank sky, sucking out breathable air.
I knew my journey was over, my quest for you
once again frustrated. But do not be sad for me:
every step I take brings me closer to you, and
in time you too will take a Night Journey toward me.
We may, on one of these nights which stretch
before us without end, cross paths in a paroxysm of joy.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night - Twelve

(X)

Eurydice

I see things I never saw on earth.
I see circles wheeling inside larger
circles, moving slowly upward into
an arc of purest light. I see squares
multiplying and piling on top of each
other, forming columns that surprise me
when they slowly lift and vanish into
another angle of space. And triangles,
formerly locked together, separate and
float into other dimensions... My eyes
are dazzled, my mind is opened, the Truth
of the Cosmos fulfills my being. But other
times I see a wide plain, almost invisibly
white, stretch across the horizon of my sight.
Small hills colored pink rise inside this gentle
landscape. It is pure and lovely and perfect
to my eyes. Nothing on earth prepared me
for this Over-Much of Beauty. Has it not been
my home since forever? Still I dimly recall Hermes
guiding me to this place and hovering nearby as
I awoke fully to its glory. Oh, Hermes, kindest of gods.
your luminous presence is always welcome in this
place where solitude is never loneliness. Others like me,
spiritual creatures who carry no weight in their hearts,
pass by me and in a double trance we acknowledge
each other, but nothing further is required. What was my life
before this perfection? I dimly recall a passionate man,
his vexed life caused sufferings to accumulate. I only hope
Hermes gives him a charming niche in the Night World.
It is enough....

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night - Ten

Interlude:

Oppositions within the Night Realm

(1)

Night is not a place of refuge.

It does not provide sanctuary or safety.

It is not a hollow tree into which you can climb,
and taking shallow breaths, wait for your pursuers
to disperse.* Even if they disperse, you will not
be free, because The Night does not make common cause.
You will prevail or fail on your own. No one in the distances
of darkness will appear armed in your cause for succor
or defense. The Night has its secret goals, it sets
them in a secret accord with itself and never wavers.

* Edgar, KING LEAR, II, iii

(2)



PoemHunter.com

The Night covers you in her darkness.

It is only her first gesture, others will follow,
some so subtle you won't even realize she has helped.
Like the wide stone arch, splashed with moonlight.
it will house your secrets in silent depths.

And the waters beneath the forest floor will assume
a rhythm matching your heart-beat, you and the Earth
making a single life pattern. And the owls, your spirit
animal according to Marie of Ireland, will penetrate
your skull and fill your brain with the quiet, lasting
wisdom of the Night-Realm. NOW you know what
so many others refuse to learn.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night - Nine

(VIII)

Last night, a mild evening in early October,
while listening to Shostakovich's Second
Cello Concerto, I gradually became aware
of two Moons. One was the familiar Moon
which looms or dangles or floats in solitary
splendor over my Twin Cities, and splashes
a white carpet across the lawn beneath my balcony.
This must surely be the Moon of My Inspiration
because month after month it presides over
my creation of poems. My heart stretches forth
in gratitude for that lunar abundance.

The other Moon rose invisibly
casting its transparent light
over the Russian's music which speaks
both eloquently and sarcastically
in its ever changing moods. That music
cast its spell over me and the two Moons.
In our characteristic ways, we were shining
in the sheer joy of two kinds of moonlight.
My soul, ever in readiness for such a summons,
joined Music and Moons, all four blended
into one nocturnal being, completely enclosed
in the perfection of the moment, as if Time
had harmonized its components into a single frame.
Such is that Over-Much of Beauty we witness as Earth's creatures.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Nightfour

Interlude

The crescent Moon is as bright as a master samurai's sword. It has already sliced the clouds from the sky, and they tumbled haphazardly below the horizon. The sky is empty, only its dark blue color attests to its existence. But its grandeur extends for one thousand feet across the rocky terrain, a blue cushion punctured by gray knives. The air that bleeds invisibly rises to sustain us.

Nothing is left to disturb the scene's calm, unless my roiling thoughts might cause such harm. I declare an interlude, a respite from effort, even the effort to be silent. L E T I T B E
My Will I suspend. It has caused enough turmoil to no good end. My thoughts I abandon because their task finished, I move on to a different cognition: They created this Moment with the help of Beautiful Language. It is enough... Let Be. Assume the posture of statues, become frozen music for a while.

Daniel Brick

Winter Twilight On An Ancient Battlefield

You arrived early on this one-time
battlefield, and encountering no opposition,
declared yourself victor. I arrived after you,
and saw your back turned to me. Had you seen me,
and turned away? Or have you been staring,
preoccupied with grief, at something over there
where an ancient battle was decided in favor of
an upstart, a malcontent, a traitor. In those days
began a weeping which swept through people and their
children, made domestic animals ornery and infected

nature with dark dawns and dreary days. Are you wrapped
in that sorrow still? My eyes strain to see you whole
in the diminishing light. The iced lake we stand on
hides its danger in snow drifts, but two heavy bodies
and the weightless ghost of the murdered king may yet
collapse these wintry defenses and then we will all
be losers... We are as far from each other as we
will ever be. No shared triumph, or disaster, will
bond us. Reconciliation is as remote as the crack
of spring thaw in the frozen air... It might be easier

to resolve our impasse with column after column of knights
in heavy armor, their horses festooned with symbolic plumes,
both men and horses eager for the clash of arms
bashing and smashing their way to victory and death.
They believe the ancient wisdom embodied in water and rock of
this land: if you have questions, they will be answered;
if you have answers, they will be confirmed. If they wonder,
Is this life I am living real? they go into combat to find out.
For us no such simple solution exists, and as we stand here
a whole season of stillness and silence has passed us by.

I wait for you here
in this cold region for body and mind,
trying not to look like I'm waiting for you.
I hear a faint sound of shifting waters
below the surface we stand on. You must hear
it too. Is that the last sound we will share?

When you finally turn to face me there will be
only be footprints in the snow, and
in the distance a blot of color
that is my silent departure across the frozen grass.

Daniel Brick

The Real Proof

The man in the pale blue suit, acknowledged as a Defender of Christianity, was squeezed between a narrow hallway and a spacious lecture hall. He raised his arms almost in a gesture of prayer as dozens of his readers clustered into his space, eager for his personal regard and his unique message meant for no one else. He was trapped but he displayed both cheeks and an amiable manner. On a large table his seven books were piled, like towers, housing his knowledge which had aged into wisdom. A young woman, graced with a springlike loveliness, and slender enough to squeeze closer, stretched her right hand across the table. He grasped it just as someone behind pushed her, and two of the towers collapsed. The look of shock on her face moved him and he said, "Don't worry, young lady. This accident means we will never forget our meeting." She rallied. "Oh, Professor, your books are the menu in the feast of my life!" He was suddenly at a loss, but it didn't last. "Young lady, my books are meant to collapse. They are just objects filled with dusty words, but you are the living reality." Their smiles bonded them. Late that night, the subject that would be his magnum opus gently eased into his thinking. He saw her smiling face when the title appeared to him:
THE SAINTS AMONG US: REAL PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE.

Daniel Brick

Re My Next Talisman

What shall I carry as my talisman
now that all the previous ones have
lost their magic. It just drained out
of them, one by one. Sometimes a puddle
of brown liquid was left behind, other times
it was wisps of smoke, quite acrid, made us
choke. And only once there was the smell of
something sweet and light. I can't recall
the details of refreshment and the leadership
issue is fuzzy, but it was just heaven on earth.
For a while... It's been four days - ninety-six
hours without a talisman, and, listen to me, it's
rough, rough. A man gets accustomed to his talisman,
and it's just not possible to be bereft this long.
I have a reputation to maintain, not the outer one!
that's your issue, I mean what makes up the chords
and fibers inside. And I am both the accused and
the judge. There is no clear exit for me. So you see,
right? You s-e-e... you must be vigilant,
I must bebe resolute, we must be together in this...
I remember - but memories won't help - still I remember
a talisman from my grandmother, her simple black-bead rosary
was warm when I held it. Of course, it must have been, you know,
on a window ledge and the sun warmed it. It couldn't have been her touch that
warmed me. Of course not. But still....

Daniel Brick

An Account Of Despair, With A Prophecy

Do not think for a moment that I abandoned
quotidian reality because of despair...

No, despair is not my answer, and never will be -
but despair has haunted me, tripped me when I was
distracted by happiness, even invaded my psyche
where my poetry resides fully empowered and
attentive to the Muses' flights. And despair
plays no role in my drama, not even an antagonistic
role, like Iago's conniving charm, or Macbeth's
valiant fury, or Edmund's anger at the world's
relentless circling of haphazard fortunes.
This tragic knowledge is my defense against
the subtle, spidery slants of despairing moods.

Have you seen a human being after despair has webbed
their destiny and cinched its victory over their
future? Brace yourself: this is graphic: their sex
shrivels to a wrinkle of flesh, their brain dissolves
and its sap seeps out of facial orifices, the beautiful
proportions of torso and limbs are twisted, and finally
the afflicted one is stunned, incapable of sound or
sense, unable to participate in tea party talk, the strategy
of playing chess, or a day of indulgence on the water,
with friends whose images are now trapped in mental repose,
in the caverns of a once free and supple mind...

You are witnessing the flaws of our initial creation,
amplified by generations of inner conflicts,
with psychic forces in disarray, when the center
is weakened by despair and spins a circle
of futility. From an Olympian distance, we sense
a ruin within. How can we rebuild what has crumbled?
How can we restore the circular motion of energy spent
and energy recovered? Or must we retire to the still
center and join the blank-eyed ones whose despair
numbs them to crisis and solution?

Some among us are already pursuing a familiar solution:
they are summoning the gods and goddesses to return,

take up residence on mountains and in the harbors of outer space and exert their powers in tandem to restart the ancient machinery of the universe. It can happen once again, but do we want to surrender our spiritual autonomy to these fractious, limited deities? They will force us to stop our self-directed evolution to Human Divinity. They will impose their limits on our cosmic destinies. We may all find ourselves wrestling with despair, if we abandon our future majesty for a present security...

There is a prophet in the seventh sphere, a fully human seer who has bent the knowledge of the cosmos into a human grasp of vast material powers that rival the primeval deities whom we are summoning to stifle our endeavors. We are facing terrible losses, unmitigated suffering, we will become the new Prometheus, oppressed like another Sisyphus, wearied like Odysseus from long toil. We will bear new wounds for every scrap of power we gain. We will rejoice in victories that those surrendering to despair will proclaim defeats. We will be a ragged bunch of warriors, nursing our wounds even as we acquire deeper ones. Once we saw Life as a Pageant and we were exultant, we spent many decades building in unity, tearing down in disunity, rebuilding with a new faith in our species as one nation. We achieved a Unity of Purpose that was squandered, and when we fell in disgrace, we knew we were our own enemies. But the prophet of the seventh sphere summons us to PRIDE. Pride is gratitude to self for genuine achievement. Let us declare ourselves a prideful people, and live our lives in a Pageant of Glory, and grasp a Greatness of Being for all who strive to achieve the Divinity of the Human Race.

Daniel Brick

A Prayer Of Thanksgiving To The Trinity

Composed for Loretta Gavin by Daniel Brick

Most Holy Trinity,
You have blessed me
with Life, Salvation, Truth.
Your gifts have made me
more than I could be by myself.
I rejoice that You have chosen me
to be enveloped by Your Love and Grace.

Lord God,
I am one of Your children in the grace
of Your abundant fatherly love. You have cared
for me for ten decades. It has been a wonder
past expectation. My response is to praise You,
to fulfill Your Will, to live everyday in the light
of Your Holy Catholic Church, and to serve You through Eternity.

Lord Jesus,
I bow gratefully before Your mercy and Your sacrifice
which opened the Gates of Paradise for our salvation.
You blessed my husband and me with fourteen dear children
we raised to serve You faithfully. Our joy was ever their
joy, our hope was ever their obedience to Your Will,
our prayer is ever our family's reunion in Your Eternity.

Lord Spirit,
Jesus sent You, Holy Spirit, to abide in our hearts
after His Resurrection. You have ever since been
the presence of God within us, as close to us as
our heartbeat, filling our minds with the highest Truths,
making our bodies Temples of Divinity, making our souls
worthy of the Life Everlasting proclaimed by the Angels and Saints.

Daniel Brick

Refugees

We are a graceless bunch,
squeezed together on the narrow
road south. What else can we do
but run away, leaving behind more
cargo than we can take? Even so,
the road south is littered
with abandoned possessions.
How will we begin a new life?
By the time we reach our new home
in whatever village takes us in,
we will be naked, stripped of
possessions and... hope... and
vigor. The last thing we will carry
into our new life is God's mercy.
Is it the hard haul over this muddy road
that keeps us silent, or is it shame?
Behind us, our enemy advances
with the slow certainty of victory.
Our soldiers abandoned their weapons
and their dead on the field of defeat.
Weapons and corpses sink into the mud.
Two of the retreating soldiers, one
of them grievously wounded, help me
pull my cart, carrying my wife and
three children. The rest is just cargo.
The soldiers and I exchanged names,
then set to work pulling and grunting.
Just ahead of us the road slopes downward
to the river valley. There our new
neighbors will ferry us to their neutral
country. We pause while my wife helps
the wounded soldier. The other soldier, his arms
akimbo, looks fixedly backward toward defeat
and death. The sun is shining brightly back there.
(This poem was inspired by Ingmar Bergman's 1968 film
SHAME, about the plight of refugees during a war
they cannot comprehend.)

The Book Of Night - Four

Interlude

I swear the nights the nights are too much
Nights when poems are made and unmade
Nights when we are tempted
to leave the substance for the Shadow
Nights that I press secretly against my heart
Andre Breton

The crescent moon is as bright as the sword
of a samurai master. It has already sliced the clouds
from the sky, they tumbled haphazardly below the horizon.
The sky is empty, only its dark blue color attests
to its existence. But its grandeur extends
for one thousand feet across the rocky terrain:
a blue cushion punctured by gray knives.
The air that bleeds invisibly rises to sustain us.

Nothing is left here to disturb the scene's calm,
unless my Faustian thoughts cause such harm.
But night itself empowers me to declare an Interlude,
a respite from effort, even the effort to be silent.
Let be. My will I suspend. It will not resist.
My thoughts I abandon. They know their way home.
Together we have created this nocturnal moment
with help of beautiful language. It is enough.
Let all of them assume the posture of statues,
they can become frozen music for a while.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night - Five(Iv)

A part of me does not surrender
fully to Night despite its immemorial
sway. Should I awake before dawn
and feel the stab of lost loves,
I am plunged into Sympathy for All.
I wonder how many preventable
are poised on the edge of realization,
as I sleep in oblivious pleasure? What if
I stay awake and tighten my resolve, will
my vigilance stop a deep sorrow before it finds
a final niche from which to launch its
mission of upheaval of body and soul? My cry
in the Night is ever, Let me help! Let me do good!

Was I asleep while the others suffered?

Vladimir

"Waiting for Godot"

Daniel Brick



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The Book Of Night - Seven

Interlude

from THE GARDEN SONNETS

by Daniel Brick

I am watchful through the night
hours of solitude so different from
the solitary day. Bright day ignores me
as he pursues his glory across the sky.
Night is my dear companion. She nestles
against my shoulder as I gaze upon her
serene face. Sometimes she pretends to sleep,
so I can close my eyes and sink into
her boundlessness....

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Book Of Night Six

(V)

I have no use for a blanket,
however beautifully it would
wrap itself around my Dreams.
I have Night itself to shelter me:
I am more likely to be broken or
lost than cold. I just imagine
my ancient past as a hairy beast,
grunting rather than complaining,
and immediately I feel animal
warmth rise and spread through
every joint and crevice of my body.
As for that concern of so many
waking hours, human loneliness,
the Night is older than the need
for another. Dreams themselves
vary in value since that first
dream showed Adam his future bliss
and he rejoiced in anticipation
of something utterly new. Wonders
are still borne upon the winds.
You have Night's majestic Panorama:
it has replaced both warmth and companionship.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night Eight

(VII)

Like a mirage, the night wavers around four a. m. It's as if dark and light performed a dance of alternating brilliance, but it threatens to spin out of control and cause a disaster throughout the fields of the night. Night owls can attest to this fear of collapse. It cannot be hidden or disguised. But I have a sense for these things. It derives from my experience, and though I am pledged to silence about this mystery, I will tell you what I can. When we reach the threshold of the moment of entry, I will know in a final flash of clarity, if we can proceed...

Then follow me with slow urgency and recite the delights of your heart until they are more persuasive than a perfect day in spring. If your truth reveals your beauty, I will no longer conceal my love. Should this fail, and the threshold closes, I will return to my ancestral home, alone but free, sad but wise.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night Three

(III)

That other part of you, the part
you seem to disparage, that light-
engendered part may not agree with
descent as a homecoming. Be patient,
oh Soul, with your Spirit. Do not
assume one contains the other:
that would be a fatal reduction
of your being. Shhh... It is
time to be silent and act your part...
This is what you must hear and heed:
If you descend without properly
processing your intent, you may
become confused, and the journey will
be transformed into an immense weight
you must carry on your back or in your
arms. Or you will stumble on your way
over smooth pavement and lie for hours
staring into an empty sky. You will be
assaulted by strange incantations that
prophecy only doom. I am not allowed
to show pity for your suffering,
it must run its course through your
psyche. You have been warned not
descend yet. You have a mission
still ill-defined. If fear of
Darkness does not restrain you,
then fear of punishment must be
imposed. But when your mind is
cleared, your spirit lifted,
your soul purged, you will be free
to join our descent. It is only
a matter of time: and we serve Eternity.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night Two

(II)

The Nightscape is always a new place on each descent even for an adept, like myself, who speaks both languages in my poems, often only semi-consciously. But my memory treasures impressions of both realms. At times, I sense them as a whole, a harmony of sorts, although highly dissonant... These words may be merely a human's human wishes, it's only the poetry that provides their wings to soar in imaginative flight. You see, scattering wishes and collecting hopes are human endeavors I endorse by my faith in language. The nightscape is always open to those who descend. That is an absolute truth. You are engaged in a homecoming when you make the soul-journey downwards, always and everywhere down, to the realm of the secretest beings of the psyche, never to be named, never to be summoned. They know their cue. You must be still, settle your affairs, quiet your feelings, and await the signal in your heart.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Night One

(I)

DARKNESS IS OLDER THAN LIGHT:

The first thing to shine, and announce its presence was Darkness. It was a marvel then, simple but striking: Darkness was just one thing, but it was mountainous and unmovable, it piled higher and higher, it sank deeper and deeper, and never for an instant did its shining diminish or alter its intensity. It was simply a time of single things, there was no blending, no uniting and consequent union, no rushing together of things, mightily pulled toward each other. It was just a still, silent, stolid sphere of dark shining...

And all lights were trapped within its vast extent. Small rays and long photons, long rays and small photons, single things composed of Light, squeezed through dark corridors and condensed into shining globes whose igniting created a new realm - light interposed with darkness, a light-world equal to its parent Darkness, engendering its own lives across Time... across Space... We human beings are composed of an inseparable bond of Darkness and Light. At home in both realms, we belong to neither wholly: we are creatures of a divided legacy....

Daniel Brick

The Seer Instructs A Callow Youth

Why bruise your knees praying
for benefit to yourself? Every god
and goddess you implore already knows
your desires and your impatience.
I assure you they are obdurate.

Do not take offense at my bluntness.
I am merely wiping a slate clean.
Listen to me with your mind fully open,
and I promise: you will end this day
with a newly opened heart...

The finest prayers are those offered
for the benefit of another person.
Begin such praying before this day ends,
and you will cleanse the very air you breathe.
An irresistable sweetness will rise

in your heart, and you will be the first
to feel its delight, but it will spill forth
into the world and refresh even strangers.
And you will be lightened as well as
enlightened. Do you not right now feel

a heaviness in your heart's chamber, even though
no loved one resides there? That is the weight
of self, a false self you must carry even as it drags
you down. This false self has buried your true self
deep in your heart's chamber. It is a prisoner,

unjustly incarcerated by an evil judge. One thing
I can tell you: you must be free. You must set a date
on which you will meet your true self. Its liberation
will not require hours of praying for your benefit.
It will happen silently and imperceptibly,

as you open the chamber of your heart. Your heart will
glow, your mind will rejoice, and your true self
will appear in all of its natural glory. You will feel

the weight of your false self lifted, and you will not lose anything in the experience... Just imagine

your joy if you were reunited with a twin sister you had lost in the chaos of living. Would not a deep wound be healed? Would this not make joy a permanent resident of your two hearts? Yes, yes, such will be the joy when your true self

lives in the center of your being. You will no longer pray for your benefit. You will be a chalice overflowing, a stream that replenishes dry fountains, a lamp that never dims but shines even brighter when darkness approaches. And you will find a fresh joy in praying for the benefit of others.

Daniel Brick

Mortal Men

Drawn from The Odyssey of Homer, Book Ten

We sleep night after night
wherever we collapse. On the white sands
of the sea shore, or in the inland forest
of flowering trees, or even near the fountains
below the witch's palace. But never, never
do we venture into the precincts she occupies.
Wine from her storerooms is abundant and we drink
day and night. Lithe maidens serve the wine
in a gracious silence, but we dare not touch them.
They appear to be very young and completely
at ease in their beauty. They may well be immortals,
like the witch herself. I saw some of my companions
stare at them imploringly, but never did even one
respond. Is this from innocence or cunning?
Myself I turn away if I catch my eyes fixed
on their serene faces and serene limbs.
Such promised happiness is not for mortals,
except for exceptional ones, like Lord Odysseus.

We only see glimpses of our lord, as he crosses
lanes between the interiors of the witch's palace.
But I saw him just last week, staring imploringly
into sea and sky. Two maidens glided to him,
one on each side. The taller one whispered into his ear,
the other took his left hand and guided him gently
through a jeweled doorway. It was surely a summons
from that woman with such terrifying power over men.
How can she turn men into pigs? Her victims told us
they were grunting despite their human minds,
they were paralyzed at the threshold of Death,
and they strained their eyes to warn us,
but by then Lord Odysseus had subdued her
with the power of eros. Rumor has it that
Hermes is our protector, and Zeus above him...

This island is a perfect place, but
a perfection it is fatal to grasp.

So we bludgeon ourselves with fine wine,
as Elpenor did and we hope not to suffer his fate.
Whatever we do - feast, drink, lounge under the afternoon
sun, sleep or talk quietly - we do under a pall
of fear. When will Lord Odysseus return us to the sea?

Daniel Brick

Day And Night

I An Incident at 11: 00 am

I met a man who told me
Night is a broken thing which
will never again be whole
as Day is whole, and no measure
of wishful thinking can change
the reality of a glorious twelve-
hour day crushing the dark remnants
of night. At this point in his tirade,
he smiled wickedly, and his stare cut
through me. "You're a broken thing too,"
he mocked. I felt my brain slump
in a corner of my skull. "This isn't -
right," I thought. "There's something
sacred here." I implored the man of
day's ascendancy, "Partners in Time,
surely day and night are partners,
they make one whole. The brokenness
of one is the brokenness of both."
He smiled wider as if my statement
cinched his victory. I tried to speak
again to defend my beloved night.
My lips flapped but no sound came
forth. And my thinking I could see was
blissfully asleep. Blissful. Sleeping.
Are they not the genuine experience of the night?
He sauntered away from me, into a blast of sunlight.

II An incident at 11: 00 pm

I found him trying to slip
through a corridor at the edge
of daylight, already pierced
with tendrils of darkness.
"Oh, it's you," he said. Was he
fearless? Resigned? Bored?
Suddenly I felt a startling sympathy
for him: he was neither my enemy

nor my friend. What we became
this moment would witness and
certify. The sympathy within me
swelled and unfolded the way
darkness takes possession
of a field of lilies or poppies
or lilac bushes in early spring.
I had to attend to these things
of the night. Let him sleep or
cower in fear, but I would not be
the agent of either night move.
I spoke to him in the voice of
a night owl, the voice of a caressing
nocturnal breeze, a voice of soft
shadows: "The night invites you
to join in her mysteries. The night
blesses you whether you stay or depart.
She is a queen who reigns but exercises
no power." I withdrew quickly, so he
could make his choice. I left him
alone and free, in a time zone
equally filled with darkness and light.

Daniel Brick

Morning Light In Spring

Light shafts shot down
from Heaven all morning, and
I was blind to both the Light
and the places illumined.
What made me live a mere blind
existence despite the flowing
around me? Why didn't I rush
into the wide open air, and wait,
a mere terrestrial, until a single
shaft of photons, flush with the sun's
energy and the morning's stamina,
enveloped me - body and soul together?
I have become so catholic in my sentiments,
I want only what others grasp as meaningful.
However distant from others, this sunlight shower
is such a universal thing... By early after-
noon, I had set aside my mind's pretense of
significant activity and both mind and sight
sought the reality of Light pouring to Earth
from Heaven. It searches for a worthy recipient
of its power and grace. Was I too late in my decisive
move into the Light? Has the Light begun
to withdraw on its own accord? Has Time
added itself to this drama, placing other
limitations on my tardy reaction? Must I now
recreate all this energy in the interior
world? Or should I resume my chosen activity,
until a shaft of Light summons me as if by name?

Daniel Brick

A Love Story In Spring

The first time I said, "I love you,"
the words were fresh and pure, and I spoke
the simple truth, and you said simply, "Likewise."
Our world was so small: just a couple of
villages along a river valley, a deep forest
between them, and scattered farm steads with gardens,
and then a vast wilderness stretched beyond our reach.

The second time I said, "I love you,"
I had learned your secret name. It made
my other words blend into a festive singing,
and made you smile, take my hands and lead me
into a dance of hundreds of couples, all bonded
by Spring. We partnered all night long, and
dawn found us still dancing along the river's shore.

The third time I said, "I love you,"
our hair had turned white and a sweet
silence filled the space between us more often
than words. The fragrances that poured
from the garden we enjoyed more than worldly
wealth, and we measured happiness by the number
of springs we shared, each one more beautiful.

The last time I said, "I love you,"
you hovered over my prostrate, bedridden
body, and smiled the widest smile of greeting
in all the world. Then you melted into my being,
and there was no space we did not occupy together.
The words had all been spoken already, the final
Spring had past, then I expired, and we are one.

Daniel Brick

The Difficult Journey To The High Place Of Truth

We journeyers are tired in body,
our spirits are spent,
but that is next to nothing
because we have a genius for
recovery. Meanwhile, our souls
are strengthened by a secret
ministry that operates both day
and night. They rival now the deep souls
of the ancient ones in our sacred poems.
Their souls, never weary, never withdrawn,
prevailed over the claims of the flesh
and the sickness of the mind. Even now
my body aches with hardships of our climb,
and my mind is sick with desire for
the simplest pleasures. But -
the fibers of my soul are taut
with original energy that compels
base desires to desist and they
simmer down to nothing. And then
my mind can take flight in its search
for truth. What is Soul? Soul is Self
with something fused within it: a brief
answer that resolves many questions,
a rare courage become commonplace,
a love that has no shadow existence.
Soul is the missing page that completes
an essential manuscript - one that tells
us how to live lives worthy of glory...
A high wind slashes across cloud banks
and the sky bleeds dawn red over our
determined host. We will not stop, we will
not even rest, until the night reveals
what the day conceals: our dreams carry
this sacred truth, our steadfast souls
own it and protect it. It will begin
an Age of Wonder when it is set forth
from the high place of truth we will soon reach.

The Death Of Orpheus

They knew they could not out do
him, those maenads screaming
in a confusion of dissonance, while
he strummed one last diatonic melody
that cut through their rage and ascended
above all violence to the hearing of his
father, the supremely calm and self-possessed
god of the lyre, Phoebus Apollo. And so they
ripped his head from his shoulders, and tossed
both head and lyre into the River Hebrus on its
course to Lesbos. They were exhausted by their
brutality, and sank into a troubled sleep.
But the head kept singing sweetly as the lyre
carried it like a barge of death into the realm
felicity. How warmly he sang, how tenderly
his voice caressed both sounds and words. Earth
was so enamored of his music that she brought
the whole of it into her being, and we earthlings
benefit from this music in birds' songs, the motion
of water, the sigh of winds and crack of thunder,
and in the harmonies of our souls in the oneness of
flesh and spirit. His voice is embodied everywhere
we call Earth, perhaps even in our identity as
Earthlings are traces of the god Orpheus. Whenever we
hear music, it is Orpheus stretching his being across
space and infusing its openness with his immense soul.

Daniel Brick

An Incident In Early Spring On The Highway Of Pilgrims

The overcrowded bus tumbled down the highway under a pale blue March sky. All of us passengers, friends or strangers, had been traveling through the night, and we were a quiet group, weary from miles of rough roads and cramped seats. I was reading without much interest the latest novel of a famous writer. But I was distracted by a child, three rows ahead, watching me intently. His face was calm and gentle; there was no guile in his gaze. I turned away and tried to read my book. I was startled when the child was suddenly standing next to my seat, talking casually like an adult. But he was holding the thread of a balloon of many colors, which tugged the thread, anxious to ascend. "Lady," he began, "You look sad, so I'm giving you my balloon which made me happy last night." Surprised, I replied, "Oh, thank you, but I can't take your balloon away from you." He replied quickly. "You're not taking it, I'm giving it. My grandfather told me, When you're happy, Ivan, give a piece of that happiness to someone else. You don't need all of it. So, here's your balloon." And he deftly wrapped the thread around my left wrist. "Now both of us will be happy. My grandfather told me about sharing happiness, but he said it was grandmother who told him. So, I guess, grandmother was the real angel, because no one told her. She just knew." He squeezed in next to me. "Lady, do you believe in angels?" And I responded immediately because he was so sincere. "Yes, I very much believe in angels." He looked satisfied, and was quiet for awhile. "Lady, I have special dreams about people, and last night in my dream I saw the two of you,

standing very close together, and there were tears in the eyes of both of you." I was speechless, but I knew he was telling the truth. "Lady, just because you don't see him at this moment doesn't mean he isn't here. Time is really big, he might be lost in it, but he will see the balloon when you launch it." He smiled silently, then ran back to his family, and they got off the bus. I wanted to wave to him, but he was talking to his younger siblings. The bus lurched on.

I reached my destination, and it seemed secondary. I walked along a grassy lane, under a late afternoon sun, came to a small lake lined with trees just beginning to bud, and, after saying a brief prayer, released the many-colored balloon. It leaped into the air, a breeze up there caught it and it tumbled around, but then broke free and rose up and up, into a flash of light that hurt my eyes. Now the balloon was free, even of my eyes. Now I had to trust the air, the wind, the sky... Oh, my friend, a child has blessed us.

Daniel Brick

My Next Poem

Is it waiting for me to find it
outdoors? Covered with the snow
that fell this morning, just a dusting
of powder snow, but sufficient to render
it invisible in a material world.
It has no inner light to signal its presence.
It could be trapped just below the third
step of a steep staircase. When I walk over it,
my shadow briefly touching it, it remains mute
though composed of words, silent unavailing words.

Or perhaps my next poem will never become
words on paper, because it is already resident
in her heart where she cherishes its wordless
message as it swells to fill interior space
with our mingled good wishes for the other,
both of us exerting a primal urge of such
spiritual intensity that the poem occupies
space and measures time, thus partaking
of both material and immaterial worlds.

My next poem could be lodged within a poem
by Denise Levertov: her words cleverly jumbled
and then rearranged will reveal something of
my poetic worth when carefully detached from
the body of her poem. And they will retain
the silver sheen and luminous truth of her art:
"To make / of song a chalice, / of Time, / a communion wine."

Or I can sit in this large chair, leaning
over this large desk, with scattered papers
of unfinished poems, stalled or still-born
or stubbornly resisting closure. Is my next
poem one of these unruly children of my mind?
Perhaps for my next poem I will surrender
to such misrule, join my proper speech to a chaos
of possibilities, and let the words find their
desired niches, as sound and rhythm toss them
in a riot of untrammelled creativity. This next poem

will be dedicated to the spirit of Sir John Falstaff.

Daniel Brick

Your Absent Face

In Memory of Kathleen Raine

When I stretched out my right hand
to touch your face, mysteriously present,
I felt only air and it parted and disappeared,
only an emptiness left behind where I expected
the warmth of your skin, the vital response
of your quickening breath, the depth of your eyes,
holding both astonishment and contentment
in a perfect balance. But something of you
abides, some trace of your beauty mingles
with natural beauty and creates a abundance
that sweetens the air with promises of more
delights to come, never-ending because never
grasped and squandered. Oh, I know this truth!
But my heart is still restless for a simple
touch, a caress of flesh and flesh,
the reassurance that all does not dissolve
into air, but something persists: a falling leaf,
a splash of water, a tender voice speaking
what must be said over and over, the longed-for touch.

Daniel Brick

A Late Winter Poem For Baharak

I have been teasing a thought
into being all morning, and
since my morning began at 3:33 a.m.
it's been a long haul to find
the right words and the right order
to address you. Oh, yes, you have been
a partner in these thoughts since
they first bounced around in my head,
unruly and disordered, hardly the stuff
of poetry. They were as skeletal as
the trees, ghostly branches covered with
snow, the whole scene reduced to two
elemental colors, black and white. Is this
sufficient material for a poem? I endured
an hour of doubt, but in that time I was
rescued as surely as someone lost in a storm.
At first I imagined your face completely
shrouded in darkness, then I gradually saw
its outline appear, and finally your face
was whole, in the pale light of a winter morning.
It was not the sun that blessed us. It was moonlight
and glistening snow that brought us out of darkness
into the welcoming light of their special radiance.
And I send my nighttime thought to you on streams
of bright winter light: There will always be sufficient
light for us to live and prosper in every season.

Daniel Brick

The House - The Home

If I were you, I would not live
in this house, sprawling across a landscape
populated with worn-out memories. Let others
take charge of it, so your hands are free
to open the nearest door and you can walk
in any direction you choose because all of them
will be a-w-a-y. And don't look back!
I'm not aware of anything as severe as
the punishment of Lot's wife - What's her name?
The woman turned into salt... But you don't
want that last sight of your ancestral house
haunting your memory. It's bad enough you call it
a home. Dispel things in the heart the way you
dump old furniture and ragged clothes.
Start by recalling all its flaws,
the hardships it caused you,
the times it failed you, when relatives
looked askance, or quietly laughed
behind their gloved hands.
Remember it as derelict, dilapidated, doomed.
You will be liberated in due time. When you count
your blessings, it will not appear. When you recall
your beloved father, he will be standing in a grove
of evergreens in the north country. When you see
your dear mother, she will be quietly napping
on a cushioned bench outdoors. Such false
memories will eventually reconcile you to your fate.
In a decade or two, there will be just a mist
in your memory, an occasional hollowness in your heart
but no more weight of the past. Better that absence
than a persistent hope which connects to nothing.
I can teach how to create artificial memories
which will create a real happiness within.
After all, what is more important: the truth
of your existence, or an everyday happiness?

Daniel Brick

Janus Reflects On The Presence Of Time In Eternity

I

I have two faces looking in opposite directions, with two pairs of keen eyes piercing the near and the far. Twisting my long supple neck, I take inside me a circular field of action and non-action. A single brain stem rises through the chakra path but it separates at the throat, before voice can speak, and a branch rises to galvanize each face. The first face sees What Has Happened and laments or rejoices in equal measure, as events occur before dropping into oblivion. The other face stares into the future, a place of swirling mists, clouds of unknowing, dense corridors of colored Air. Here is the unclothed unity of tomorrow. The brightest Image. With ego and self all space is filled... There is the wholeness of Time. The longest or the shortest Moment. With ego and self all time is past. How do we reduce such multiplicity to a central certitude of knowing?

II

My brain wanders over these arrangements, and grasps a deeper sense of matter and cognition. I sense things separate joined, things broken whole. It's as if journeyers in a desert region suddenly enter an unmarked oasis, and ease replaces effort and Hope revives with every step. They are simply refreshed, and the remaining distance yet to be crossed is lit with a cool brilliance. You will find me sitting in a patch of sturdy palm trees, in a pool of yellow-green radiance, poised between action and non-action, wondering if they are not really just two faces of the same reality. At times like this past and future cannot be wrenched apart, and Nature reveals her wholeness and everlastingness:

lesser thoughts will be absorbed into the joy
of the Higher Truth, like dim lights adding
their luster to the blaze of the Noonday Sun.

Daniel Brick

Poems With An "Angel" Motif

"The Visitation of Angels"
and Other Poems Centered on the ANGEL Motif

Poems by Daniel Brick
2017-2018

I dedicate this collection of poems to:
MY DEAR FRIENDS SONYA AND ROBERT

Our friendship makes us a TRIO, let's say, a String Trio. I will assume the middle voice of the VIOLA. The viola was Mozart's favorite instrument, which is recommendation enough. Robert can be our CELLO player, who will provide the magnet of our ensemble who will pull us toward the common center or release us into solo excellence. This set-up means Sonya is our VIOLIN player, who will carry the melodic line on her fiddle as gracefully as she occupies the first chair. And so we three will achieve a harmony of spirits to the rhythm of everyday life and make each melody a song of the earth we give to those who listen.

It is really easy to be happy, we know its fourfold secret: you must have friends you cherish, you must do work which satisfies you, you must make the good things of the past flourish in the present, and you must have hope these good things will be sheltered and grow larger. This imaginary triumph will ever be our personal one. Excelsior!

Daniel Brick

Aserel, The Angel Of Silence, Inspires The Trio

The angels descend from the silence of the Empyrean and enter the zone of sounds, noises, music, cacophony in our space of being. Sometimes they create a cone of Empyrean silence to simulate their home where mind links to mind with no speaking.

The one named ASEREL has chosen me: he hovered over my life for weeks, filled my soul with angelic disciplines, then he left me in a Cone of Silence to test my resolve. I responded with prayerful poems made with my human craft in sweet angelic silence.

I'll watch the silence of Sonya's hands as they prepare a canvas in her studio, and then paint the images which her mind has shaped over time and now assume their identity in colors and forms on the completed canvas.

I'll listen in silence as Robert recites a poem he knows by heart. He grasps this silence as one of his tools, and punctuates his performance with silent moments embedded in speech, sound and silence in perfect balance.

And I will compose a new poem which will dazzle those who also love writing and will perhaps inspire those who dream of being poets to become what they dream of. Aserel may add notes and pauses from the Music of the Spheres to its natural texture.

And so it will be in our age that time and eternity will exist in a common place and both angels and humans will find its location and begin to populate it. And the wonder of this scenario is that the place of meeting will be strangely new to both of us, and we will discover each other as companions in making it a common home.

Daniel Brick

The Angel Aserel Encourages Humans To Seek Daily Beauty

The Angel Aserel on the Daily Beauty of Human Life

ENVOI

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

An Appeal To The Angel Aserel

Stay with me
because the world has betrayed me
again, yet demands I follow its lead.

Stay with me
because North and South are no longer true directions
and East and West have plunged into nothingness.

Stay with me
because Hope has dissolved into Despair
at the knife-edge of awareness.

Stay with me
because my dreams are too distant to see
and my nightmares moan beneath the bed.

Stay with me
because the frightened angel of the Star Gardens
has abandoned both roses and maidens in love.

Stay with me
because the intense red of each dawn and
every sunset must be witnessed by human eyes.

Stay with me
because poor as we are
life turns into love and love into wealth.

Daniel Brick

The Angel Of Silence Performs His Ministry

Is this the Being of Light whose first radiance I kindled? Was I the one with the necessary gesture to release the stalled spirit? Did I, mere flesh and bone, play an angel's role in ignorance?

They descend from the silence of the Empyrean and enter the zone of sounds, noise, music, cacophony in our space of being. Sometimes they create a cone of Empyrean silence in which we can be at peace and feel the joy of angel-life.

The one named Aserel has chosen me: he hovered over my life for weeks, he taught me the truth of prayer and ritual, then he left me in a Cone of Silence to test my resolve... I must have passed these tests, because silence is sweet.

I'll watch the silence of Sonya's hands as they prepare a canvas in her studio, then paint the images which have grown over time in her mind and now assume their places in the world of art and life.

I'll listen in silence as Robert recites a poem he knows by heart. He grasps this silence as one of his tools, and punctuates his performance with silent moments embedded in speech, sound and silence in perfect balance.

And I myself will compose a new symphony, which will dazzle those who love music and open the hearing of those who have not listened yet. And perhaps my guardian Aserel will add notes and pauses from the Music of the Spheres to its natural texture.

And so it will be in our age that time and eternity will exist in a common place and both angels and humans will find its situation and begin to populate

it. And the wonder of this scenario is that the place of meeting will be strange to both of us, and we will discover each other as companions in making it a common home.

Daniel Brick

An Angel Composed Of Fire

When I drift through the chambers
of my soul, I stop often and pray
for help in my search for something worthy
of contemplation. There is a flash of light,
exceeding even the speed of thought that
displays the truth of being I seek. I follow

in a partial trance as it unwinds its tendril
of connection to the same spiritual place
that holds me in thrall. The light I follow
pours forth illumination. The light resolves
its fiery nature into the shape of a pure
bright red appearance, like me in human form.

He stands within a wide circle of rays, all
the color of fire and shooting forth
in all directions, both blind and focused.
I bow in my own defense. But no harm to me
is intended. The red flaming character
assumes a posture like mine, readied for talk.

As my fear decreases, that energy promotes
a shift to understanding. I sense a communication,
a telepathy, swelling into articulate speech:
"We are one being, pale one, your part is intellectual,
mine is passionate. We balance each other, we act
in tandem, we are bound together, we cast one shadow.

"From this moment forward we are one being, I am myself
the Heart that burns in desire and heat, you the Mind
that thinks in desire and detachment. Together we will
live a fully sentient existence as the Angel-Man,
blended, united, bonded, ONE." I found my voice,
"What wonders we will perform, dazzling the angels,
dumb-founding the humans."

Daniel Brick

New Day

It is the Morning of the World.
Great shafts of light pierce
what seemed in the depth of night
to be a permanent darkness. Already
the World is not just lit by bright
streams but it shines as if an answering
light from its interior is being lifted
out and up to join the sunlight pouring
down. How can we resist this double radiance?
It is time to come out of hiding, and join
the others in this age of candor and
the bitter truth. There is even less reason
to hide yourself today than there was yesterday,
and in the infinite line of tomorrows assembled
across space, meaningful life is manifold.
Indeed, this is a time of wonder. You feel it,
don't you? I want you to feel it like a promise
fulfilled. The doubt that may still hold
part of your soul in thrall will soon be loosened,
and your heart will be free to pursue its loves
in this double light from within and from without.

Daniel Brick

A Prayer To The Holy Spirit

Inspired by the PRAVOSLAVIC Faith
practiced by Liza in St. Petersburg, Russia

Oh, Holy Wonder!
Descend and brighten earth
with Your supernatural brilliance.
Enter the natural zone of our existence
and make it shine with Your abundance.

Oh, Fountain of Eternal Truth!
We have prepared ourselves
to receive Your Illumination
to the dizzying depths of our souls.
Prayer and Charity, Worship and Agape
have scoured pettiness from our reformed selves.
Our souls are just empty chambers, anticipating
Your arrival, hollow sanctuaries which long for
Your Holiness to fill them and render them worthy.

Oh, Beloved Spirit! Oh, Marvelous God
of Flight and Illumination!
Our prayers to You express only adoration.
Our faces, raised up to Heaven, are suffused
with a longing for Your perpetual presence.
We have expelled desires, impulses, hungers,
vanities, regrets, fears. We have attained
a condition of emptiness within and without
to be filled with Your Divinity. Come, to us,
lest we die an animal death, with our souls
damaged and severed from Your heightened Being
forever. Transform our desperate pleading
into a hymn of Your Glory. No longer do we tremble
before the terrible calm of Your Being. You have given us
divine understanding. Our hearts burn everything that
occludes Your presence. Our voices stretch out in one prayer,
resounding across space and time to the end of space and time:
GOSPODI POMILUY! GOSPODI POMILUY!GOSPODI POMILUY!

Inspired by the PRAVOSLAIVE Faith
practiced by Liza S. in St. Petersburg

Daniel Brick

Saintliness

What makes the saint
so different from you or me,
from all of us lumped together
into one huge disorderly family?
Is it the saint's dawn prayer
that fold upon fold of light descend
upon one and all, even the unworthiest
among us, that no evil disturb
the poise of faith within each heart?
And in what tarnished place
are my morning thoughts lodged
while his embrace the whole of hope?

Or is it his gesture of charity
at every moment, acts of virtue
so sudden, so spontaneous nothing
of them remains after their doing,
no sign that points back to him,
anonymous and fleeting, known only
to the witnessing angels? Meanwhile
I am assiduously amassing good deeds like wealth,
swelling my account in heaven as a hedge
against judgment, so fearful am I
that mercy is too good to be true
for one who has lived a narrow life.

Or is it his life in prayer, with one
prayer tumbling after another, tracing
a path that angels use to readjust their
place in the chaos of the world and restore
their view of heaven, making worldly things
dissolve in the celestial light, invisible
to all on earth but the saints, each with
his companion angel who interprets every thing
that happens as a sign of God's presence. The saint
responds to all this lavish natural wealth
in his nightly prayer, "Lord, give me nothing
more. Shower your grace on that solitary soul,
who wanders bereft of hope and faith. Lord, save him."

Daniel Brick

Your Impromptu Poem

for Keith

I was tardy entering the sanctuary.
Sunday's service had begun,
with the first hymn already sung,
the impact of its melody and meaning
spreading over the assembled worshipers.
The harmony of music was now the harmony
of people. This awareness is blessed.
Suddenly, like a flash of light from no
natural source, I realized you were engaged
in an impromptu prayer. Your eyes nearly closed,
your mind fixed on the other world, you reached
deep within to grasp the words to carry your message:
it was the reality of the Father's truth,
of His goodness and love, you borrowed, shaped, delivered
by a human voice, just your human voice. But the words
were not as swift as your faith, and in a holy silence
you paused to let the words find you. This pause itself
was prayer. It was the readiness of the believer to receive
whatever the Father gives. And so immortal words spilled
forth, winged and wondrous, like sacred music, and
through them the Spirit filled every heart present
with worship of our three-personed God. "Let us Pray"
was your response to this plenitude of faith. Is this not
the mission you have assumed? To make the presence
of the Father as immediate as a human voice in prayer,
as real as the touch of agape love stirring our souls.
Amen to that....

Daniel Brick

The Journey Across The Night Seapart Ii

A thousand faces were released at once.
They floated slowly upward, gently rolling
in a circle as they rose into the sky.
Their eyes were shining from some hidden
source of light not visible to mortal eyes.
We were transfixed, we stared at them
for the duration of their ascent. They looked
down on us with compassionate eyes, tender
expressions flitting across their features.
I was speechless that so much love could
radiate from human faces. It seemed that
our vigilant watching was itself part of
this ceremony unfolding above us. The last
thing we saw were their eyes, even more
strangely illuminated, blinking again and
again as if they could not believe what
they were seeing, as if the wonder of it
transcended even their exalted state of grace.
And then it was over, the vision closed...
The nineteen who had been asleep awoke, having
dreamed what the four of us had witnessed.
The Mysterious Barge and its ghostly captain
were vanished. And our ship was surging forward
with propitious winds and friendly currents.
Once again, we were just sailors in a goodly ship
on a vast ocean under the pure blue light of morning.
The twenty-two men started debating what had happened,
then they argued without listening to each other,
some came to blows. But I remained calm. I knew
the Reign of Heaven on Earth was beginning and we
had entered an Eternity that would seal Earth and
Heaven into One Reality. In God's good time, which
has always been the best time, this would transpire.
All praise to God and His Angels and His Saints!

Daniel Brick

The Journey Across The Night Sea

from A Barge Mysterious
by Emmanuel George Cefai

A barge mysterious in the thick of night
Sailed slowly to the sober shore
Beneath the ramparts of the dreaming fort...
Whence is the barge coming in the night?
Whence did its journey start?
No reply came - and none in that still barge
Appeared to reply or move or breathe:
So horrid the stillness of the thin barge.

Why did that mysterious barge choose
this port for its apparitions? Why did
its ghostly captain leave behind charts
with exact coordinates? Most of all,
what daring possessed twenty-three young men
to hazard such a dangerous journey? I was
the first to feel compelled and convinced
the others to follow my lead. My head was
on fire with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.

We launched our ship from a secret natural
harbor, set sail in the middle of the night
on steady nocturnal currents, followed the path
of a huge cloud of sea fog, only partially
concealing the Mysterious Barge from our fixed gaze.
But suddenly men grew tired, completely worn out,
some collapsed where they stood onto the hard deck
and curled their bodies into rigid sleep.
Others dozed at their stations, shook themselves
awake only to fall into a deeper sleep. Within an hour
only four were awake, and fear crept into our souls
when our ship came to a halt just a few yards from
the stationary barge, no longer covered in fog
but lighted in a garish black light that slowly,
inexorably covered our ship too. I cannot speak

for the other three, but my fear was dispelled and I felt strangely lifted in my mind. What dispelled my fear? It was the presence of the ghostly captain on our ship. One of my comrades began to shake, the barge's captain touched his head with his long-fingered hand and the sailor was immediately calm, he began smiling. Then I heard the captain's voice from some deep recess of my mind, or should I say, my soul?

"Fear nothing, mortal men. The great war between Heaven Hell has - ended. My comrades and I, once slaves of the Evil Lord, have overthrown him. We have bowed in worship to the Lord God before His angel ambassadors. They have pacified Hell and we have surrendered our power to do evil... You mortals do not understand Eternity and we immortals do not understand Time, But the Time of Division is over, How and when this cosmic peace will be announced and promulgated, we do not know. Wait, patiently.

"And now you will witness the first of many Ascensions, for the denizens of Hell, your sisters and brothers, whom we seduced into damnation, are being taken to their Purgatorial Ordeal. We are fulfilling our first mission."

Daniel Brick

The Eucharist At The Center

for Lois and her fidelity

Winter makes people withdraw into themselves or to consider ways to escape the ice-covered landscape, to abandon snow-piles growing ever higher, and to start over in some California of the mind where it's perpetually warm. Don't we need some paradise, perhaps imagined,

where we can sleep out our troubles and travails? But you know what these people have forgotten, that we are meant to live through hardships and travails, to seek supernatural help and to be an agent of that help. To that end, you visit every day those home-bound who long to participate as they once did in church. This is your Christian mission, this is your service.

You drive a reliable car in reliable streets, and reliably deliver the Eucharist. By the gift that you bring you show the heavens more just: safe within your pix dwells the Creator of All Things Visible and Invisible. And you place that immensity in the cupped hands of the eager communicant, with the simple exchange of "Body of Christ" and "Amen" to seal the ritual. And a great stillness unfolds.

Winter makes people withdraw into themselves or to consider ways to escape the ice-covered landscape and abandon this place were snow-piles keep rising. They want to start over in some California of the mind, perhaps in a zone of perpetual warmth and calm. Don't we need some paradise-place

to sleep out life's troubles and travails? But you know better than these dreamers that God intends us to live through hardships, to seek supernatural help in prayer, and offer our neighbors help in God's cause. To this end, you visit those home-bound who long to participate in the Mass and other ceremonies and rituals once so accessible to them and now so distant.

You drive a reliable car on reliable streets and reliably deliver the Eucharist to those who serve by waiting patiently. What a gift you bring them! Within the tiny case dwells the Creator of All Things Visible and Invisible, manifest as our daily spiritual bread, and and you place this immensity in the cupped hands of each communicant, with the simple words, BODY OF CHRIST.

Has this miracle become too familiar? Do we take it for granted? For each communicant the Eucharist is a special bond, an impossible intimacy with God achieved as the bread melts into our bodies and the Spirit of Divinity swells in our souls. This communion with God is almost invisible and yet it makes us one with the Source of Everything. You, Lois, are the divine messenger who makes this

a reality, and make it a blessed moment in ordinary life.

TOPICS:

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The Ladder Of Ascent

for Kory

The week is like a ladder
we climb day by day until
Sunday when we reach
the highest rung and we pause
and rest. And there, out there,
beyond us is the vista that stretches
all the way to Heaven. That pause
contains your Sunday sermon,
your talk to the parishioners
who elected you to be their pastor,
the one who climbs the same steps
as they do, the one who gazes over
the same vista as they do, the one
prays often as they do that we will be
admitted into the Life Eternal. Such is
the life of the pastor. And the calm
you display and the summons to goodness
you invoke are the proof we need to know
you are leading us on the Right Path.

At any moment, one of us may step off
this Ladder of Ascent, with fear and trembling
which becomes hope and faith which becomes
desire and fulfillment which becomes our entrance,
our homecoming, our salvation. But that is a Mystery
we must each of us experience alone before God.
Your role is to take us across the vast plains
of the world and to accompany us each week
on the Ladder of Ascent. It is the place of
tests and triumphs, of sin and forgiveness,
of giving and receiving grace. It is your mission
to take us, holy and healthy, to the highest rung
of the Ladder of Ascent, until we take a final step
into the abyss and the Hand of God saves us,
and we are favored by His rescue forever.

Faith And Friendship A True Story

My mother's first job and her deepest friendship coincided like a happy fate. She and Doris worked at a pharmacy/fountain in an oddly shaped, narrow building where six streets intersected in St. Paul. Did these converging streets increase business, or accidents? They joked about this, and many other things, possessed of the same sense of humor, the same domestic intentions, the same sturdy moral standards. It was an ideal friendship, and it flourished after their marriages, after each became a mother of a boy and a girl. This was that blessed friendship that parallels the longevity of family ties and a true marriage. But blessings are not immortal. And Doris's early death from cancer was a sword of sorrow that pierced the hearts of the many who loved her. I was too young to comprehend my mother's grief, but I remembered witnessing it. And later, when I understood how grief dogs our lives, I belatedly felt her pain...

My Mom and I sat in chairs across the desk from a young priest, the assistant pastor. He kept checking a slim black booklet with gold lettering. His conversation with my Mom was tense, there were no smiles. The issue was very simple: Would our parish church, The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, allow my Mom to attend her best friend's funeral service? It was a vexed issue, with our family being Roman Catholic, and Doris's Lutheran. The young priest, still consulting the black booklet, finally said, "Bernadine, you can attend the service, but you must remain seated throughout, and under no circumstances can you participate in the Lutheran service with prayers or singing."

As my Mom and I sat stolidly in a middle pew, many of Doris's family members greeted her. They knew this

had been a beautiful friendship. "God bless you, Bernie, " I heard again and again. And my Mom's repeated "Thank you's" brought tears to her eyes. The theme of the service, those greetings, the minister's sermon was, "They will know we are Christians by our love." But my Mom and, of course, the eight-year-old son beside her remained silent and strangely disengaged. Until a small miracle occurred. Or was it a rebellion? The minister said, "Let us rise and recite the Our Father for Doris's soul." And my Mom stood with her fellow Christians and recited the prayer Jesus himself taught humanity. I quickly rose and joined the recitation with the third line: "... Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven...."

I was so proud of my Mom for this gesture of love, which transcended whatever that slim black booklet required the priest to ordain. I am sure an angel hovered near-by my Mom, giving her consolation: "Bernadine, your friend was a good and just woman. She lives now and forever in God's favor." Amen to that.

Daniel Brick

Our Prayer Life

for Mark

When we were children we played
a game, placing our palms together,
fingers pointing upward in a familiar
gesture for praying, we chanted,
"See the church, see the steeple."
Then opening our hands and wagging
our fingers, we shouted, "Open the door,
See all the people! " When the nuns
watching over us saw this routine,
they reminded us to pray, but they
were smiling too. We were assembled
in the front six pews, facing the altar
and the celebrant, kneeling or standing,
as the ritual would have it. We responded
to the priest's sacred words with equally
sacred words, and miracles happened on cue.
But did we really pray in our hearts?
How do children learn to pray, body and
soul united and fiercely focused on Jesus?

Does prayer gradually increase in power
and awareness until it permeates
every fiber within a child's soul? Until
a parent is startled when her daughter
says, "Mommy, I'm glad Jesus loves me."
Until a father finds his son reading
the Bible on a Saturday afternoon,
and the two of them talk about EXODUS
as if it were part of their family's
story. And they feel Moses, Joshua
and Deborah watching over them
in a community of prayer...
And somewhere nearby a man alone
is assailed by doubt, his mind clouded,
access to his soul blocked. Then he reads
in the psalm, "Taste and see the goodness
of the Lord, " and he rejoices, because

his journey back from doubt to faith
is almost over. He recites favorite prayers
and they reach the depths of his soul,
where Jesus awaits him under the Sign of the Cross.

The signs that signal it is time to pray
are everywhere, because everywhere is blessed
with divine presence. In a recent but eternal
Sunday service, the pastor, having already closed
the event with a blessing and a mission, stood
at the edge of the sanctuary, speaking
with a parishioner, when another brushed past them,
in a trance of prayer, anxious to kneel. He was summoned
by something inside him and someone outside him.
He bowed his head until it touched the sacred floor,
and he was one with his prayer. A million words
of theology could not have explained better what faith
is than his prayerful example. He knelt there,
a man redeemed and grateful. The children sing,
"See the church... See all the people, " and
it already their first prayer on the road to redemption.

Daniel Brick

Three Witnesses

O the moon-days of winter! Snow has fallen.
You leave after midnight, having drunk crimson wine,
the dim precincts of men. The red flame of their hearth
briefly lights the snowy path you tread alone.
Georg Trakl

O clear winter night!
A red deer steps out of the forest.
She stands in a pool of blue light
and watches the lake freeze.

The golden angel of the western sky
beats her vast wings slowly.
Her crystal tears fall
into the same lake

the deer watches. I arrive
at the lake shore. I take
my place under the yellow moon
between these fellow creatures,

one of the land, the other
of the sky, myself displaced,
at home in neither place,
seeking always somewhere to be.

The angel folds her mighty wings.
She bows her head, and the perfect
calm of her face fills me with awe.
The deer turns her head,

she slowly bites a leaf from an ash
and chews it deliberately.
The moonlight is like a tent
which encloses us in a rough triangle.

Above me
the angel hovers over the freezing lake.
Beside me

the deer stands at the water's edge.

Here will I wait
as long as the deer and the angel.

Daniel Brick

Loretta Recites Her Daily Rosary

When the pale winter sun gently
lifts creatures from their sleep,
you are already awake, sorting
in your mind this day's service.

There are sons and daughter to consider,
all fourteen of them, and grandchildren
to bless, along with friends far and near,
all of them people you hold dear.

When you reach your chair and settle
beneath a favorite blanket or two,
your soul rejoices, and you are ready
to recite your daily rosary, dedicating

its grace to those people you hold dear.
Your rosary lies coiled in its beads
and chain, but springs into your hand.
It is a small miracle in the morning,

but greater ones are poised to happen.
In a faraway cathedral, young nuns sometimes
accompany you in their angelic voices.
Or it is your private devotion which

rises heavenward. You begin with the first
of five "Our Father's", that primal prayer
taught to humanity by God Himself to worship
God Himself in the Mystery of the Trinity.

The whole of Creation knows
this prayer: "Thy Will be done on earth
as it is in Heaven." All fate, all fortune,
all destinies are contained within

the Will of God, and the Grace of Heaven
descends on those you hold dear
who accept this divine truth in their hearts
even as they receive the benefits of your prayers.

Is this not the larger miracle? That your daily
prayer rises to Heaven and then spills back to earth
with blessings for everyone you love. When you recite
the repeated "Hail Mary's", the Mercy of God,

embodied in His beloved Mother, descends to earth
like a perfect summer day in the depth of winter.
Do not call this a miracle. It is merely the blessed
result of your natural prayer and Heaven's grace.

Daniel Brick

The Angel Of Day

Sunlight is too dense to grasp
the appearance of the Angel of Day.
She slips through those heavy shafts
and remains invisible to material eyes.
She carries her invisibility far and wide
in the Day Realm, absorbing every sound
and harmonizing each one before it enters
the cosmic harmonium which envelops all
of space, transforming the din and fret
of time into peace of eternity. Listen to
Bach's PRELUDES AND FUGUES and you will be
in the Angel's presence. Or listen intently
to the ten PIANO SONATAS of Alexander Scriabin,
and you will become one with the ascending sounds.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Angel Of Night

Silence guided me into sleep, and
left me on the dark side of reality.
Part of me sleeps, part of me wakes:
I hear a low hum of music nearby.
It strikes my hearing like a slow flood
of Gregorian Chant, enveloping
rather than drowning the listener.

There will be time enough in the night
to say good-bye to the flesh, to bid
farewell to mortal affairs, to uncoil
all the entanglements of time, to feel
what remains of a lifetime stretch out,
so that my mortality touches eternity
in an infinite moment of renewal.

In the natural field of existence,
I am a poet, that is, one who dreams
with words - day and night alike -
and makes life take on the texture of
reality and poems embody hope.
The future is illuminated, and a space
opens for the present to flourish night and day.
The Angel of Night will greet me again and again.

Daniel Brick

The Day Before.A Narrative Poem

In Thursday, in late morning,
my angel-companion and I took
a slow stroll through a yellow-red
woods. The mood was wonderful, and
you must grasp I have been laughing
everyday, or at least smiling broadly.
A mountain, dislodged from its vertical
splendor, pierces the ground like a mighty
arrow. River-currents swirl in figure-eights
but the blue shining water is stationary.
The foam of waves is tossed into the sky
where it coalesces into graceful cloud-shapes.
Deer speak to each other in a dialect of the forest,
and lions, male and female, rest in their massive
being between feedings. My mind is stumped
by such alien images, but at the same time
it can calculate cosmic equations. I feel
no need for explanations. (Our world exists
in the hinterlands of eternity.)

Three blue-streaked fish plunge
their heads into the air above
the water line. In their bubbly voices,
they encourage me to dive. "Then, we'll
swim the middle depths together," they
bubble in unison. My companion angel
subtly smiles but shakes his head.
A tiny finch catches my eye. As soon as
our gazes lock, he opens his beak and
wags his tongue, hopping up and down
on his narrow tree branch. I recognize
him as the lone finch who visited
my balcony last summer, and he cocked
his head from side to side as I spoke
of random things that bond bird and human.

My companion angel turns away, and looks
fixedly into the sky dome. I sense this walk
is not the same as the Lord-God walking

in the cool of the evening through Eden,
talking quietly with Adam. I say impulsively,
carelessly, "Tell me your name, my -"
"No, Daniel." Authority is what I hear.
The finch flies away. The fish submerge.
I cannot speak another word, and know
laughter and smiles belong to yesterday.
"It's true I have spoken to you often
as a friend. I admit that and say no more
about it." My heart was sinking. I saw
the lions vanish into the thicket. The deer
ran pell-mell away from me. And high above me,
I watched the cloud-shapes collapse in disarray.
A chill that did not belong to morning in the woods
cut through my frame. "I have foreseen your sorrow.
You will be even more bereft over time. These will
be hard times for you: your sadness will be swamped
by your fears, and nature will not help you again.
No creature, neither animal nor angel, will be able
to comfort you..." In the long pause of his silence,
he shimmered in and out of his angelic shape. He
disappeared completely for a few seconds. Then, he stood
clothed in a glorious nimbus on a mound a distance from me.
The rest of what he said to me was spoken directly
into my interior being. "Another War in Heaven rages
even as we speak. At least three factions of angels
contend in hatred and harm, eviscerating their spiritual
beings. What these warring beings will become,
if anything is left of them, is too terrible to foresee.
I refuse to look ahead. The end will not be long in coming.
Angelic beings are too sensitive for prolonged violence.
The survivors of one great battle have condemned themselves
to everlasting agony and yet they gloat over their victory."
The angel fell silent but still held me in this thought-embrace.
"This crisis may yet pass, angels may yet see the Light
of their being, and cease this second War in Heaven..."
I suddenly found my voice, and cried out, "Angel, Angel,
hear me. You will prevail. Your beauty cannot fail - it is
the being of our being, forever. ANGEL, YOU MUST DISPLAY HOPE."
I felt his touch caress me as he vanished. That very afternoon,
I set about building a Temple of Hope with things of the earth.

The Black Angel

A murder of crows descends
from the twilight sky, and
settles in a huge tree, huddling
against its gold leaves. Below them,
King Lear writhes in the muck,
moaning and cursing his fate.
Suddenly aroused, he shakes
his fist at the nearest crow:
"Croak not, black angel. I will not love."

The first time you fell out of love,
you felt remorse and your heart bled
for your forsaken partner...
By the fourth time a lover failed you,
you were merely glad the separation
did not take more of your time.
A black angel sees all from its perch.

Your sleep is vexed by snatches
of memory. A once-loved face
will look ruefully into your sleep
searching for the truth of your affair.
The black angel stays in the background,
but she will come night after night
in this fool's errand. Oh, release her.

Winter light only reveals the outline
of things. It highlights the skeletal
shape of trees, the tarnished whiteness
of snow, and the wide wingspan of crows.
Do not dismiss it: it has shed its dark
radiance over your being and makes it glow.
The black angel launches into flight and climbs

out of sight. Are you ready, finally ready
for the gift of love? Are you prepared to make
the necessary sacrifices? Will you accept both
the darkness and the light? Is your heart cleansed
and your mind clear? Are you the man you claim to be?

Or are you just a ghost presence in a murder of crows?

The black angel returns and lurks nearby.
He is always nearby. He may be a creature
without a soul, but he has cunning and, day
after day, he persists in his mission of watching
over things and beings. He watches over you
with special resolve. Do not writhe. Do not curse.
His presence summons you to fulfill your human fate.

Daniel Brick

A Garden With A Pondportugal, Winter 2018

Kathinka

I came to this place after
your sojourn: your presence
still lingered in the air,
and the spirit of the place
remembered you. Grass stalks
your footsteps flattened
have lifted themselves
in anticipation of your return.
I reach a rim of rocks outlining
a shallow pond. It was here you sat
in a meditative calm, and felt peace
permeate everything. Then beauty
simply unfolded herself, like a flower-
patch in sunlight. When goodness arrived,
you knew this circle of virtues was complete.
It is your presence which summoned this trio.

The tears you shed
in that moment of fulfillment
were harbingers of Joy, not sorrow.
They arose from deep within you,
where all is whole and free, and
dropped one by one into the patient
ground... My words vanish, too:
they were drawn forth
to witness your epiphany: what persists,
what abides is simply the love
your meditation left behind,
that turns the hum of existence
into the music of of our shared life.

Daniel Brick

Angels And Humans

The angel handed me a book, saying, "This contains everything you wish to know." He disappeared... The book melted into this world that is about us.
Paul Valery



PoemHunter.com

I wonder sometimes,
"Do I really need their help? "
Often they fly passed me, or
high above me so quickly,
I can only conclude that
they won't swoop down and
share my reality for a spell.
Their missions which require
such high flight and headlong
speed are more urgent than
anything troubling my single soul.
Or perhaps I am ahead of others
crawling between earth and heaven,
and angels deign to let me see

their maneuvers across space and time to calm my heart and grant my soul patience. And they have planted in my mind a seed which will send forth spiritual tendrils of growth that will in due time flower into cosmic knowledge.

Meanwhile, angels secure the cables holding mountains to their bases, repair flaws inside the gigantic machinery of continental drift, replace all systems of freeze and thaw which will hasten the arrival of spring in wintry climates. They have already adjusted the signals billions of birds receive to begin migrations... All of this activity restores a cosmos of change and charge, in which adepts - both angelic and human - receive messages how we are to inhabit and amplify the Mystery of Things. Different degrees of light emanate from angels and humans, and both are necessary to illuminate the world and make the earth radiant.

Let me play the angelic role for humanity, and unseal a great secret that was never meant to be a secret. We humans are not just bone and skull, just muscle and sinew, just flesh and skin. We are radiant beings whose inner glory some twist of fate occluded and made us foul and fallen in our own eyes. Angels have opened our eyes to that inner glory, now pouring forth into the world and brightening earth with the double radiance of angels and humans.

Daniel Brick

The Final Light: A Prose Poem

Jeremy realized his mind wandered wantonly unless he forced it to concentrate, which since his fifties he found increasingly hard to do.

He also realized certain familiar sayings lodged in his mind were tiny beacons of truth. One saying went: You shall reap what you sow. How true that is, Jeremy thought without a second thought. He associated it with aspects of his existence, often ruefully, as if he had something to expiate.

In recent months, he felt the saying was a nagging, dangling moral tag, permanently attached to his interior life. It will loom over my last moment, it will be my last moment, he concluded. Jeremy was disappointed to think his last thought might be just a narrative

detail: Oh, death! as if an unexpected character in a 19th century play strode onto the stage, and then The End; and then oblivion. Instead he longed for some visionary content that would affirm his mind, his thinking element he had done so much to create. You will reap WHAT YOU SOWED. Please could it be a final illumination of philosophy, or a flash of mystical insight, or, even better, a close-up of the lovely face of that girl who touched his heart when he was eighteen and she was fourteen, who broke his heart a year later when she proved inaccessible. She was - he knew by way of a deep intuition - the love of his life, and the later muse of his poetry, and yet they shared no time together, no intimacies were exchanged. It was all his longing, futile but real and lasting. That is what he wanted to swell in his final moment: her young, lovely face

smiling into his departure. As darkness squeezed his vision to a blank screen, her vanishing face would be the final light he witnessed, and perhaps...perhaps...No, any further hope would be too much to ask for. Yes, let it be just her fading face, beautiful and mortal, the haunt of desire, that closed his life.

Daniel Brick

Wintering

The crunch of hardened snow.
A mouthful of icy air, everybody's
breath visible in swirling clouds.
Head down, into the wind, cuts
like broken glass. Deer reported starving.
How do sparrows endure all winter,
perched side by side, huddling?

So many things are marked for departure,
but instead they linger, stay where there is
no comfort, where everybody covets their warmth,
nothing extra available. Just remember the starving
deer and you'll get the whole picture of wintering.
And then you must abide the time, it's frozen too.

Balancing your heavy body with flapping arms,
you attempt a winter walk. It's a good idea
gone bad. Blame the weather, the rest of us do.
There are no feelings here to be hurt. Remember
the face of Janus, the doubled-faced god staring
into two time zones with no emotion, hard as ice,

cold as snow, no friend to men and women, just
a guardian of winter, a time-keeper whose
cold gaze sees neither beauty nor wonder,
only duration from solstice to equinox.
So many other things marked for departure
have fled, but you chose to remain,

winter after winter, you endure, you prevail
in this cul de sac. There must be some deep
sense of beauty in your soul which rises
every December and embraces this frigid season.
It is not warmth that rises to flood your being,
it is a sense of belonging to this land in every season.

Daniel Brick

The Mission Of Angels

Angels are always on the move.
Karlheinz Stockhausen

The only tears angels shed
are shed because they despair
of helping us heal our wounded
lives. Oh, we are surely
more complex than our primeval
ancestors. It is an issue of degree.
They lumbered into love and loss
just as we do millions of years
later. I have been told the angels
watched over their vexed inventions
of emotions, and affection, and
love itself. The angels guided
their clumsy but sincere growth
into humanity. So why are we still
creatures of ecstasy and grief?
Why does our human fate move them
so deeply? I have been told
every night a dozen or more angels
descend the Ladder of Ascent, and
glide through the twilight air.
Blending their presence with scents
of lilacs and violets, they place
the needful gift on a flat rock,
or inside a flower circle, both
artfully arranged so we will know
the gift is heavenly. And then
they withdraw into the shadows
from which they keep watch over us
in their inexpressible love
all through the night. So I have been told.

Daniel Brick

The Visitation Of Angels

Angels are always on the move.
Karlheinz Stockhausen

The only tears angels shed
are shed because they despair
of helping us heal our wounded
lives. Oh, we are surely
more complex than our primeval
ancestors. It is an issue of degree.
They lumbered into love and loss
just as we do millions of years
later. I have been told the angels
watched over their vexed inventions
of emotions, and affection, and
love itself. The angels guided
their clumsy but sincere growth
into humanity. So why are we still
creatures of ecstasy and grief?
Why does our human fate move them
so deeply? I have been told
every night a dozen or more angels
descend the Ladder of Ascent, and
glide through the twilight air.
Blending their presence with scents
of lilacs and violets, they place
the needful gift on a flat rock,
or inside a flower circle, both
artfully arranged so we will know
the gift is heavenly. And then
they withdraw into the shadows
from which they keep watch over us
in their inexpressible love
all through the night. So I have been told.

Daniel Brick

On The First Day Of January,2018

If I sit here long enough,
by this double window framing
a partial view of a stark winter day,
I will eventually see a field of
yellow and red flowers, a pond
reflecting the sky's blue and
the sky itself with wisps of clouds
imperceptibly moving out of the frame,
leaving behind only pieces of spring.
But winter is the master now, and it
imperiously summons me to acknowledge
its reign and not succumb to pale
mental images. Oh, this season is gracious!
It spreads its spell across white fields
punctuated by evergreen groves and frozen
ponds. And perhaps its dreams inhabit
things in hibernation, and grants them
a cold solace for the duration
of ice and snow. And the silence
will prevail until the first crack of spring.

It spreads its cold charm across white
diels

Daniel Brick

New Year's Day 2018

I missed the moment TIME
turned on itself and faced
a new year. A single spin
in the quantum realm and it is
January the First, with a double-
faced god, looking ahead and
behind, acknowledging both past
and future, perhaps balancing
the two to make TIME one reality.
And then there is that heightened
flash in which the present asserts
itself as the very moment of beginning.
I failed on that last night of the old year
to balance being awake and being asleep:
the midnight moment found me napping,
for just the crucial half-hour before
the twelve chimes announced 2018.
My chosen music, Beethoven's Rasoumovsky
Quartet No.2, in which the strings evoke
the calm constellations arching over us,
played itself into silence. I can take
no credit for this year's turning: I was
just an unconscious man, not even playing
the role of witness, offering neither help
nor hindrance to an event so much larger
than my existence as a denizen of surfaces.
And TIME in its mighty solitude unfolds our lives
toward whatever welcoming eternity awaits us.

Daniel Brick

Two Poets In A Garden

for Glen, in appreciation

The two poets sat under the shade
of a maple tree. One was reading
over and over the same poem of Hafez.
His voice was tied in knots. "Why,
why doesn't it ascend?" he thought.
The other poet had closed his book.
He smiled as he watched a sparrow
hop and fly from lower branches
to higher branches of the maple.
Would he reach the sun-branch before
dark? "Come, my friend," he said
suddenly. "Let's walk in the garden,
until we find a door that admits
both of us to the precincts of Paradise."

Daniel Brick



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Grief And Joy

Inspired by a poem by Pamela Sinicrope

I

Grief pulled me from sleep. It was a shallow sleep, so I was immediately awake and saw Grief's heavy face lined with deep furrows, but his eyes, his eyes were shining with care. He dredges from the bottom-world on the other side of sleep deep truths of our existence. Oh, he is thorough! He will carry them to whatever surface we occupy, and there, there we can make a peace between Fate and Freedom. Do not expect a quiet moment. Grief will be our advocate, he will keep us awake and alert, but we must prepare ourselves to endure the fear that undermines us, as Fate passes across the roof of the world, and Fate's trumpets blast our pride. We must bow our heads, bend our knees, and abase ourselves beneath the Reality of Power beyond the reaches of our souls. Even Freedom is a blunt force and we will shudder until Grief restores our sleep.

II

Joy pulled me from sleep. It was a shallow sleep, and she entered it as music and gradually released me from its hold as the inner music swelled, then slowly dissolved, even as pale light prevailed over darkness. But Grief has his say even in a time frame measured by Joy. As he withdraws to his void, dark, and

drear solitude, he demands Joy make
her peace with Fate and Freedom,
in her own gracious way. And so we,
mortal witnesses, see a vision of
a young sapling rooted along
a much-traveled road, a tender maiden
walking along a sea shore, and an almost
invisible goddess hovering between them.
They are three in one, shimmering in noonday
light exchanging positions and identities,
in their interplay of feminine realities,
answering Grief's display of Power with
Joy's apotheosis of - Beauty.

(Quotations:

Beyond the reaches of our souls - HAMLET

A grief... void, dark, and drear - DEJECTION: AN ODE, Coleridge

The Trumpets, etc. - THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

The sapling, maiden and goddess - HOMER'S ODYSSEY, Book 6, l.162-
185.)

Daniel Brick

A Man Alone poems By Daniel Brick

This of my soul is the of the world. They are bound together like life and dream. They have grown up together and merged into one another... They will be borne away into nothingness.

Georgy Ivanov



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... And I left their presence. I entered the purifying circle of loneliness, selfhood, victory.

The 's Parlor

My disguises have been make-shift, nothing
to dazzle your eyes, nothing to put you
in debt to me. Ignore them entirely:
They are meant for me, not you. I must
disguise myself or despise myself. And so
I deliberately for a 's parlor,
in clothes salvaged from a trash can
on a private estate, and assembled
with no regard to fashion. Or self-respect.
You see I have not an iota of autonomy
in matters of Self. The rats, however,
were surprisingly hospitable, they poured me
a second of Assam and put more cakes
on the table we sat at for a leisurely hour
of inter-species communication. I think I made
a good impression at the 's parlor. Perhaps
I can build on this modest success. What do you think?

The 's Parlor

David Knut

Daniel Brick

Just Locks And Chains

When the Prodigal Son returned home for the second time, his father, all joy and forgiveness, announced a party at once. And at once set to work. Even the most distant relative was summoned, and people nearby, even strangers just passing through this vicinity of joy, were invited. All of them crowded around the boy, jostling for the best place, breathing the available air, leaving him gasping, unable to answer their blandishments. He broke free, when his father was occupied, and found an open spot on the second level. He was drinking too much wine, gulping down glass after glass, as the servants dutifully responded. Below, he saw his father in the midst of a pack of servants, some carrying wine flasks, others trays of food. His father was giving them expert directions, pointing here and there, even waving up to his eldest son. The boy was shocked, How could he possibly find me? Then he saw his three younger brothers warily staring up at him, making no effort to turn their sneers into smiles. Abruptly, they vanished into the huge banquet hall...

Around midnight, sated with wine and people, the honored guest slipped away, avoiding eye-contact, and walked down an immense hallway which connected this southern wing of his father's sprawling mansion with its two northern wings. "All this will be yours, my dear son," he smiled over his eldest son the day before his first escape attempt. He sheepishly returned on his own, mumbling excuses and lies. His second attempt was equally futile as agents of his father surprised him at the fortified border center and kept watch over him, until the strings that bound him to his family, stretched taut, suddenly snapped him back... Now he was walking drunkenly

down the connecting corridor, confused and angry. He reached an immense stone chair. He climbed awkwardly to the seat, and sprawled in its excess space. The stone chair was a relic of a lost age when men were still giants roaming the earth. Legendary warriors, they wore no armor, they carried no weapons. They wrestled their way to dominion but no one stayed on top for long. There were always new wrestling matches, with challengers gloating, there were new conquests to achieve, new widows to pursue...

He awoke suddenly, after several hours of drunken sleep. His dream had dispelled his stupor: it displayed a wide road unfolding for miles of forest and prairie. He bolted from the giants' chair, and ran, stumbling, breathing heavily, down the hollow corridor, echoes of his haste bombarding the walls. His father, his younger brothers, the guests would all be sunk in deep sleep, having been guided to their chambers by sober servants. It was easy to get some of them to prepare a horse and supplies for him. Once mounted, he followed the upward curving slope of the road to an elevation, where he paused but did not dismount. Looking down on his father's opulent mansion, he was puzzled. This has never been my home, he thought. Let my brothers wrestle for it! My place is elsewhere. "Good-bye, dear father," he spoke softly into the still morning air. "You tried to give me everything, but it was all just chains and locks! All I want, all I need is to breathe ample air freely." At his signal, the horse began to gallop down the road, which widened with every mile.

Daniel Brick

A Verse Flower Winter Solstice 2017

for Baharak

I

The watchers have told us for centuries
this is the longest night of the year.
More darkness will pour over our bodies
tonight than any other night. Our ancestors
woke in abject fear of this increased weight
of the dark pressing upon their sleep. So why
do I feel so light-hearted? So calm and poised?
Is it mere habit that assures me of tomorrow's
dawn? I am inclined to look deeper and wider
into this night which grants me extra darkness
to contemplate the blank sky, the occluded stars,
the stretched-out hours passing slowly, and
the infinite extent of night's wings fanning
the silence of motionless frozen air.

II

Early this evening I saw the red glow
of the new solstice sun smeared
across the low horizon, and its light
was so pale, its red so undernourished
that I realized it held little benefit
for us who rely on borrowed light
and warmth. So I turned away and faced
the deepest darkness of the year,
perhaps with a trace of our ancestors'
fear. But a warm thought quickly dispelled
it. Instead I greeted the fading light
as sufficient for my purpose, and brought
forth a flower that blossomed in the light
of poets and through the warmth of their
friendship. It is the Verse Flower of your
favorite colors I have imagined into existence.
You have yourself imagined flowers into being.
Last summer six stalks of sunflowers bowed

every morning in gratitude, a hedge festooned
with white petals gave shelter to huddled wrens,
and in early autumn the willowy flowers we call
Baby's Breath waved their fragrance of delight
in your presence. But tonight, my friend, you can
rest, assured that the Verse Flower casts its aroma
even into early winter air. The sharp wind carries
the fragrance awry, but do not worry: the Verse Flower
shares the resilience of one of our sturdy poems.
It needs nothing from you to flourish in your presence,
except your eyes gazing over its growth, your eyes
filled with the light of your being, the sole illumination
required to make this flower of December glow both night and day.

Daniel Brick

Reasonable Quotations

Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound; since wound must be?

Robert Browning

The purest lesson our era has taught is that man,
at his highest, is an individual, single, isolate,
alone, in direct communication with the unknown god,
which prompts him from within.

D. H. Lawrence

Man alone resists the direction of gravity: he constantly
wants to fall - upward.

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Just as I shall lie alone in the grave, so, in essence,
do I live alone.

Anton Chekhov

I am alive, alone
with a poet's heart
in the moonlight's company.
I am new in the balance
of a song, every verse I know.
The moon and I are quieted
by the falling notes. I light
a fire, I open my heart.

Susan Lacovara

All I wanted to do was try to live the life that was inside of me, trying to get out. Why was that so hard?

Hermann Hesse

Daniel Brick

The Adventurer Addresses The Institute For Exploration

Inspired by Othello's Monologue Act I.3, l.128-169

My trusted colleagues and sponsors,
Alone, I have walked calmly and swiftly
through the larger world this Institute
is pledged to protect. I have swum
in lakes of warm yellow waters, home
to dozens of predators and prey, myself
a cunning visitor. I have crossed mighty
rivers at flood-tide as if by magic. Hills
and mountains posed no obstacles, I leaped
to their summits and raced through their
valleys. Water-falls and fire-falls crashed
in my path. Clouds thick enough to roll in
carried me across the pink sky at dawn,
red-orange clouds at night covered my sleep.
I saw huge storms of lightning in dry deserts,
I watched from low hills fires ravage prairies
that stretched for hundreds of miles. These things
I witnessed and recorded, and never was I fatigued
or fearful or depressed. The journey itself restores
needed strength... In low places and on plateaus,
I communed with familiar and strange beasts, whose
howls, bellows, whines, whose whistles, cries and
songs were eloquent past imagining. And I replied
by reciting Shakespeare and Yeats, and we bonded.
The animals nestled against my body when they sensed
my departure, and I shed human tears over their hides,
fur and skin, when I embraced them at departure.
Such were the adventures of a lone man returning
to the community of nature. All forms of natural life
accepted me in these times of natural peril. How will
we answer their curiosity, their wonder, their companionship?

Daniel Brick

The Astral Light

The Astral Light is an invisible universal matrix that surrounds everything in the universe, including stars and the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. It also surrounds and saturates the souls of human beings and engenders their rebirth in new bodies. The colors of the Astral Light changes, according to the spiritual level manifested. In the dense material realm, the hues are hot, predominantly red and orange. The Light in the higher levels of the psychic universe is brilliant shimmering. There the dominant colors are clear perfect whites and golds.

Daniel Brick



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Envoi

The Dweller in the House

There is only one who dwells
in this house, and he often
feels he and the house are one being.
The builder made a complicated arrangement
with this dweller, and then left permanently
for other unknowable endeavors. Are you surprised
the dweller moves very slowly? Even his thoughts
move cautiously and often cluster together
into a veritable symphony of integrated musings.
In the silence of the house a music unfolds
in his mind. The dweller wakes to the early morning
light and feels the light permeate his body and
ignite his mind. His soul simply rejoices.
He walks the length of each of his three floors.
He pauses at each window, leans forward and
looks out into the park at the hedges, the exotic
trees, and the twelve flower beds. As he looks over
these green growing things, the dweller senses
something slowly, regularly rising within himself:
he smells a smiling aroma of roses and breathes
deeply and continues breathing deeply. He is
stunned by the brightness of green tree leaves,
and the hedges seem to be dancing their version
of a minuet accompanied by the South Wind.
Each window in turn excites these emotions,
they quiet down as he seeks the next window
and the next uplift, until he reaches the attic,
with its one stained-glass window through which
tri-colored light pours over him. He is both
warmed and illumined, and he cries out
in an ecstasy of long-postponed joy. He knows
he and the house are suffused with all available
light and warmth. In a few moments a great calm
has absorbed all of this energy and all beings
and all things are blessed, blessed, blessed.

Last Moments

The line of debris begins with a broken ladder. Its twenty-two rungs lie scattered on the ground it was meant to surmount. But there never was the possibility of escape, so even the ladder whole was useless. Why do so many people try to escape, when they are just rushing deeper into their prison? Or worse? Why not curl up comfortably in a warm corner and wait for fate to fulfill itself at our expense? Why keep kicking if fate is immovable? You can't push it aside because it's already deeply embedded in your being. Surrender is the only successful action, and it too is fate's triumph. Still it will give you a moment or two to review the salient events you lived, as they rush passed your diminishing sight. We are promised that flash of memories that displays in an instant the whole life we trudged through for many years. They sweep over you and enter the abyss ahead of you. It is a final hope. Welcome it. And... let go....

Daniel Brick

Moonlight In Late November

for Baharak

Moonlight spreads across the landscape
and covers everything it touches in its path
with shining white - trees and bushes,
streams and ponds, narrow lanes and far fields.
Nothing will resist this unfolding of light.
It is a spirit-force we welcome, because
we are attuned to things high above us.

Moonlight sweeps over the homes housed
in long snow valleys. Inside their shelters
all people sleep the same sleep, but are visited
by different dreams, each one a special gift
of the Moon. Alas, many people forget their
Moon-gift upon awakening, or laugh it out of
their daylight lives. The Moon is forgiving.

There is one among us who needs less sleep
and the Moon grants her the Higher Dream
that contains the seeds of all the others.
She is the guardian of it through the patient
night. She lies or sits still in a lucid dream
whose radiance envelops her. Her mind is focussed
on inner currents carrying both seeds and dreams.

I am only a witness who watches her, withdrawn
in the daylight, active in the night, bend
the dark to serve human needs and make Moonlight
lavish her splendor over our incomplete lives.
In another age she would be crowned the Queen
and raised to a throne. But our guardian is content
to be a dreamer among dreamers and share the Moon's bounty
with all who love Moonlight and cherish the dream.

Daniel Brick

The Friends In Three Scenes

for Baharak

There is an immense wall
between us. We can hear
far above the roar of
the King's chariots racing
four abreast on the top.
The King presents the winner,
who displayed the most daring,
to his court and gives him
a lovely golden chalice
inscribed with the imperial
seal. (Next week his subalterns
will place memorial wreaths
on the graves of the losers.)
... We cannot see each other,
no voice can penetrate the alien
stone. But let us walk along
the wall until we sense each
other's presence like a welcome
dream figure. Then we will stop
and face the wall. Touching
its hard, ragged surface
will be like holding air,
soft, pliant, transparent air
in our hands. That sensation
is to touch what friendship is
to the soul. We seek no imperial
favor, we do not feel the allure
of gold or silver. Friendship
is our lasting joy. Meet me there
where we are one in the silence of the wall.

There is a broad river, one of
the aged brown gods, that churns,
and sweeps, and floods the dry
landscape west of the city. We
walk on either side of it despite
its force and deafening noise.

Sometimes I will playfully
speed up, begin to run, and
you will laughing chase me.
Other times we stand still,
each one only a blob of color
to the other on the other bank.
We wave our arms in a kind of
sign language, each smiling
at the other's ingenuity.
And, I admit, sometimes tears
well up in my eyes, because
your figure is so bright,
trapped in a shaft of purest sunlight.

Travelers, whose business or
pleasure takes them far from
our capital city, speak of
a garden on the far side
of the dusty hills of
the high country of the North.
They say the colors shimmer
even from a distance, but explode
in wonder when you draw near.
They say red flowers, blue flowers,
white flowers cluster in their blazing
glory in fields stretching to the horizon.
They say flowering trees with huge green
leaves sheltering delicate yellow interiors
line the banks of rushing silver streams.
Then they tire of talking, and leave us
anxious for their next visit. And I wonder,
if both us lie in separate sleep, clear
our minds of trivial things and picture
those flowers that festoon the earth,
might we not dream that garden
in our separate sleep into one lucid
dream of a common place where we stand side by side....

Daniel Brick

Thanksgiving

Each day exults
in its measure of Light.
Its attendant darkness,
however large or small,
does not diminish this joy.
I sit in my recliner
every morning and witness
the daily beauty of however
much Light us granted. What is
given us is sufficient to evoke
appreciation. What matters is
the gratitude that connects
me to the Light. This is how
I participate in the glory
each dawn unfolds into the world.
How long this glory lasts
- a few hours, or a whole day,
or a forever-moment that mocks
the futile "tick-tock" of clocks -
depends on my willingness to lift
my voice in affirmation by means
of a poem, or an act of agape,
or a conscious hour of delight
in the Light pooling around me.
It is so easy to be happy in the world!

Daniel Brick

A Devotee Speaks

When I was very young
I heard a summons well up
within me, like a fountain
of fresh water. I did not know
what to think, but I knew what
to do. I joined a band of wandering
devotees, also summoned, also
confused. We were a sorry company,
lean, pock-marked, smelly, often
sickly. We walked and walked
through forests, villages, high hills,
tundra, and only stopped to rest
at isolated lakes or deserted valleys.
Priests and parishioners alike banned
from entering their churches. We knelt
in a semi-circle at the steps below
the great wooden doors decorated
by carvings of the Savior's life.
We prayed fiercely in the open air
and sometimes raised our scrawny
voices in hymns. But we knew our place
was not among them, and withdrew
before they emerged from God's Holy House.

We withdrew back into the forests
and deserts of God's original creation.
We prayed everyday for God's grace
to descend and bless every living thing.
One day an Angel appeared suddenly
among us, shining and glowing, and he spoke
gently in our hearts. He led us in a forgotten
dance, a dance of celestial things, with music
heard in our hearts accompanying our movements.
It was daylight when we began our dance-worship,
it was deepest night when we stopped. We realized
we were living angelic lives. We closed the night
kneeling in communal prayer and did not notice
the Angel had withdrawn... And then each of us
felt the Hand of God touch his head. Again and again

we felt that touch, both gentle and firm, absolutely a touch of grace. And soon afterwards a dozen once weak and confused men strode out of the wilderness, fully prepared to spread God's Joy to the world.

My brothers and sisters in Jesus,
I could tell you many things, if you are ready to hear them. Or I could stay silent and disappear like a cloud of morning mist in the sunlight.
I could tell you of a life of service. I could tell you of a perpetual thirst. I could describe a Temple within your hearts you will never finish building. I could tell how we pray that your lives become a marriage of Goodness and Beauty, and behold how heavenly light shines over this blessed marriage. And the angels far above us, wrapped in heavenly glory, see your humanity expand to angelic dimensions. Trust me, there are so many things awaiting you. Oh! Oh! Everything will unfold before you, open out, and become a thousand times more than itself, and keep opening out into Space and Time as they steadily become an Eternity that brings you forever into God's presence....

Daniel Brick

The Brahms Recital

Through the deep night
he drove in and out of
so many remembered lives.
A mere hour earlier
the violinist paused
before beginning
his final offering;
"There's joy in my family
this week. Our daughter-in-law
gave birth to our first
grandchild. You will forgive me
for putting it this way? "
Laughter and applause spread
through the small auditorium
filled to capacity. The violinist,
the renowned Sir James Crofton,
was so happy, his joy cast a sheen
over the music lovers. Still smiling,
Sir James nodded to his pianist.
He emphatically began the Sonata
in D minor by Brahms. In his intense
solitude, the listener let the perfection
of the music raise him into its high spaces
above the dangling shreds of a destiny
relentlessly unraveling even now. And then
it was over except for the formalities of
applause and departure. And the listener
realized he had listened with a doubled
hearing - his certainly and hers
just as certainly...

His drive past ghostly trees
that lined the road was a loneliness
that exceeded definition. At the door
of their cottage, it was not his wife
who greeted him but their hospice nurse:
"She's sleeping now, very peacefully.
I gave her the pill an hour ago."
She helped him take off his winter

coat. And he stood exposed as if
naked in his own home.
How much he wanted to tell
the nurse and Judith that
he had witnessed that nexus
of old life and new life,
that exchange of departure
and arrival, with things dying
and things new born. He was amazed
at the depth of consolation
such knowledge conveyed
impartially, almost secretly.
Outwardly he said softly,
"Oh, thanks for this respite."
Inwardly his gratitude became
a prayer, "Oh, thank you
for the glory of it all."

Daniel Brick

Hearing Ravel's String Quartet In A Crowded Coffee House, 5: 30 Pm

The stillness of this music
surprises me. It does not move
and yet changes continually.
It becomes at every moment
more than itself. I sank into
the ease of the music,
as the musicians relaxed
into their mastery, their faces
showing only the joy of performance.
I drifted in and out of the sounds
as I tried to write a poem of sympathy.
(You know this story, my friend, I won't
belabor the failure of words at this time.)

Those sounds, rising above the chatter,
enveloped me, and Music and I became
a single being, attentive to the vibrations
of the larger world. I felt a goal I had not
reckoned had been achieved, and its benefits
spilled over the edge of things and filled
the awareness of people of good will
everywhere. It was as if I stood in the midst
of everyone and danced a dervish dance
summoning all to universal sympathy. It's true
we can indeed touch the World Soul and feel
its wholeness within our souls. And in that
homeland of unified souls peace will descend
and embrace even the most vexed soul among us.
The music, having fulfilled its purpose,
fell into a deep repose. And the rest is silence.

(This poem is dedicated to the victims of the
earthquake in Northern Iran in November, 2017.
May they rest in peace.)

Daniel Brick

Music As Holy Ascent

So long ago
Music brought Heaven
close to Earth, and gave
suffering humanity Joy,
as they labored every day
and night for masters who cared
only for what sword and spear achieved.

Some laborers conceived higher
hopes, and nurtured them in an
atmosphere of inner freedom. And Music
blessed that nascent freedom
with the gift of spirit flight.
Music is both Ascent and Descent,
and both directions are heavenward.

Today, laborers no longer, we are
the Adepts who can bring Heaven down
or raise seekers to the empyrean.
With GRUPPEN we announce our mission;
STIMMUNG purges souls of the ascendants, and
CARRE celebrates their bonding as a visionaries.
INORI is the praise-song that makes all one.

STERNKLANG links our individual minds
with the Cosmic Mind, as we ascend beyond planetary
knowledge. SATURDAY from LIGHT frees us from
sensory limitations. Through LIGHTS - WATERS
we open our hearts to love, and through MANTRA
we open our minds to gnosis. With MICHAELION
we look back at Earth with deepest love.

LIGHT - PICTURES show us the first wonders
of our new existence. HARLEQUIN teaches us
the laughing wisdom that replaces the Aeschylean
wisdom gained only through suffering. We experience
MICHAEL'S HOMECOMING as our homecoming, and MICHAEL'S
JOURNEY AROUND THE EARTH will be our memory of mortality.
We will soon join the ANGELIC PROCESSION, for which

Stockhausen has composed a new Heavenly score for our apotheosis.

Daniel Brick

The Appointed Day... Or Not Part One

The Appointed Day arrived without any accompanying signs. Some said simply, "It arrived today, because today is neither yesterday nor tomorrow. It arrived in its slot, because the calendar told it to do so." They expressed neither faith nor wonder, they bored themselves with common sense, earth-bound and terminal. But one eager believer responded with the alacrity of his fictional heroes, "Just because it has not revealed its secrets does not mean it has no secrets. It has arrived - that is the first event, only the first one." Another eager believer lunged over him, and added, "These rocks are beautiful, the carriers are beautiful. What is there not to admire? Are we not one race of human beings throughout the galaxy?" The crowd had thinned, mostly the Eager Ones milled about. A few pockets of the Nay-Sayers persisted. But they had turned their backs to the Eager Believers, who had formed their own tight circles. Thus, at the edge of the city, where civilization and wilderness meet along a thin line of separation, the Nay-Sayers and the Eager Ones stood on common ground while strengthening their divisions.

Daniel Brick

My Name Is The Subject

My name, both inherited
and merited, has affirmed
my identity for seven decades
against a swirling mass of
competing names, crowding
the spaces of the world
in which we either prevail
or fail utterly. I fear
that anonymity, so I seek
refuge. At least in a sentence
my name has an unassailable
predominance: my name takes
the place of honor as
The Subject. All other words
must place themselves in deference
to its mighty grammatical position.
Like the KING piece on a chess board,
the sentence subject is the key player.
Even the verbs, those electrons
among words, are secondary as they
spin and swirl in orbit around
their acknowledged center. My name
is the sun which casts its glory
over that verbal flight. And lesser
words - adjectives, adverbs, etc. -
fill in gaps of meaning, making
whole the sentence over which
my name sways, the most powerful
being in this small world of grammar.

Daniel Brick

The Space Age A Sonnet

A rocket takes off from from Dillon's Run Base
and launches toward the x-ray binary star system
called CHANDRA. The crew is evenly divided between
Engineers, who manage the space travel technology,
plot the course unerringly, and monitor hundreds
of cybernetic siblings, and we poets and ambassadors,
whose mission begins when the engineers' is finished.
They return but we remain as guests of the Autarch of
the watery metropolis of Mercier 976 for the whole
of our mortality. Such is our choice to serve two masters,
Earthly and Chandran, and blend our mammalian culture
with their reptilian culture, to make common cause
with all creatures for the expansion of civilization
across the Universe and the triumph of the Space Age.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Nighttime Is Homecoming - A Sonnet

In the fresh morning light
I gaze over the leaf-strewn lawn
that was shrouded in moon-white
just four hours ago. Whether I call
myself night-owl or night-hawk,
the result is the same ruffled feathers.
My mind follows the tides of NIGHT:
its slippery contours, its slow array
of stars shaping secret constellations,
its translation of day's frivolity
into the stuff of mystery, with its
silence composing new Hymns to the Night,
its labyrinths interlocking in a fused
pathway leading the night walker to transcendence.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

A Pause On Your Faith Journey

for Matthew, with encouragement

I see you as if you stood
on a ridge between lowlands
and rugged high country.
You are poised in thought,
your back to familiar scenes
as you gaze into a new sky
shining over your next trek
upward toward an unimaginable
summit. That may well your life's
pattern: mastering one height
after another, drawing ever
closer to the final summit.



PoemHunter.com

for Matthew

I see you as if you stood
on a ridge between lowlands
and rugged high country.
You are poised in thought,
with your back to the lowlands,
as you scan the rocky heights
and wooded thickets below a sky
of steel blue expanse. What you
are thinking has lifted your spirit
higher than the highest peak.

How long will you stand
between realities of descent
and further ascent? An awareness
was been placed within you
ages ago. It has grown steadily
and shapes the man you are
becoming. It is bound to help
you, it is bound to complete
you, it is bound to raise you
body and soul to the highest glory.

Will you assign a name to this
gift of impulse and purpose?
Call it Fidelity, and immediately
the face of Jesus appears everywhere
you turn. Now it is clear: your thoughts
while standing on this ridge,
between the beginning and the ending

of your journey, were prayers. And now...

they are answered prayers, because you are ready for the next stage of your mission. This is the moment when pride and humility must coalesce in a perfect balance. Stretch out your right hand and clasp the hand of the one closest to your heart. You two will continue to walk, and climb a common path. There will be others beside you, behind you, ahead of you. It is a community that ascends the highlands, with you as their natural leader.

Daniel Brick

Travels In Provence(Part Two)

II

I reach a plateau, and
pitch my tent at its base.
In the morning I will ascend
and view the vista, and
in that space spread before me
I will read my future, thus
unifying space and time.
But tonight will be given
to the dream geography of
thought and sleep...

I know in my soul's depth
I am following a path forged
by Tristram and Iseult.
I am perhaps one of their
lesser servants: carrying
garments and blankets, I am
in the background of their lives,
but for me their presence is
a central fire, which casts light
dispelling darkness and spreads
illumination dispelling ignorance.
Their entourage is small to avoid
prying eyes. Two mounted knights
with lances and claymores lead
the procession deep into a forest.
Tristram walks beside his horse
and holds the reins of her horse.
They both look resolutely ahead,
their eyes piercing the dark woods,
anticipating a different darkness
that will release their bright hopes.
Iseult is veiled in a green silk scarf
but strands of her golden hair slip
into view and flash with a brilliance
that outshines even the brightest silk.
I see no other trace of the woman Iseult.

She willingly dissolves into anonymity.
Tristram wears no armor but he clutches
his naked great sword, Endurable, as if
enemies lurked along the path. At this moment,
he is not Iseult's lover, only the faithful
protector of a princess whose glory awes
him. He is steadfast, silent and strong,
and I can tell he is a very happy man.
Three retainers struggle and complain
as they steady a cart drawn by two work-
horses packed with worldly goods
the ghostly lovers no longer cherish.
By noon we reach the outskirts of
Tristram and Iseult's hidden castle,
their refuge from the frivolity
of King Mark's court, their hideaway
dedicated to the Arts of Love,
True Love, unstained by profit
and false glory. It is a paradise
they have created beyond the world
in which they can find an available
happiness. The rest is Fate.

When I awake to the true light of
morning, in my tent, alone and free,
I feel in my soul the energy of
an ancient, unsurpassable joy.
Such is the reward for my fidelity,
my faithful service to Venus
and "the April-like Queen";....

Daniel Brick

Travels In Provence, Summer, 1972

(I)

For three weeks I have wandered
without an itinerary across
these Troubadour lands. Delight
and Repose are my boon companions
as I move in courtly measures
from a place of beauty to a place
of loveliness, with flowers forming
color patterns on the ground and
swirls of scent in the air.
And in my hearing the chanson of
Arnaut Daniel alternate with Gregorian
Chant, bringing flesh and spirit
into harmony, with threads of bird songs
connecting human with animal music.
At moments out of time, I see my mentor
hiking along a ridge above a river
I have yet to cross. He waves to me
but does not summon me. Even at this remove
I can see he is a very happy man.
But all too soon he drops out of
view. It must be his intent
to make me decide for myself
what this journey is: a pilgrimage?
a vacation? an exploration? I carry
my much-read copy of his book,
THE SPIRIT OF ROMANCE by Ezra Pound,
and I sometimes wonder: Is this
my liberation he has arranged?
Just last week I rushed after him,
looking for traces of him
in the heavy scented air, but
all I found was more beauty.
But I know he has not abandoned me,
like the sun that withdraws its favor
every day. Ezra is the steady sun
of continual illumination. At dusk,
I feel the only sadness of my travels. It is

not loneliness, it is not panic,
but this sadness overwhelms me
before sleep. I shove it aside
like a dead log. Nothing unliving
will retard my progress. I lie
in a pool of moonlight, and count
my blessings prayerfully. And
the wonder of it is the man
I could not detain strides
into my dreams. Ezra Pound says,
"I can tell you are a very
happy man. Make your joy a lasting
thing, and address her, the
April-like Queen, as another Venus."
As he begins to fade I hear
his anthem, "Nothing better
suits a poet than the worship
of a goddess who still lingers,
in this world, Beauty within Beauty."

Daniel Brick

On The Human Condition

“Wanderer, there is no path. There is only the walking.”
(Inscription on a monastery wall in Toledo, Spain.)

(I)

“Wanderer... ” (The Body)

Wanderer, tell me where
you have been, and I will
know who you are. Tell me
where you are going,
and you will be a mystery
to me. What will you say?
Does the past hang over
your path like a broad-brimmed
hat, blocking your sight
of immediate things?
You must practice leaning
backward stretching your neck,
craning your eyes. These gestures
will make the world visible,
even as darkness drops
from the sky, slips through cloud
banks, gets entangled
in the leafless trees
of this low country
and spreads across
the rough ground
like a stalking beast.
I see you are a man
of high country habits:
you move too fast for this clime.
You will arrive too soon
at your destinations, people
won't be ready for you, they
will struggle to find conversation
which suits you. They will spill
precious beverages trying
to serve you. And the premature wine
will lack flavor... But somewhere

on our crowd of citizens, you will find
one dazed denizen who speaks
your language, even with your accents.
It will be a homecoming of sorts
as you share favorite poems
each of you has learned by heart.
When you retire for the night
in a makeshift bed even the blankets
will remind you of your lost homeland.
And the grief you have carried
for days and nights past counting
will fall into the deepest abyss
of sleeping and vanish.

(II)

“... There is no path....” (The Mind)

Knowledge plays tricks
on us: it pretends to be
universal, when it is only
local. It promises happiness
to those who strive to learn,
but its pursuit brings loads
of sorrows the learner must
carry - for how long? But
the mind is cavernous, its
sorrowload is scattered over
the floors of thought, and
the burden lightens over time.
Two types of learners contend
to make their knowledge swell
in relevance: some sit in chairs
or walk under arborescent lanes
as they contemplate in silence
the nature of things. Others sit
at desks and in a frenzy of writing
produce page after page of erudite
speculation or dazzling fantasy.
Which is the worthier occupation?
I myself, a mere dilettante beset
on both sides by these passionate
advocates, have sampled both. I conclude:

on odd days writing trumps contemplation.
On even days - Oh, take your pick!
When the South Wind breezes through
our campus on its passage to the sea,
then the writers breathe in its dense
energy, and write passages of amazing
and incandescent wonder. Meanwhile,
those in contemplation breathe the same
charged air, and their thoughts, still
and focused, permeate space and lodge
in minds like mine and we sense
a heightened awareness render us
still and focused. When this mood
of mind fades, we will read
the writers' frenzied words, words, words.

(III)

"... There is only the walking."(The Soul)

I am the third speaker. It is my time
to turn time into purpose and purpose
into triumph! Have you heard of this
philosophy? It goes by various names
but its essence never changes. It tells us:
you can do what you will, but first
you must prepare that god within, your s-o-u-l,
to receive its truth from itself. That is
the abundance within that continually
pours its power into body and mind and
MAKES YOU WHOLE... The only sin is
laziness. So stand up, brush the crumbs
from your shirt, grab your cane, and take
the first big step into your future.
And the steps will almost magically
follow one after another, and your body
will assume a gait in sync with the currents
of your mind, energized by the power
of your soul, in the fullness of your being.
And your mantra evermore will be: There is only the walking.

Daniel Brick

Gratitude

How many times a day
do you breathe, pulling
swirling air, fresh and
sweet, into your lungs?
How often have you said,
"Many thanks, air, for always
giving me what I most need? "

How often do you see
Sonya's watercolor of
the musician in Renaissance
attire playing fiddle for a dancing
couple and walked blindly passed it,
with no melody in your mind,
no rhythm in your gait?

How often have you finished
writing a poem to your satisfaction
and ignored your debt of inspiration
the Muse hovering close by?
And then you will tell
your friends a likely story,
"Today I wrote a poem."

What of your luck sleeping
through the night visited
only by benign dreams
of fountains and waterways,
the scent of pine trees, and
the kind regard of yellow-eyed owls?
Do you acknowledge the Gate of Ivory?

When you re-read "Hamlet"
yet again, are you once again
churlish to sweet Ophelia
and oblivious to thoughts
beyond the reaches of your soul?
Does the Abyss open its maw
only after you have passed by?

What makes you so callow?
Is it a hidden life
that isolates your waking life?
Is it a stony heart that
crushes your tenderest feelings?
Have the threads connecting your soul
to the Soul of the World snapped?

Observe, my friend, the signs
that flash behind your eyes,
to the sounds that linger
after listening to Schoenberg's
"Verklarte Nacht", to the sudden
illumination that floods your mind when
flesh and soul clasp flesh and soul.

Daniel Brick

Gurre-Lieder By Jens Peter Jacobson: A Variation

Wonderful Tove,
my soul is at peace...
I look into your eyes
and remain silent. Only
silence can equal your
beauty. Our love is
a single flower with
parallel petals: joy
and sadness, effort
and repose, life and
glowing death...
Will these opposites
all blend into each
other and become
a wholeness of rare
glory? We near each
other, tendrils of
electric energy connect
us invisibly. We look
into each other's eyes,
then the eyes of Heaven,
the Stars, shine upon us,
and it is the same reality.
The roof of the World rises,
we are carried higher than
human hope to the precincts
of Heaven. Do we hover
in streaks of blue-gold light?
Or are we absolutely still,
in the perfection of the moment?
I cannot tell movement from
rest, and your laughing face
equals mine... Ah, now
a single orb of red-gold
light envelopes us, we are fixed
to the same dream, the same vision.

Wonderful Tove,
you and I, I and

you, we are a single
thing, a circle
circling itself,
a place that exists
everywhere, a silence....

Daniel Brick

The Nature Of Truth - A Science Fiction Poem

This is not the whole story.
Truth in our world is always
a fragment whose jagged edges
suggest an equally jagged whole.
You must, before your quest begins,
assess a plethora of warnings.
The jagged circumference of
the whole truth might lacerate
you mercilessly; you could lose
a hand trying to connect two pieces,
much more the whole; the surface may be
incandescent and scorch your hands,
even your face; after all your efforts,
what if you find the pieces incomplete?
The whole cannot be achieved in our world,
only a stuttering, strangled half-speech
will ever be made manifest....

My friend, there may be worlds out there
beyond the rim of space, passed the nebulae
whose swirling light blinds our vision and
our telescopes, even the most sensitive
instruments of discovery. But perhaps
on one of those hidden worlds, TRUTH
is One and Whole. And people live
perfectly circular lives, or perfectly
triangular lives, and their perfections
may be equal to the task of flight
between the stars. They may be in quest
of our partial truth just as we are
of their absolute truth. It may yet happen.
We may find people whose every day of existence
fulfills our hope that each person carries
the SOUL OF TRUTH within. Perhaps they will be
the happiest people in the universe because
they can grasp the Whole Story. Or they will be
the saddest people because the Whole Story is
an awful disappointment, true but unresonant,
complete but of no lasting interest...

Is it not better to live each fragment
of time fully, to listen to the music
of the present for its temporary glory,
to absorb each day's partial truth,
and to embrace the inevitable darkness
of night, as our dreams anticipate
moments of wonders yet to come?

Daniel Brick

A Spiritual Courtship: The Lover Speaks

There must be a thousand homecomings
before we can say to each other, "I love you."
We must exercise a superb patience,
and wait for all the signs to be fulfilled.
First, the noonday sun must shine
into the forest's west side and dispel all shadows.
A spring harvest must exceed all expectations.

Twelve deer, both male and female, must leave
the woods, and eat apple slices from the palms
of our hands Two eagles, perched high above,
must flap their wings a dozen times, then fly
in tandem around the forest's circumference
before flying away on a northerly trajectory.
The rain that falls just after dawn must smell
as sweet as honey, and nocturnal rainfall must
hover over your sleep. These signs are
only the beginning... A blind man must find
his way to your house and you must serve him
freshly baked bread. And a deaf woman must tell me
in sign language that in her sleep she hears
the music of Mahler. A teenage girl must find
her derelict father and persuade him to return
to the family circle. A woman and a man who have
both betrayed their vows must each morning must
ask for the other's forgiveness until a New Love
raises their lives to a higher union. And then
on an ordinary morning or on an evening as quiet
as the prayers of the redeemed, we will become
aware of an angel casually leaning against a simple
maple tree, and we will know we have achieved
our final homecoming....

both betrayed their vows must every morning seek
the other's forgiveness until A New Life raises
their love to a higher union. And on an ordinary morning,
or on an evening as quiet as the prayers of the redeemed,
we will become aware of an angel casually leaning
against a simple maple tree, and we will know
we have achieved the last homecoming....

Daniel Brick

What They Say (For My Friend Baharak)

They say all the waters
of the Earth converge
beneath this place

They say the winds
of the four quarters
of the World begin
in the forest enclosing you

They say nowhere is
there bluer sky than
the sky above you

They say veins
of precious metals
abound in the rocks
on which you stand

They say the four seasons
agreed to cycle through the year
when time gathered them in this space

They say the first woman and
the first man to embrace in passion
left their cries and sighs
in the air you are now breathing

They say female poets
rendered mute by catastrophe
became the earliest Muses
when they became one with this place

They say male poets
who wrote only war epics
invented lyric poetry here
when the Muses touched them

They say what must be said
is said here, and what must be heard

is heard here, without end

They say if this place lives
in your heart when you return
to the World, you will live a pure life

Daniel Brick

The Higher Dream

Redeem/The time. Redeem/The unread vision
in the higher dream....

T.S.Eliot, 'Ash Wednesday, IV'

I

I will be honest to a fault:
I have lost the thread that
connected so many necessary things.
Now they flap in every passing wind.
Greatness is no longer theirs.

II

How long will it take
for the good things
to return to their places
and resume the whirling motion
of the universe in harmony?

III

Just assume with me that
we are on a pilgrimage
that will make us better people.
We are nearing our destination.
Why are we so slow? Why are we not hastening?

IV

Words are readily available
to believers and to seekers.
They have been tarnished
by the base uses of base men.
Let us restore their primal purity.

Daniel Brick

Science Fiction

for Sonya and Robert

Duck! The two of you! Do it
in tandem. Flying cars swooping
overhead graze pedestrians
all the time now. They are driven
by driven government agents.
The same ones responsible for
detentions and identity checks.
Duck, I tell you, or you may be
one head shorter in stature.
And the noise in the city - some
claim they have to shout all day
to block the noise to hear thoughts.
Others have stopped thinking. I met
a poet the other day at a coffee bar,
he said the words are disappearing
because our heads don't have the room
to house them. I told him -
'You have to save the words for the rest
of us, ' and he just laughed until
he started coughing. I left quickly
before he started crying. People
of all kinds do that. But a doctor
told me people's tear ducts atrophy.
and all they can do is sob. That is
not me. I live for the future, I have
hopes lodged deep inside me and they
are seeds, each of which contains
one promise. I once had a list
with all my hopes and promises
written on it. But agents doing
a routine security sweep took it.
They threatened me with a Brain
Sweep, but nothing came of it.
That's the way things are now:
Nothing comes forth from things
or speech. It's as if everything
is frozen and every person is

paralyzed. But don't repeat that,
it might get mixed up with rumors
of a Revolution, and I could lose
my head, or my mind, depending on
my punishment. I hardly have anymore
the energy to be cautious. In a city
in which people in churches curse
God, and people in libraries tear
pages one by one from books, and
people spice their food with curry
to disguise the spoilage, and people -
Look, at the edge of the neighborhood,
the ground is curling and dust is swirling.
A wind is blowing across my face. Soon
the dust storm will take over our lives.

Daniel Brick

'The Dark Backward And Abysm Of Time' (*)

(*) Shakespeare, The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2, line 62

A demi-god, proud and foolish, made the Earth
and her Moon. The work was difficult and
unrewarding to him. He was bored and uninspired.
He invented the shameful custom of cursing things
whose darkness dismays us. He created a world
out of nothingness, except his deep impulse
and the readiness of the non-existent to be.
He grew smaller as he made the world bigger.

Later worshipers named this demi-god
VOLTURAN. They were awed by the shadow
of his creative power. (The good demi-gods
had not yet thought themselves into being.)
They never spoke words of a base nature.
They were the inventors of Poetry and Music,
and established their rapport for all the ages.
Volturan's sense of failure puzzled them.

How could Volturan revile the Earth and threaten
to render it as lifeless as the Moon? They saw
only good in his planet and her creatures. And they
loved him. They honored him. They praised him
as the Source, the essential heart beat of all things,
the Voice that spoke them in the wildness of the wind
and in the quietude of sleep. They smiled even as he
frowned and plotted against them. They deserved better.

The ancient texts describe Volturan as an angry and
bitter God, who leaned against the edge of Space,
pushing aside the fabric of the sky to make more
room for himself. He gazed down the corridors
of Time with a stare that ignited fires and
burned what he could not love into cinders and ash.
But his reign of power was not to last. What is
that force in things that is aroused in due time?

And so it was that Volturan regressed from being

to place. He lumbered into a cosmic niche enveloped in nothingness, and was steadily absorbed into its solidity. He became a chunk of the Southern Mountains as they rose over colliding land masses. He was fixed forever into the mineral life of the planet, and his being dissolved into place, his pride broken.

The Earth had purged itself of something unworthy of existence. Then, with infinite patience, the Earth transformed itself from mere place into living being, a Goddess, a Cosmic Mother, whose loving hand and serene countenance prevailed over Space and Time. She unfolded waves of love that rolled around and around, embracing both beings and places into a Harmony of Life.

Daniel Brick

A Learning Curve

'A penny for your thoughts'

We used to say when we were children, and did not understand thoughts are private things, sustained by the pure light of the mind, hardly able to withstand the coarse light of the sun or the stained light of the moon. 'A penny for your thoughts,' we said, because we thought everything was available to us, no barriers caused by wealth, no limitations from ignorance of the world. We gradually gained pieces of experience that pass for wisdom, mostly the wisdom of caution and hesitation... Now it all seems so obvious. We guard our thoughts, treasure them, hide them away. So many impulses hedge our thoughts: Will they die from exposure? Will they shock when revealed? Should they be censored? That is why only children think they can buy thoughts for pennies. The rest of us know: thoughts are priceless.

Daniel Brick

My Name

I have never been fully visible.
Perhaps in some angle of view my soul
is outlined by the light imparted
at my creation. But that has faded,
my illumination has faded, even the stars
that made my nativity visible have faded,
as new stars, more aggressive, more endowed
with brilliance have eclipsed them,
extinguished their planets and moons,
and left a desolation in the sky
my feeble human light cannot penetrate.
So I am slowly becoming fully invisible,
but not transformed into Spirit...
So I will be a lesser being at my death
than at my birth. I am one whose name
us writ in soul-dust, or even worse
in flesh-dust. Oh, where in the chambers of
Space, on the shelves of Time, in the swirl of
dark matter into dark energy, will we be rescued
and truly seen by the spirits that abide?

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Nightmare - Four

(IV)

The Nightworld Forest

Is this the end?

This turning of the road, veering left, passed dense sumac bushes already autumn red, and entering a forest of indeterminate size.

What are we to make of this latest place in the deep forest of the Night?

We need help down here to judge each moment's reality. Space is unchanged for us, we understand extension. But the mystery of time has increased and we do not understand duration. We assume the forest may hold help...

The ones we sent into the darkness come back in two groups: Stragglers crawl out the forest, stretch and contract their bodies, make low animal sounds, and sleep on the grass. They say nothing to us. When they awake, they are shocked at their nakedness, confused by their plight: 'Where have I been? Where are my clothes? What is this place?' We clothe, and comfort them as best we can. Adagio music helps.

Others stride out of the forest, completely self-possessed. They stand or lean but never sit, they say nothing but their names, ignore our questions, look with disdain on those we have wrapped in borrowed clothes. We were once a company, a visionary company, we drew from the same source, exchanged and amplified

our individual resources. We are now panting survivors,
or we are aloof watchers, or are we a third group
still being formed by powers beyond us?

I only know this: My turn to enter the forest occurs
next month: I would rather be a lost soul in the darkness,
or a naked, shivering thing than one of those striders
who no longer exhibit our common humanity.

A forest without end blocks our advance. A wide valley
with a tumultuous river snakes behind us. And above us
is the huge expanse of a steel-blue, cloudless sky.

Daniel Brick

A Poem Of The Kaleva District

Honoring One Hundred Years of
the Independence of Finland

Tell me, Singer, those stories that
cling to your mind as vines
of blossoms and nettles cling
to an old house hiding terrible
secrets. Tell me those stories
again so I stay awake, alert and
prepared for the worst. This night
is crucial for all of us. It has
never been as easy as we imagined.
There will be a swollen river ahead
we must ford; a mountain pass will be
blocked by a family of trolls;
a battleship is being built by
our enemies; there are wolves larger
than any we have seen before. My mind
has ever been far-roving, my body ran
to keep up with it, but now both
body and mind want to return to
the Farm in the High Country where
I can watch the Great Bear and stare
into the heavens studded with stars.
So tell again the story of the pale-faced
fortune-teller and the orphan girl with
the sad eyes that should shine brighter
than the summer sun, and the tale of
the last defenders of Master Paavo's
homestead in Karelia, and the Song
of the Sampo. Then you can rest for
awhile, until tomorrow's sun ignites
the eastern sky with red fire and dispels
dark skies and portents. Then you will
sing for me one story of love and hope,
but do not tell me if it is true or false,
and I will carry it deep in my heart
all the way home to share it with our family
assembled by the hearth fire, and it will be

a holy remembrance for all seasons to come.

.

Daniel Brick

Night Into Day

for the 100th Anniversary
of Finnish Independence 1917-2017

Tell me those stories that cling
to your mind as vines
of blossoms and nettles cling
an old house hiding terrible
secrets. Tell me those stories
again so I stay awake, alert and
prepared for the worst. This night
is crucial for all of us. It has
never been as easy as we imagined it.
There will be a swollen river to ford
ahead; a mountain pass will be blocked
by a family of trolls; the region
you are crossing was ripped
from your map book. The radio promised
you updates but the only sound
you hear is 1980s Rock Music. So repeat
the story of the pale-faced fortune-teller
and the orphan girl with golden tresses and
sad eyes that should shine, or the tale of
the last defenders of Lord Paavo's castle, or
the final account of the Sampo in the KALEVALA.
And finally, as the next day's sun ignites
the eastern sky with red fire and dispels
yesterday's dark skies and portents, give me
one story of love and hope, but do not tell me
if it's true or false, and I will carry it
deep in my heart all the way home to share it
with all of our family assembled by the hearth fire,
and it will be a holy prospect for seasons to come.

Daniel Brick

Listening To Sacred Hymns By Gurdjieff

Out there in space where stars
and planets position themselves
according to primeval patterns and
determine the seasons on earth, it is
already Autumn 2017. But here,
in the places we walk, in the air
we breathe, in the thoughts tumbling
in our minds to their own ends, it is
still Summer. Can our simple desires
exert a force that will make Summer's
blessings last even longer? Can my thoughts
race through space and freeze the behavior
of celestial objects? Relieve them
of their role in determining human fate?

The pianist is playing a piece called
HYMN FOR A GREAT TEMPLE, and it summons me
to either prayer or despair. Perhaps
I should restrain my thoughts, and
position myself between the two extremes.
First, I will humbly pray, second roar
in defiance of fixed, unbending things,
then repeat both and keep repeating them
until a current of energy takes over,
turning their opposition into a single
force. Or will this music of Gurdjieff
quiet my thinking, and make me absorb
what is given, and not to wrest control
from the ancient custodians of reality?
And do not the simple pleasures of Summer
and the complex joys of Autumn mock
the heaviness of my thoughts? I will
postpone until Winter any resolution.

Daniel Brick

A Spiritual Nexus

The angels come and go, sometimes
distracted from their missions,
they are lost and wandering
for decades of our time. Eventually
they find themselves: they rejoin
an angelic cohort and resume
their mission work. But they
recall with delight their time of
wandering as a time of freedom
when the fullness of their being
was fully engaged. And their minds
were strangely linked to human minds
and strange emotions flooded them.

I have seen traces left behind
by angels rushing across space and time
in their seasons of accidental exile.
I believe on rare occasions an angel
has lingered in my presence and shared
his immense awareness with me but only
for the briefest moment. I once thought
angels and humans lived totally apart.
Now I sense those traces of a common space,
even though the Universe dwarfs their
occurrence. Some argue my patience
is wasted energy, that angels loom so large
it's like a snail summoning a human being.

What matters is the brief moment
when a human being occupies
the same place and moment with one
of the winged wonders, and his being
is made radiant in a flash of exchange.
He become for a moment an angel and
the angel becomes in the same instant
a human. The weight of this higher existence
overwhelms his human experience: he only exists
for a moment in a blazing knowledge of power.
But the angel is transformed forever

by a depth of feeling, fragile and sincere,
and wholly human. And so the nexus happens.

Daniel Brick

Orpheus

The whole Night I spent searching
for you within the four walls of Sleep.
I sang a sweet Song of desire,
the shining ebony walls parted, and
my body floated above the bottomless floor
of Sleep. Although my eyes were closed,
I saw clearly every object clinging to
its own nightspace, fearful that
a random light shaft might loosen its grip,
and it would fall down the vast vertical
length of Night... I searched with hand
and eye, the Eight Chambers of Sleep,
avoiding only the fourth where creatures
that hate humanity lurk in readiness.
In two chambers I sensed your recent presence,
traces of colors and sounds still came to
my senses. In the awesome sobriety
of this dark realm, I was intoxicated
by this awareness. My resolve was as tight
as a stretched bow, and the arrow of expectation
was released. It showed me a path to the Fifth
Chamber. No further magic flight aided me,
I had to climb the high plateau of this immense
chamber. An exhausted man reached the top,
refreshed only by the ambiguous night air
swirling around me. But you were not there...
I slid down the opposite slope into
the sloshy ground between ground
between Chambers Six and Seven. In the turgid air,
I saw our spiritual rival, MELATRON, sitting
on a gold throne. Even in his disgrace, his beauty
is startling. He knows me well enough, but
he acknowledges only those who stoop to beg
for his unholy help. Your image shining in my mind,
swelling in my heart, gave me strength, and I left him
in his regal solitude. I arrived at the hinterlands
of the Eighth Chamber and witnessed a dire sight:
a burning lake or river sent columns of fire
into the blank sky, sucking out breathable air.

I knew my journey was over, my quest for you,
once again frustrated. But do not be sad for me:
every step I take brings me closer to you, and
in time you too will take a Night Journey toward me.
We may, on one of these nights which stretch
before us without end, cross paths in a paroxysm of Joy.

Daniel Brick

A Poem From The Dream

Last night I dreamed
that you dreamed
that you wrote a poem about me.
In the dream your dreaming self
watched that other you compose
the poem with grace and certainty.
Then it seemed the two of you became
one and your joys increased. I was
buoyed above the waters of the Night
and felt waves of delight vibrate
across the space of sleep. You finished
another stanza, for a moment you looked
pleased, then frowned. I knew my summons.
I gathered a dozen images of kind smiles,
flashes of surprise, a mouth saying 'yes'
over and over, and one lazy look of content.
All these images tumbled into your poem,
and you placed each one where it belonged.
A double portrait was emerging in the poem,
as you placed yourself next to mine. Memories
returned from exile, and deferred wishes
came alive. You wrote the last line. A smile
lingered on your lips as you read
the Poem from the Dream.

Daniel Brick

An Analysis Of Modern Marriage

The two-fold goal of marriage;
first, to make two one;
second, to make two three.
How conveniently Nature provided
the same mechanism for both goals.

Sometimes what we see is
solid substantial flesh and bone.
Other times, it is only skin deep.
How is it that touch provides no truer
test than the eyes roaming, guessing?

How unevenly Time is split
between Desire and Performance.
I can desire for hours and feed
my Desire continuously by looking
and then recreating it all in my mind.

For some flesh is merely a curtain
they push aside to reveal the gemstone
life of the Interior: and in that airless
space resides the soul, inviolate, immortal,
with no lasting shape but shaping other things.

For others the soul resides in no place:
it is a vapor, floating at will
in measureless space. It chooses
to wait patiently in the flesh. They say,
when flesh dissolves, soul ascends...

We can perform for moments, for a moment
we are united. The momentary is all
of this rapture we are given. But our hearts,
those finely tuned instruments of feelings,
imbue memory with lasting appreciation.

The philosopher tells us we both
have and are our bodies. I can readily
see that's true: I can point out parts

and organs the way a car salesman points
to features in a new model car for sale.

And we are our bodies: the truth of that
I can see when I look into your green eyes,
their emerald wonder, and know they are
the openings through which Intimacy
crosses the borders of our selves, again and again.

What is Intimacy but a common treasure
we both acknowledge as priceless?
Intimacy is a spiritual sight by which
I see depth of truth in you and you in me.
It is two hearts fused, two minds united, two bodies one.

What is divorce? The cancellation of every line
of this poem. The breaking of every promise carried
by its words over time. The denial of its lyrical
delight, the silencing of its life long conversation.

.....

I move and speak more cautiously now, because
I carry inside, where soul fills the space of body,
the corpses of both of us. They were fused into
one body for burial, but there are really two, which
never were truly one. You never told me our marriage

was a failure from its very beginning. This I never knew.

Daniel Brick

Two Versions Of Love

Eros himself is nearby
in Ovid's poems. When a woman
crosses paths with a man, a sense of
fait accompli prevails rather than
anticipation. They slip
into an embrace effortlessly,
both of them know this love-play.
The warmth of the early evening
is luscious in the garden. Sweet
flower perfumes take away what's
left of their breath. Their kisses
multiply in an adjacent room decorated
with erotic picture. Entangled
in each other's limbs, they pause
to appreciate the artistry
which perfectly mirrors their passion.
When they climax, they both inhabit
the realm of the gods briefly.
Immortal longings are satisfied
temporarily. Smiling, they speak
softly about their joy and gradually
drift off into a shallow sleep...
Such is the content of Ovid's
THE ART OF LOVE. It is addressed
to prosperous people, a way of being
for those who race through life,
grabbing their delights in the rush
of experience. There is another Love
which descends from sacred Desire, and
lags far behind Ovid's type. Desire
takes its own time to unfold in time.
It postpones the shudder through the flesh
to add delicacy and coax passion to swell.
Desire means walking together on air,
embracing under blazing sunlight, or
within the cool radiance of nightfall.
It is composed of promises of happiness
which seem as accessible as the next
day's dawn, and sleep is deep and restful.

Daniel Brick

The Road Again

I came out of my homeland
by my own design and will.
No one gave me any help,
not even a small gift
like an unbreakable cup
to hold the waters of many
other lands, pure, cool, fresh.

I always leave a marker behind
at the fountain or clear-running
stream or even rainy plain
I have discovered for later travelers.
Sometimes I mix fruit, native
to the place, with its water.
It is my habit to give a small gift.

You see how the thing given has
benefited me already. It is like
the spiritual conversations
in Botticelli's paintings. It must
be shared. Perhaps it will lift
the burden my countryman carries
within. I think, why must he suffer,

why must he suffer alone, when I am
on the same road again? 'Let me help
you carry that weight, ' I say to him,
but he is unbending, 'No, it is mine
alone. My soul is too sick to companion
yours. Perhaps in two or three years
we will walk side by side. Perhaps.'

At the gateway, the guardians were generous
with advice. One of them spoke a prayer
to their highest god while then others bowed
their heads. 'May grace descend upon you.
my brothers, ' I said. 'It naturally will, '
he replied. But you must learn the difference
between giving and receiving. The desert will teach you.

If you think you understand these exchanges,
you are profoundly deluded.' The other men
at the gate quietly assented, and one said,
'You will understand. Your journey will end.
We speak in riddles because they are
the only language of the Threshold Experience.'
They reminded me of philosophers, or disguised angels.

So armed with interior truths, I continued on
my way and completed all of my exchanges
without stress or setback. On my way back,
I saw my countryman, a happy and affable man.
The faithful gatekeepers gave me new riddles
that lodged in my mind. And even on the hottest
days, the sun was kind to humans and animals alike.

Daniel Brick

Searching For A Vanished Poet

A sheet of paper carried on a summer breeze
tumbled passed me. Where it settled,
on a park lawn lined with elm trees,
revealed a dump site of sheets, all
abandoned poems. No breeze refreshed me,
sitting alone on the hot grass, reading
poem after poem, looking for you,
your signature, your voice, your presence.

There were poems in French and German,
Spanish and Arabic, English and Mandarin
Chinese, Attic Greek and medieval Latin,
and in several unrecognized languages -
those poems preserved their secrets.
The rest made up our Company of Poets,
spread across every niche of planetary life,
our contemporaries, our peers, our friends.

I saw only early poems by you, and searched
the pile again for your new poems in vain.
As I slumped to the ground like the others
before me, twenty more came and tossed
their poems without a word spoken. More came,
more piles appeared. I cried out in a strangled
voice, 'My friends, what is the good of what
you are doing? We should be rescuing, not burying.'

Some glared at me, others threw their poems
away with contempt. But worst by far to witness
was the low, mean laughter of a few. It was
laughter of those without hope, a sullen crowd
attracting more followers. A girl with green eyes,
maybe eighteen, maybe younger, suddenly stared
into my blue eyes. Our sights locked, and I saw
in her face a fierce hope shining with integrity.

Daniel Brick

A Speculation About The World's Fate

WHAT IF the outcome of primal things
were not just different but vastly different?
Suppose the Titans had won the War at the origin
of time against Zeus and his siblings. Their victory,
just a matter of brute force, pure violence,
would have kept the Planet a Chaos instead of a World.
But Zeus's mind would still grow mighty in defeat, and he
would build a Universe of Order within his spiritual Self.
Meanwhile the Titans would stumble over their own strength,
give way to petty envies, neglect their cosmic duties.
Zeus and his siblings would subvert them by taking over
the hard work of governance of the Universe, and over time
the Titans would simply withdraw from a new creation
alien to their nature, and a different Hesiod would be inspired.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

As It Should Be

The business of the day
is almost finished but
the energy allotted
to this day is not yet
spent. A fat bumble bee
still sucks nectar,
even as the flowers droop
into fading sunlight.

A resting rabbit suddenly
races across then lawn,
and then rests again
in a patch of bushes.

The twilight choruses of
song birds have dissolved,
a few solitary birds crease
the sky in fast flight.

Soon they will be huddled
in their feathers and asleep.

No miracles are being performed.

All is as it should be, this night
reflecting last night, all nights
and days reflecting the primal
pattern. My thoughts suspended,
my feelings quiescent, I join
this winding down, this slow drift
into silence, sleep and Night.

Daniel Brick

The Last Pieces

Finally I know the whole truth.
The last pieces of the puzzle
were delivered to me by an angel
disguised as an ordinary hospital
attendant. I recognized his angelic
signature shining beneath his uniform.
But I had forgotten his name but he
just smiled wanly, both of us aware
of what really matters and will
never be forgotten. When I finally
reach heaven and he returns there,
his earthly mission complete, we will
know the names of all beings and things.
He was obviously in a hurry, but I
detained him, because who else could
could share this moment with me?
A divorced man, with only one distant
distant daughter and a handful of friends,
mostly alive in the country of memory,
none of whom is ready to hear these
final truths from just another crazy
survivor. Who but my attendant angel
could grasp this hopscotch assemblage
of passions and aspirations that make up
the News of Universe? But here it is,
on my hands, some of it typed, some of it
handwritten, and some of hiding behind
a series of ellipses. To read those passages
it helps to have a touch of what they call
mental illness in this hospital, just the brush
of angel wings passing over you. The angel, who
was so impatient a moment ago, sits quietly
by my bedside now, his eyes wide with compassion
watch over me. I cannot speak, but I can still
smile my contentment. Soon smaller angels will
bring my food, and others will hover invisibly
nearby all through the night. Could this hospital
room be an antechamber of heaven?

Escape Artist

Let us assume you want
to escape...

We'll consider the need
on another occasion.

Is this want like an interior sword
that slices across the outer surface
of your soul, the way a sword gashes
exposed skin, and both halves fall
to the side, just dead tissue?

Are you capable of doing this violence
against yourself? If you cannot answer
my question, if merely the thought
of such sacrifice repels you, you are
indeed a prisoner and no escape will
free you. This place of dim light,
bars, animals howling in the night,
is your habitat: seek no other...

ESCAPE is not not like leaving your house
on a Tuesday morning, checking for
keys, address book, loose change,
and then waiting patiently for public
transport. Such daylight behavior is laughable.

You must be ready for weeks, live only for
the pure act of flight, your mind emptied of
thought and feeling. You must be prepared
to push others aside to make room for yourself,
And that book you failed to finish reading
last year, bring it with you. When the gates
open, with no jailer in sight, and sunlight
floods the cell and blinds you, adjust your eyes,
step forth readily. Nothing will get better
over time. This is the life you wanted
just ahead of you. Start living it.

Daniel Brick

'Those Who Watch With Me'

The creator-god was tired
and ready to resign. For eons
he had tried to make the whole
endeavor succeed: To make
created things mesh into a unity
and thereby prevail. That is
what happened on the beginning
and he was giddy with joy.
'I made you shine, ' he exclaimed
to the stars and their usual
brightness intensified fourfold.
'I carved your basin, I made
your slippery natures so you can
flow everywhere, ' he confided
to the waters, which took on
the color of the the sky
to match their gratitude
with his delight. 'Your colors
and perfumes are daily pleasures
for me, ' he told the flowers
as they swayed in the breezes.
But recently they don't sway,
they droop and fade. The creator-god
seems to droop, even fade a bit,
and now there are long pauses,
when his voice deepens into near silence:
'Has something been broken from the very
earliest days? Is that why the humans
are so bent in pain, so unhappy
even in this atmosphere of good?
If so, I am responsible....'
As he spoke those despairing
words, an adolescent deer
looked into his face, her large
brown eyes heavy with shared grief.
'What am I to do? I have cleaned
the joints and levers, replaced
the bearings that measure pressures,
added filters to the southern regions,

tuned the heavy wheels of change.'
But his immortal eyes looked into an abyss,
adjacent to his created world, and he
stared as only a god can stare fixedly
at nothingness. 'Is it all sliding
into the dark backward and abysm of time?
Will those who watch with me now slip
from my nurturing hands into a vast chaos? '
The female deer nestled her head
against the massive strength of the helpless deity.

Daniel Brick

Transformations Through Music

Klavierstucke I-XI

This music trains a new kind of human being, who the hearer not yet is and who has never existed before on this planet... (Listening to the piano pieces) one grows beyond oneself.

Stockhausen

(I)

I have reached that future
you told me about years earlier.
You said, 'The Piano Pieces are
musical time machines: they take
the listener into his own future.'
There was a learning curve designed
for me to follow. There were moments
for soul, and moments for body,
opening into a new era of soul-body fusion,
with times of silence carefully measured
against moments of noise, and rising out of
these timely events, an increased visionary
capacity gradually unfolded within:
I can hear the ground flake as the mole
presses forward; I can hear the ruffle
of the owl's feathers as she stirs
in dappled sleep. I can hear the solitary passage
of a worm through topsoil, so keen has my hearing
become. I can even hear the creak high above
in a cottonwood when winds part its tallest branches.

(II)

In Piano Piece V (we experience) the serialization of freedom...
The last section of Piano Piece X emerges from the pitches of the hand cluster
like a butterfly from the chrysalis.
Jonathan Harvey

The music, oh the music,

overcame my doubts and
pulled me into your circle
of inspiration. I know,
in some profound way, you see
me, merely a listener, with no
technical training, no musical
gifts, as a co-creator. How can
this be? The whirligig of performance
took over and tossed me from sensation
to sensation, each folding me deeper
into the music, deeper into the sheer
experience of being one with the Musical
Vision: My eyes see into the infrared
of distance; they are scorched by heat
from a faraway fire; they fix on
churning eddies, heaving waves, currents
twisted into whirlpools; finally the still center...
At that still center your presence informs me: I know
what I need to know, and my interior life responds.

(III)

Listening within oneself: It is as if one makes contact with oneself
as if with some unknown person, as if one wants to explore oneself
as something that mirrors itself.
Stockhausen

In the whirligig of time we shall all get our revenges.
Feste the Clown, TWELFTH NIGHT

I am at this moment listening to my favorite
of the KLAVIERSTUCKE, which is VI, written between
1954 and 1961, in four versions. Can we speak of
a MOMENT of composition, spread over seven years?
Is there ONE COMPOSITION among the four versions?
What really am I listening to? Are these valid questions?
Asking them has distracted me from listening. In a moment,
I will begin from the beginning. But during this extended
moment of silence, with no music for my hearing to focus on,
my mind of music can appreciate VI as something precious
something pure and alive, something I listened to late
at night, just before surrendering to sleep, sprawled

on my black couch, with only one dim light in the room,
my eyes open only to the interior world, a barrier erected
in my mind against all intrusive daylight thoughts,
against desires and urges, against hopes and dreams,
even against prayers, however necessary. The 24: 40 time frame
of VI was, and is, a column of sounds, pure and living,
connecting what must be connected. And that is sufficient.

Daniel Brick

How Things Stand

What did you mean
by waving a single white flag
to those on the yonder shore?
Are you planning your escape route?
I myself am rooted to this place.
I will shut the final door
without your help. I just hope
the remaining sunlight is not
us not eclipsed, because tomorrow
I must return all the keys still
in my possession. There is a small room
in the Hotel just past Jackson Street
where all the accounts are filed.
Many have already been settled, but
their ghostly paper presence lasts.
Our accounts will stay active
for another decade. A decade is
not as long as you might imagine.
Continually time speeds up,
its huge maw swallows anything
that lags behind. We do need
a larger room in which to finish
our business. It won't be long
before Life Itself takes over.
How much Life leaves behind
for those of us still crawling
between earth and heaven is
unknown, but don't you expect
generosity? Won't you be
generous when your term swings around?

Daniel Brick

A Poet At The Parthenon - No.2

Thomas Rinehart, 27, Cambridge graduate in Attic Greek, author of an acclaimed volume of poems; London critics have predicted his next volume might well establish him as the Poet of His Generation.

My dear sister, Cynthia of the clear waters
and quiet streams, when we parted seven months ago,
I promised I would greet you from the plateau
of the Acropolis, at the Parthenon itself,
and send you your heart's desire from the heart
of Hellas. Consider that a promise fulfilled.
Dear sister, I called you the Mirror of my Mind.
Brace yourself to receive information that
will darken that mirror. Then it is my sincerest
goal to polish that mirror brightly again. Cynthia,
I so need you help... Remember what we talked about,
sitting under a star-strewn sky at night or looking
over a vast field of grasses and crops that stretched
to the horizon, both day and night our visionary
powers themselves stretched, yes, the so exhilarating.
Oh, how are minds are linked by our mountain, Green Crest,
imagined into being by two poets, yes, Cynthia, two poets.
You have ever been as much the poet I have been, only those
obtuse London editors fail to grasp what is so real to us.
And now, Cynthia, you must be poet for both of us. The gods
and gracious goddesses will demand it of you, and they will
pour precious incense over us, one of us among the living,
one of us among the witnesses of the living in death's realm.
My dear sister, how could I wreck our last moments together
by telling you the sickness which claimed our parents will
soon claim me? My hands were empty. The only gift I could
give you was a false hope that last year's farewell
was not our final farewell. Cynthia, be the Moon-Goddess
of your Age! Add the dark music of your poems to sounds
of your time. You have my permission to grieve my passing -
for a while. Then you must LIVE to keep my memory alive.
Read my poems even as you write yours, you must write yours.

Cynthia, beacon of my heart, I want you to be happy: I want
you to seek and find your heart's partner, a man who

will appreciate all of you, I want you two to name
your first-born son after me. Tell him about his uncle
who loved life, loved poetry, loved you. Teach him hope,
show him our Green Crest, the lakes and streams, the spring
after the winter, the talking trees, make him live always
a large life and in his triumph a part of me prevails.
My Cynthia, forever....

Daniel Brick

A Poet At The Parthenon - No.1 400 Bce

Glaucus, a young poet, recently published, ascends the Acropolis to seek Athena's wisdom. As he approaches the Parthenon, he prays to Aphrodite.

Golden Aphrodite, Goddess,
you gave me a companion
for my bright days and
deep nights, the woman
who matched my dreams
in her reality. She lifted me
to the sky's realm, where we
breathed the same air that
that nourishes the Olympians.
And then I fell from those starry
heights, alone I fell past planets,
past starlight, past morning and
noon, into the night realm where
hope is blind to beauty, desires
turn to dust, trust vanishes.
This is not the Night of Lovers.
She left me for another man, rich
and sophisticated, everyone's
friend - mine included: he published
my first book of poems. He laughed,
amused at my grief, Glaucus, my boy,
my poet, you're young. I need her more
because I'm old. You've written your
Love Poems, go and write your Grief
Poems, and I'll publish them too.
Goddess, am I not a broken shell,
a brick dislodged from its wall,
a piece of fruit rotting on the wayside?
Have I not sacrificed to you, seeking
no glory but only your glory? Have I not
praised you in the marketplace, in the theater,
on the hillside and the shoreline? I prayed.
I danced. I cried out in pain or joy. It was
not I, but always and everywhere, it was YOU,
Goddess of Sea-Foam, Goddess of lyre and

love song. Hear me, even now I raise my voice,
cracked, its beauty of tone roughened by crying.
Goddess of the Best Gift, Goddess of the heart's
highest hope, hear me as we near the Parthenon...
I have not climbed to this Temple of Athena
to complain about you, to spread false rumors
about you in the hearing of the other gods.
It is to praise you and thank you, in their presence,
that I stand upon this sacred ground. I prayed
to you for love and you gave me a lover: she proved
false but You proved faithful. I implored you
for beauty in my life, and this beauty dazzles me
everywhere. And it spills forth so abundantly,
others, even a false friend and a faithless lover,
can enjoy it. Aphrodite, I ask for only one gift:
Make me worthy of the next lover who will cross
my path, because in my heart I know it is your desire too.

Daniel Brick

With The Deer

I awoke this morning
in the darkness before dawn light.
Tendrils of an uncertain dream
webbed my eyes. They loosened
and vanished, then I saw the dawn.

I read the philosopher Algis Uzdavinys
for an hour of peace, until the day
announced its intention to stay
shrouded in overcast, with clouds
bunched in huge motionless masses.

Something rebelled within me, something
that desired another kind of light.
I left my apartment in a mission
I barely understood. I drove to
an urban park, and parked in an empty lot.

On a deserted lane, lined with bushes
and trees, I stopped abruptly: staring
at me curiously but without fear stood
an adolescent deer. We were fewer than
fifteen tremulous feet apart, I could

breathe her lack of fear. Three minutes,
give or take, we accepted each other's
stern scrutiny. The wonder of it filled
my heart, and I had to believe something
akin to wonder imbued her with the same poise.

I slowly edged past her. She turned her head
and followed my retreat until trees drew
a curtain between us. My hope was fulfilled:
a wild thing stood on common ground with me,
and never flinched nor ran. She welcomed me.

I walked on a boardwalk through a marsh,
the water completely covered by pale green
expanse of algae. Red-winged black birds

perched on the swaying water plants. All was still. The only motion was my human self.

On the far side of the marsh, I was about to re-enter the forest, but at the threshold stood a mother deer in front of her two offspring. This was no slumming adolescent, taking a risk with her own being. This was

the serious business of survival. She raised and lowered her head, again and again. Was it a warning, or an appeal? I took it as an appeal: I turned around and walked away, never looking back. I thought, such is the entirety of things: a female deer

lets me pass, a mother deer blocks my way. On another path, I crossed paths with a young mother and her two children. I told her about the mother deer and her two young just ahead. Before the mother could speak, her daughter said with casual certainty,

'I know those two baby deer. They visit me everyday in my yard. They chew on apples.' Then she skipped ahead to join her brother. The mother shared a smile with me, there was no need for speech. Rain was starting to fall in heavy fat drops, and we went our opposite ways.

As I drove home, my smile did not fade: a young deer had admitted me to the garden, in her luminous brown eyes I was a just man. And I earned the regard of a mother deer by withdrawing, simply by going another way. I hope in some way the deer felt

my love for them, a pure love for wild things....

Daniel Brick

Heroic Seneschal

His corpse dissolves in the muck...
Seneschal, will you now lead us? '
He did not wait for my reply. He stumbled
twice as he vanished into the smokey twilight.
'We are free, ' said one of the servants,
several others nodded, but the silence
was heavy around us. 'Do we have homes
somewhere? ' Kundry's lady-in-waiting asked.
'Are there people out there waiting for us? '
But what do prisoners know of the world?
And we were doubly imprisoned: first by Klingsor's
labyrinthine fortress, second by his enchantment.
Our enchantment ended with his death, and we could
see the world with our true eyes. And what we saw
startled us: cracks creased the walls and towers,
fissures widened, and then the collapse began!
All of us - servants, butchers, blacksmiths,
cleaners, cooks, the whole complement of the castle
huddled in the open space at the center of the fortress.
We witnessed the final end of Klingsor's reign:
walls buckled and fell straight down in ruins,
towers swayed as huge blocks dislodged, breaking apart
on the ground, debris piled around us, releasing
choking clouds of dust... We stood transfixed
but untouched, we felt neither fear nor triumph.
Through the smoke and haze we could out former
Grail knights wandering without purpose,
others hunched over, sat holding their heads,
moaning. Then, we saw a blessed sight:
the Flower Maidens, slaves no longer, walked
in a slow procession through the destruction,
oblivious of the violence, untouched by the chaos.
We had for ages traduced them as little more than
whores, but now in the moment of liberation, we saw
them arrayed in gowns of white and gold, their former
nakedness clothed in glory, their seductive wiles
dispelled. And we knew they were the ones who would
lead us out of the wasteland into our futures...
Grace was shining over them and us. Rejoicing silently,

we joined their slow procession.

Daniel Brick

The Lost Eclipse

(On the eve of a Solar Eclipse, I try to find
the hill from which I watched a Lunar Eclipse,
forty-eight years ago.)

I am driving in
West St. Paul
with a purpose
driving me: to find
the height in then Heights
that seems to be leveled,
or sunk in the ground,
or is just hiding from me
in an eclipse of my vision.
How much longer will I search?

Yes, this is the fabled hill
from which I watched
the eclipse of the Moon
by the Earth, which turned
the Moon a strange red.
No longer the pale, slender
White Goddess, the Red Moon
swaggered like one who had just
won power she intended to use.

I'm still driving
all these years later,
but I'm running out
of gas. Soon I will
run out of drive and
come to a full stop.
Then the delights of
walking will take over,
and I will slowly pass
sites of another age,

but still that lofty red
color of the Moon tugs
my memory, and beckons me

to further sights and deeper
memories. Does it matter my life
is now a valley life in terms
of vision? Soon I will see
the Sun eclipsed, and darkness
will possess the light, and it will
usher a new age of glory to remember.

Daniel Brick

My Story

On a windy day in early autumn
I went to my balcony with a folder
of all my love poems from twenty-five
years of writing. I read each one
in a voice that matched the wind's
passage across the still lush lawn
through the trees into a brightening
distance, which was this day's birth.

They were poems of lover and beloved,
their happiness, their fruitful conflicts,
their sojourns in seasons of plenty
or scarcity. And their gratitude to the Earth
for tilting on its axis one distant summer day,
so they were thrust into each other's arms.
Such were the poems I thrust into the wind's passage.

When I finished, the silence I felt around me
was a purely personal silence. Birds sang,
leaves rustled, traffic droned three blocks away,
and in the apartments around me, people readied
for the day's business, marshaling crucial facts,
rehearsing urgent speeches. Satisfied, couples
greeted each other and talked of inconsequential things.

I had heard the earliest bird songs
become a multitude singing from branches
and rooftops. Finches fly in wide swooping
circles. Two robins play a game of stealth,
temporarily silenced by their hunger. This is
just how I imagined my new world would begin,
with everything the same but profoundly altered.

I follow as always Goethe's example, who knew
when to turn desire into hope fulfilled, and
mind, naivete and sensuousness coalesce
into a new kind of poem which will be
perceived as a sacred response to this
new world birthing itself around me.

And through Goethe, Hafez offers his sweet advice.

As I gaze at this new world around me,
I am astonished by its abundance.
No trace of envy or disappointment,
this is an age of contentment from which
will spring only generous impulses, and
my voice, fortified by nature, amplified by agape,
will release songs of glory, shining with resolve.

This poem was inspired as a response
to MY STORY by Baharak Barzin.

Daniel Brick

A Story Of Love

Inspired by THE DIARY OF ONE WHO DISAPPEARED
by Leos Janacek

I met her along the edge of the forest
where wilderness and civilization meet
and share a corridor common to both.
Neither of us stepped off this line of grass
and foliage, stepping into the other's zone.

Would it be an act of faith in love
to enter her zone, and sing a song
of adoption, myself the impresario
of my new existence as a child newly
born into her wilderness, helpless, wholly hers?

Or what if she would dance with such abandon
her repertory of dances, that a careless
step made her lose her perfect balance, and
she plopped down on my side of the border,
her clothes in disarray but otherwise unhurt?

Would she curl into a tight ball, and,
weeping, rock back and forth, trying
to squeeze the sudden fear out of her body?
Would her face, drained of all delight,
darken: 'Oh, my soul is lost! '

Or would she jump up and dance into my arms,
delighted that an accident had freed her
to choose life in my world under a changing
sky of light and dark, where people live
at fixed addresses and dance the Maypole Dance?

Oh, our eyes see each other's beauty, and
an electric shock races through our bodies,
fusing them. Each heart sees into the other's
soul, and two souls fuse into one wondrously
new soul. Oh, we are already living one life!

Let us live together on this green corridor
a pure life of rain water and forest fruits.
Let us pretend it is world enough for two united
in love, whose longing is fulfilled in the other...
Or, my darling, should I simply step into your world?

Daniel Brick

Ancient Music Now

There are still other songs
which prevail because
their sound comes from the same
deep source as your singing voice,
songs made of fragrance and stench,
earth and water, mud and soul,
from regions below our daylight life,
there where it always Night and Unconscious,
and impulses form and reform without regard
to meaning... Gilgamesh crawled through
this region on his mission. He crawled,
choking with fear, croaking such songs that
are native to dark passages. And he emerged,
whole and sane, in the garden of gods and
goddesses. We have no hopes of reaching
a garden, lacking the primal King's stature.
But we will know the place of passage
by the fear in our souls and the music
faintly reminding us Gilgamesh was
both hero and villain, god and man,
friend and foe. All these things vexed
his mind so he stuffed them deep
in his psyche, where they were transformed
into components of a new being, ultimately
you and me and us. Where we find ancient
songs now is dense, deep, and unforgiving
even of Lord Gilgamesh. But we place
our human mark exactly there, from which
an excellent energy pours forth
into our earthly days and nights.

Daniel Brick

Acts Of Faith From The Gospel Of Luke

A poem for Sonya

Which of His miracles do you carry
closest to your heart? Is it Cana,
when the young man who would never
marry, never father, never enjoy
enjoy domestic life still began his ministry
celebrating the beginning of a couple's
quite ordinary domestic life with a gift of wine?

Or is it an event near the town
of Nain, when He felt compassion
for a widow about to bury her only son?
And He said simply, 'Young man, I tell you:
get up, ' and then gave him to his mother.
And then he left to find his disciples,
as the crowd exclaimed, 'God visits His People.'

Or perhaps you are awed when he ascended
the mountain with three disciples, and His face
changed and His clothes became sparkling white, and
Moses and Elijah spoke with their Lord face to face?
Does your faith increase when from a tumbling
cloud, the voice of God thunders,
'This is My Son, the Chosen One: Listen to Him? '

Or is the genuine miracle for you
the consequence over time as people
followed the Parable of the Good Samaritan,
about a simple man whose charity has moved
so many ordinary people to exceed the norm.
And Jesus merely pointed this man, saying,
'Go, and do the same yourself.'

Or is the miracle closest to your heart
simply the almost forgotten mother, who
treasured her child's deeds and words
in her heart, and let go of Him to perform
His mission among strangers, only to be

reunited with Him at the cross,
where He died a human death in her fixed gaze.

Daniel Brick

Your Christian Identity

A Poem for Nancy

I see the fire in your eyes
and know there is another fire
burning as brightly in your mind.
It consumes pettiness and doubts,
temptations melt in its heat.
This fire cleanses your mind,
so holy thoughts occupy its space,
and their light outshines
with spiritual brilliance
all rival fires in the world.

I hear the air in your speech
and know it circulates its purity
within your being, bringing
the freshness of Faith
to every place within. Sometimes
it is a wind scattering unworthy
feelings before they settle. Or it is
a breeze that gently freshens you,
and makes doing good as easy as breathing,
as effortless as saying the name of Jesus.

I sense your holy spirit in your presence
and know the Holy Spirit is present,
because you have made your life
a welcoming place for His perpetual brooding.
This divine brooding is a source of joy
that makes you proud and humble,
at the same moment: proud to be Holy Spirit's
residence and humble because God chose you
as His tabernacle in the world...

How many eons ago did God create the world
and see that it is good? You live in a world
that you see is ready for divined intervention.
It is a world of shocking suffering, humanity
is divided against itself in a mad rush

for power and wealth. God's gift, the beautiful
Blue Planet Earth, is raped and despoiled.
You read our future in the Book of Revelations:
You rejoice to see more people finding their way
to Jesus, even as the prophecies of the END TIMES begin.

Daniel Brick

On A City Block

We live wherever we can...
Once I saw an older man,
fiftyish, with his gray hair
pulled back into a ponytail
and a shaggy beard which bounced
when he moved. Eyes closed, he was
dancing wildly in front of
a dilapidated apartment building.
'Hey man, are you dancing for rain? '
I cried out. Abruptly, he stopped.
Then his eyes flashing wide open,
his whole face smiling, he replied,
'No man, I'm dancing for joy! If I stop,
my hopes will crash... Come on, help me.'
And so I did. I helped a guy who needed
his hopes. We danced dervish dances
in tight circles, we danced Zorba dances
with linked arms, going back and forth
across his narrow patch of grass.
We did free form rock dancing and
what he called JAZZ ORPHEUS DANCING.
Forty minutes, give or take,
we danced in tandem to keep hope green
and fresh and ever-lasting. Passers-by
were puzzled but not curious. A few dropped
coins in his blue cap, and smiled but said
not a word. And when he wasn't looking
at me, spinning about, almost collapsing,
I stuffed two fifty dollar bills
in his ragged blue cap. I tried to leave
without notice. But he called after me
in a voice rough with anger and belief,
'Someday I will live in plush digs
just around the corner from Paradise Gardens.
Come and visit me at the end of your tether,
and I will give you a slice of Heaven
you can keep forever.' I smiled and waved,
but he was already lost to me,
dancing wildly on his narrow patch of green.

Daniel Brick

A Song For The Man I Love

Written for Aphrodite

Even when I see you far away,
walking by yourself over dunes
along the seashore, you are really
at my side in a pine grove. Even when you
are absorbed in painting, looking intently
at colors blending or figures emerging,
I am really holding your hand and staring
into your eyes. It cannot be otherwise:
Love has multiplied our beings, because
this passion is too intense for just
one pair of lovers to contain.

I have endured passionless days,
I have waited through empty nights.
All the pleasures of solitude exhausted,
all the distractions of frivolity drained.
And what of you? Rumors abound of a man
who seeks the truest woman for the truest
love. He follows leads from friends and
strangers, trying to discover the one true
path. Others tell of a man who walks
in wide circles, confident he will eventually
find his true love inside one of them.

I will assume the role of a pilgrim,
my walking staff will measure the distance
between my loneliness and your grace of being.
I will assume the role of a prospector, and
dig for gold in the least likely places,
because it is your golden presence I need.
I will become a scholar, and haunt libraries
like a ghost gliding from book to book
seeking the one which tells your story
and shows how I become part of it.

The Angel Of Soul-Love Visits Aphrodite

... passed time that we met, Aphrodite.
I am, as you may already realize,
the Angel of Soul-Love, aka the Angel
of Necessary Love, aka the Comforter of
Broken Hearts. That last title is very new.
I petitioned the First Eschelon Angels
to grant me the power to comfort, and they
were sympathetic, not to me, to you.
Oh, you humans! You move our angelic hearts
with your suffering, with your willingness
to suffer for what you believe in, for whom you love.
We angels can feel no pain. We were made that way.
So why is it I feel your longing and must reach out?

Desires rush into your souls and lodge there,
they feed on your heart-fibres. Even after
you find your soul-love, your hearts
do not rest in the dailliness of love:
you suffer still the course of love.
But I can assure you in a few centuries
your whole race will be raised to Glory.
All desiring will cease, your souls will be
perpetually at rest in the Glory of -
Oh, wait, Aphrodite, I misread your Fate:
in a few millennia, you will be raised to Glory
of Being. Millennia, not centuries, but how
does Time matter when Eternity beckons?
Aphrodite, why do you bow your head?
Why do you weep? ... Have I hurt you
with my angelic grandeur? I thought you
were ready to receive your Fate...

Aphrodite, raise your head and face
the morning light, which even now sheds
a portion of Cosmic Light over you.
Look into my eyes, don't turn away,
look deeply and you will see the heavy
sway of FATE arrested, poised, neither
falling nor rising. Thus it will remain

until you have recovered your human strength:
it is HOPE... That alone is what you need,
it will shine again throughout your being.
And the Unmet Friend, whose image fills
your heart, is close in Time and Space, closer
than your next breath. Breathe deeply, Aphrodite,
and exhale, and your desire will be fulfilled.

Daniel Brick

At The End Of Summer

After Hafez

A deer, my companion for three seasons
in the wilderness, has left me for her home.
She has obligations there and announced her
return with footprints delicately tracing her path.

Soon relatives who do not know me will cluster
around her, and she will be lost to me. I may see
her with the others treading through the forest's
silence, but she will respond with nature's shyness.

And so it is that I enter a wide, treeless plain,
alone, but not bereft. In my mind's eye, I see her
standing still, as she listened entranced to my human
speech, as if it were tree talk or sun speech, understood

by all creatures touched with higher purpose. No doubt
an impulse was placed into our beings by a power wiser
than both of us. In our winter sleep far apart, a whistling
wind or crack of ice will wake us, and each will see

the image of the other, straining to locate the lost companion.

Daniel Brick

The Jazz Cat Homage To Gato Barbieri

for Paul, my friend for over fifty years

This afternoon the two of us will perform a Memory Exercise, and hopefully we won't need a Memory Miracle to complete it. Miracles are the prerogative of something higher and more abstract than two friends pooling their resources. Friendship and Music, for instance, are very compatible: they both can soar directly into the sun and reach the empyrean; or they both can settle into a comfortable routine; or music can be the background and friendship the foreground, or handy-dandy they can exchange ground. Our exercise will harmonize Friendship and Music on common ground for the duration of common time. It begins with the Jazz Cat you know so well, the Argentine wonder who surpasses every border, the master of the searing saxophone - GATO BARBIERI.

You and three friends on a Sunday afternoon went to Orchestra Hall in a distant early autumn. Gato and Ensemble were the opening act for The Modern Jazz Quartet. What? Gato in second place! Well, what matters is performance, and so the four of you took your seats before an empty stage already electric with Jazz Energy and you added a frenzy of Jazz Talk. But you turned suddenly silent, turned inward, where the lyricism arises, where the music reposes before being composed, where you and Gato are in friendship. This is always the Soul Realm, and the Latin Soul was ascendent that day. Gato appeared before his band, playing a simple traditional melody on an Indian flute. It was as if a huge mirror descended before you, invisible to the others, and you saw your Indian Soul swelling to an impossible size and envelop you in its solar light. Then it withdrew, and Gato was simply performing and letting the magic happen as it is meant to. You were standing above your

sitting self, two of you, one hearing sounds,
the other seeing visions. This is called ecstasy.
You felt the Latin Rhythms unleashed by Gato's
music become the pulse of the Universe. You were
at the center of this swelling energy
in a state of perfect calm. And when Gato slipped
the sax behind his back, grabbed the microphone
with both hands, and began to sing, it was,
you told me later, 'Earth's cry and Heaven's smile'.

In the last moment, you saw him leave the stage,
holding his sax in his right hand, raised high
in the air, as if it were a banner or a talisman, or
perhaps a golden bird perched there, ready to launch
into flight. You turned and saw your three friends
staring at you. In a flash you knew what that meant.
Without a word exchanged, the four of you left
Orchestra Hall. Any other music, however elegant
and polished, would simply get entangled in the sounds
still playing in your heads and mar both musics.
When speech was restored and you all sat at a table
on the Black Forest Inn, you all shared your words
about the music and the sheer experience of being
in Gato's orbit. You agreed it was Music of Rescue.
You agreed it was Music of Necessity. You agreed...
But inside, in the silence of the interior sea
of being, you felt those those currents moving and knew
they arise from even deeper Latin Rhythms of the Universe.

Daniel Brick

Love And Loss

I asked her to name her favorite season, and she answered, 'Autumn, ' without a pause for even one thought, question and answer bumping into each other. Oh, I launched into a rhapsody on that season of things ripening or already ripe, so happy that we shared the same favorite. I was foolishly voluble, talking too fast out of excitement, and, you know, nervousness. She had grown deeply silent, her head bowed, a strand of brown hair partially covering her face. I brushed it away very gently, saw her wide green eyes staring through me. She took my hand and placed it on her cheek. My voice was quiet but inspired by her response. I spoke of my love for red-gold leaves, of the clear blue sky scoured free of clouds, of the crisp taste of autumn apples, the snap of cold dawn air, long evenings with friends with a roaring fire the only light... She looked straight into my eyes, and added softly, '... And walking hand in hand along the Mississippi.' The light that emanated from her and entered me was like a first kiss held for a time past counting. And joy happened later, when we two were alone - together....

It was only later, during the wait of winter, that she admitted she only answered 'Autumn' because it was the season she least hated. And she added with peculiar bitterness, 'I hate time, because it passes, but you l-o-v-e time, you - '

So it went, and so it ended. That spotty conversation in dim winter light, more my monologue than our speech. There was already winter in her cold regard, she was anxious to make an end of hope. 'Hope is stupid, ' she said with vehemence. For an hour we sat in silence. I held her limp body loosely, and marveled at her loveliness. Then, without a word, she slipped out of my grasp, and entered a distance alone. And

the distance soon became an absence, and then a memory,
and then there was only me, with my love of many things.

Daniel Brick

Mesh And Web

The Creator God was exhausted,
ready to withdraw into divine
solitude, build for himself
a Temple of Wisdom and henceforth
from its dizzying heights observe
the patterns of stars and planets.
But can a Creator God withdraw,
abandoning what he brought forth
out of Chaos eons past when he felt
the full flush of Divine Glory?
He made it all come forth - plants,
waterways, beasts, precious stones,
liquor, sexual beings, hills and
valleys. Then, only then, did he realize
he would labor, and must labor to make
the whole endeavor succeed. To make
created things mesh into a unity and
thereby simply operate - without the need
for his constant vigilance. He sometimes
wished he could fall down immense corridors
of space into the web of things, limited things,
neither possessed of power nor of knowledge,
just existence, fleeting but sweet, gone
in a flash, and then perpetual rest forever.
Or perhaps not forever, perhaps there is something
other than forever, which is only repetition -
over and over and over... But what could
could that other things be? Can I create that
OTHER THING? he wondered. He remained on his throne,
no longer thinking of ascent or descent, but
in his mind revolving thoughts that moved
with majesty and certainty, as they had
wins ago at the beginning of created things.
I will summon my deep powers. I will bring forth
new things, I will become the Wonder of a New Creation!

Daniel Brick

The Oboe Player

Three things he loves with no sense of moderation: his wife, Claire, a woman of charm and beauty, twelve years his devoted spouse; his garden, which nurtures forty-seven flower species, and, as he proudly tells friends, not one flower has deserted its place for another garden; his oboe, a majestic affair designed and made by the master, Francois Ballois, in 1819. It virtually plays itself, he tells admiring colleagues.

When the offer to premiere Elliot Carter's just composed Oboe Concerto was delivered, he hesitated: Carter's work being so craggy, his fingerings so eccentric, and what did those high notes mean really? ...

But his wife said, Oh, darling, how wonderful - a week in New York City; and the flowers sent waves of fragrance over him as he sat in their midst, signalling their approval; and the oboe was unequivocal, You fool, of course we're going! This is Elliott Carter! He's 97 years to heaven, for heaven's sake. What could he do but comply? That evening he and the oboe began rehearsing. It was tough going. The next morning he called his travel agent for flight and ticket arrangements. He could hear the oboe rehearsing in the adjacent room.

Daniel Brick

What We Need

The killer armed with the deadliest of guns finds his victim cowering against a bend in the wall which provides no shelter. They appear to be the same age, at some past moment may have had the same male dreams for their future. At this moment one will deprive the other of both dreams and future... What if the prized gun malfunctions and doesn't fire? The prospective killer and his prospective victim look into each other's eyes, and drop deep into the other's psyche. The killer feels the sear of pain which rushes through his target. And his mind is deluged by lacerating regret - his life has been severed, cut short, the final second of living is an immense cry of anguish. Oh, how he wishes the gun had discharged and demolished the man, and released him from such awareness... The victim sees a seething man overwhelmed with anger, and knows his grim eyes see past him into a mass of men just like him, all prospective victims. They are all the enemy because they are privileged, prosperous, undeserving. Oh, how readily he would surrender his store of privilege to have his term of life restored... What happens after these instant thoughts? Does the killer fix his gun, or does the gun fix itself, and blast the other? Or does the victim attack his killer, and in a paroxysm of fear and rage beat him senseless? Or in the stress of the moment do both men collapse, hit the ground hard, and lie moaning, both disarmed and helpless, the indifferent gun lying between them? And there they lie in an accidental peace, both alive, neither one the victim of the other... What we need is something to stall the violence - permanently.

Daniel Brick

A Single Kiss

You enter the garden alone
and shut the gate behind you.
You walk swiftly across the lawn
to a tree-shaded place where
your favorite bush of white flowers
grows apart from other bushes.
It feels no fear with your arrival
because you are a woman who writes
poems and thus cherishes everything
touched by the sun, cleansed by rain,
and raised to higher awareness nightly
by moonbeams...

You bend low and place the whisper
of a kiss on a single petal, and it
awakens the latent heart of the flower.
You see nothing happening, but inside
your single kiss releases every flower
from sleep, and tendrils of desire
shoot through the veins and branches
of the bush. Every flower is tense
with borrowed yellow energy of the sun
and seeks to express itself in waves of
fragrance, like the flow of honeyed words
from the mouth of an inspired Sufi poet.
You settle on a blanket beneath an elm tree,
and open your journal to a blank page soon
to be filled with your summer thoughts.
The sun from its lordly summit of power
sends rays which cause a surge of fragrance
from the petals which mingles with your
native fragrance, and both rise into
the ambient air and spread across the garden.
And nothing wicked or mean can withstand
the goodness of this amplified air. All evil is
dispelled by its greater power. You and all
living things breathe deeply this pure air.

Hours later, after you have left the garden,
closing the gate behind you, the exhausted sun

surrenders its fires to the coming night,
Moon beams descend and restore the white flowers
to their vegetative life. The petals curl into
slumber once again, dreaming of you and how
you summoned them to a vivid life with the grace of...

A S I N G L E K I S S

Daniel Brick

The Prophet's Message

The Prophet's core message is:

I AM NOT ALONE IN THIS ENDEAVOR, NOR AM I ACCOMPANIED.

It is a puzzling message, a paradox, clearly contradictory, right? Well, maybe, if you're in a rush for meaning. But...

Talking in circles around an issue is his style and that way of speaking can mean disparate things coalesce into a larger meaning as they circle. It's worth a whirl, isn't it?

But he wants this admitted paradox to strike you with its full force, as it did strike him, so he doesn't explain it. I can, not being a prophet pledged to silence. He does not want this truth to enter your mind in pieces which is what an explanation does, being a sequence of words. He wants it to be like Andre Breton's near death in a car accident in which he and his companion sustained no physical injury

but suffered into a clarifying, immediate knowledge of the surrealist concept of OBJECTIVE CHANCE. Whew, it was a fuzzy notion until the accident made it radically real and genuine. (However, maybe you still want this prophet to talk in plain language. OK. I AM NOT ALONE refers to the sense of being protected he speaks of in the first stanza.

I AM NOT ACCOMPANIED means he has no supernatural helper like the Angel Raphael for Tobias in The Book of Tobit.

Daniel Brick

Music And Soul

Bruno Maderna, Concerto for Oboe
and Orchestra No.2 (1967)

I paid the closest attention to the oboe
in the concerto which concluded
Saturday afternoon's concert. The soloist
was tense as he waited for his solo passages,
but once he began playing those impossibly long
notes, he relaxed into his mastery, and the loosed
tension entered me, making me momentarily one
of the players. All that was surface:
the oboe's sadness was a costume, a disguise
I assumed to become one with the music. Time passed,
music blossomed into a passage of utmost beauty.
these oboe sounds circled around me, entered me
through an open wound I only dimly recalled receiving,
and lodged themselves in my soul, as if native
to that place within. They adopted the deep red color
of my soul, as their tendrils pierced the nearby tissue.
And so it is: my soul enhanced by music is more than
human substance, it partakes of a beauty reflecting
the Eternal. It has happened as I willed it...
And those sad long notes summon dreams
which take the form my soul desires.

Daniel Brick

Gruppen 1955-57 / Carre 1959-60

I

These two works come to me
as siblings, both friendly,
open-hearted, proud of their
heritage as early works by Stockhausen.

The older brother, GRUPPEN, stunned me
the first time its soundscape enveloped me.
My ears lost their grip on the sounds
as music again and again, but those same
alien sounds became the threshold for Music
of our Age. Had I not gripped my chair
while listening, I might have floated
into the air holding these sounds, and
joined the composer in fantasy of flight.
And toward the end, sound became tactile
reality, as a malleable chord rushed
through each orchestra in succession
and bound all sounds into one vast Unity.

II

CARRE, the younger sister, spreads
her charm over our listening minds.
She is the tender one who harbors
the simplest answer to our most
fervent question. She dispels doubt
in a flash of her luminous eyes.
I must be quiet within, fully composed
to be admitted into her presence'
She is pure being: she chooses to dwell
in our company as Music and Spirit.
Sometimes she is manifest only as
a tendril of spiritual desire, growing out
of the experience of Music. Other times
she is the source of many voices seeking
a harmony of sound and sense. It is
a movement not just through Time

but around it, above and below it,
becoming a whirligig of moments,
ever transforming itself into -
The Eternal Moment.

Daniel Brick

What I Experience

Even as a child my hands
were strong enough to hold on
to things. It got worse
as I aged: I took more
and more, and wouldn't
release my grip on them.
Eventually the things realized
it was my will that they stay,
and they settled deeply
in my life, became one
with my being. Do they
actually belong there?
Do they have substance
only because they are
meshed into me, body and
soul? It's hard to fly,
launching itself takes
all of my available breath.
Then I must coast by and through
clouds, gasping, heaving into my lungs
all available air...
Two nights ago, with a suddenness
that surprised me, I did let go
of many things, and I immediately
rose into the unresisting air.
I floated, breathing easily,
for hours, either tumbling slowly
or swimming with broad strokes.
But mostly I let the air carry
my unresisting self as it willed.
I even dozed, so gentle was this
experience, until the sharp light
of dawn returned me to my other life.
Had I experienced in this astonishing
event those last human moments
before we are transformed
in the twinkling of an eye
into higher creatures?
I cannot say, and do not,

in this moment, want to learn.
I am once again holding
many things tightly in my grip.

Daniel Brick

Experiencing Mantra

)

Do you simply wait in whatever station you find yourself? Is waiting that simple? I suppose it is, if you are content and no Eternity summons you. But not if you are like a limp flag while the other flags flap on the edge of the wind, or like a boat clinging to its harbor slot, paralyzed by conflicting weather reports. How can the Eternal penetrate such time-bound realities? And thus you find yourself not awaiting but anticipating MANTRA, the issue is Decision, no other word will suffice. There is the stage, the two pianists are poised. They are content, their minds are attuned, they flex their skilled hands. One of them catches your eye and smiles brightly. He can play this music intuitively. His colleague has turned inward, because that is where he finds this music. If he would speak to you, he would say, We don't just live with MANTRA, we live through MANTRA. The smiling pianist is nodding his head in assent. MANTRA will claim sixty-seven minutes and thirty-three seconds of everyone's life.

II

You already realize MANTRA is Music of Rescue. We all need rescue from something possibly malign, perhaps even murderous. Or it may be joy-killing ennui. Fear or Boredom - they both kill the mind, hold the soul hostage, twist the body toward base pleasures. This is more serious than you are willing to admit. Still now and forever, you invoke both Time and Eternity, when you acknowledge: MANTRA is Music of Rescue. Both pianists, the Smiling One and the Interior One, are the agents of rescue. They carry forth Stockhausen's precisely composed score

from the Realm of Music and place its Eternity in Time. If they used words instead of tones, they would say, We don't just live with MANTRA, we live through MANTRA. But they use tones, not language. The visionary moment will be extended for sixty-seven minutes and thirty-three seconds...

III

The concert is over as a musical event, but it continues as a social event. People mill about, indulge in small talk, make post-concert plans or post-concert excuses. It is our life in time asserting itself. Even the pianists are casual as they autograph programs and recordings. But most of them feel an obscure but genuine mood inside, a soul-state composed of Stockhausen's tones and their feelings. This mood is intensely quiet within them. Its resonance will stretch throughout their being, beyond mere rescue, instilling MANTRA energy to run parallel with their ordinary energy. How long will the visionary state last? How great will it grow? How much wonder can you carry within you? You are accustomed to carrying the weight of disappointment, as if it were your heritage. Are you ready to carry instead this wonder within you? To keep it fresh and fascinated? The answer to your question swirls in the air you breathe, it is lodged in your soul, it is a simple formula like one that generates art: We don't just live with MANTRA, we live through MANTRA.

Daniel Brick

Obedient To The Time

I

We know all about those lost ages
dogging a time of glory, when darkness
descends suddenly like a winter twilight
over a pale landscape, and we witness
even the heartiest hope can manage
only two last breaths and then is stilled.
And so we become reluctant carriers
of both grief and darkness. We try to escape
but find the way blocked by other griefs
and deeper darkness...

We must be obedient to the time
into which we are thrust, with no
regard for our readiness or willingness.
What great-souled ancestors can be
our models? Who among us will recognize
the glimmer of radiance before it fades
forever from view? What prophetic voice
is left to galvanize our remaining vigor?

I fear the god of this world is abandoning
his creation. He has been glimpsed walking
awkwardly down the corridors of spent time,
muttering,
HAD I KNOWN THIS THEN, THERE WOULD BE NO NOW.
He cradles a new-born lamb in his folded arms,
as he crosses the threshold of the world.
One person, perhaps reliable, swears
she saw him turn and look over his shoulder,
and the twist his whole frame, and look
long and hard into the world he was leaving.

II

I feel life slipping out of me,
as the god withdraws his sustaining
strength. Is this the sway of a new

NIHIL overtaking my mind? But my Will asserts itself against the very thought of an exhausted creation. I cannot assess my present condition. It's as if I stood in the eye of a storm, calm and unafraid, as clouds of fiery energy circle around and over me. Or is that just a projection, my mind is stunned by the absence of our departed god? It might be a Lucid Dream of vast proportions from which I shall awake a new man, almost a man ready to play the role of a god. Perhaps this is the moment of the Phoenix, whose mantle I will assume. The fire subsides. I see people like myself, scattered across the scorched landscape. Like me, they seem ready and capable... From the few remaining charred trees, a flock of orange birds are singing brightly.

Daniel Brick

Arabian Nights' Entertainment Revisited

Ali Baba has joined his fortunes
with the remaining thieves. He told me
in the market place last week, 'My friend,
I've suffered enough poverty, I'll make
some rich man feel the sting.' I could see
his eyes wandering greedily over the market wares.

A green dhow sail rose over the crest of
of the surf waves. 'It's Sindbad's ship! '
The cry echoed along the wharf into Basra's
residential area. A crowd arose and people
jostled for the front row. A solemn Sindbad
disembarked. He looked older than I remembered.
'My friends, there was no business, no profit,
no rocs, no crashing waves, no villains, no heroes.'
He kept walking slowly away, his face now wrapped
in a dirty yellow. I alone saw his eyes: his once
flashing, fierce eyes were dead. But the people
gathered at the harbor refused to believe their eyes.
'His adventures this time have worn him out. He needs
to rest and recover. Then he will regale us with stories
and treasures. Oh, the wondrous adventures he has had!
Oh, the wonders he will share with us stay-at-homes.'
I alone realized the truth: No book of stories would
record the Eighth Voyage of Sindbad. It is a closed book.

The Visier spent a fortune of his Prince's wealth
to buy a talking parrot from Indian merchants.
The bird was very tame and even seemed to bow
before the Prince. He cocked his blue-green head
to one side and began to warble, then cackle, then
made rumbling sounds in his throat. And suddenly
he began reciting the verse of Abu Nuwas in perfect
meter, with pitch-perfect intonation. 'Oh, my word!
Oh, my word! ' the Prince repeated in helpless wonder.
The visier smiled in triumph... Three weeks later,
thirty court poets, all dismissed, some after decades
to the Prince, huddled together in a hovel near the harbor.
'Oh, my words. Oh, my words, ' they whispered. It was almost

a chant addressed to the clouded heavens above them.

The Prince of Baghdad employed me as a go-between when he courted the beautiful Fatima, daughter of the Prince of Nasra. 'You, mangy cur, do not offend my beloved with your scrawny voice. Bow your filthy head and hand her my love poem. Then leave her blessed presence and report to me.' Ah, it was plain to see how much they loved each other, with a love noble and true... But the families could not agree on arrangements, the dowry, property issues, etc. I continued my humble role as go-between, until that Golden Day when they were married in a ceremony glittering with gold and gemstones. That was in high summer. In late autumn, an angry Prince led his caravan of horsemen and camel herders, carrying chests of gold and gemstones, back to Baghdad. 'He divorced me, the mangy cur, ' I overheard the Princess yell at her father. Her eyes were fierce with venom, her hands twisted a precious Chinese scarf. Her father nodded ruefully and embraced his unloved daughter. I was dismissed.

On my lonely journey back to Basra, I stopped in a small oasis famous for its musical fountains. I settled myself against against a soft flowering tree, and lulled by the softly bubbling fountains fell into a deep sleep. When I awoke, it was twilight, already the full spread its lovely over us. US! Yes, across from me sat a giant genie, with his huge arms placidly folded over his chest. 'You've witnessed wicked things, you've had much bad luck, you mangy cur.' And he laughed in a roaring voice. I shuddered in fear. 'I've had my eye in you... You are a good man, Omar. You deserve a better fortune. I will grant you three wishes.'

Daniel Brick

Storm And Peace

for Anne

The air is cool after a morning thunderstorm.
For thirty minutes huge sheets of rain slammed
down on house and yard. Then rain changed
to hailstones which pummeled the roof
and drowned out even thinking in my mind.

But the fury of nature was soon spent, just
a few more big drops fell, rolled down
the side of the porch and disappeared
into the ground. Nature had completed her mission
to dispel yesterday's heat and bring us relief.

Still for the duration of the storm, I wondered,
Had I done something wrong to deserve this fury
from the sky? And I cowered in a corner of the room
until it was spent. I went to the porch and saw the sky
had cleared, its pale blue expanse restored, its yellow light

descending over me like a benediction from above.
There was nothing now to fear, and nothing pointed
to me as a guilty creature. Peace now reigned over
all the region spread before me and within my soul
an even greater calm ascended. I am free to rejoice.

Daniel Brick

Insomnia

For Baharak

I cannot see you, because the wall
of darkness is thicker than any made
of wood or metal. I cannot hear you,
because distance swallows sounds,
then carpets space in a deep silence
which nothing mortal can penetrate.
But these are not barriers for us: clouds
cannot stop the free flight of birds, and
mountains do not block dawn from casting
her transparent light into every dark place.

And so it is that you and I are both awake
in our distant homes and keep vigils
while all the others sleep and dream their
dreams. Once you watched over your family's
restful sleep and their peace and safety filled
you with a quiet nocturnal joy. Now it is as if
you keep the same wide-eyed vigil but it embraces
the whole world with its sympathy, a world plunged
into suffering and hate, on the edge of hopelessness,
whose people rejoice in the grace of your peaceful gaze.

Daniel Brick

The Prophet's Summer Discourse

Here is your God: He is coming
to save you. For water will gush
into the desert and streams
into the wastelands. A road
will run through the rescued
land, a highway called
the Sacred Road. Shouting for joy,
the redeemed will use it...

ISAIAH 35: 4,6,8

I
I have an obscure feeling of being
protected... As my mind sifts through
details of EXPERIENCE, it locates traces
of safety threatened and fear increasing,
and both are suddenly calmed, rendered
peaceful, within and without. How long
does this mood prevail? In the early days,
it dissipated in the time it took a cup
of coffee to cool. Rarely did it last
into the next day. I often observed
its bright presence diminish like the day
as it faded into twilight...

But duration is not the issue: what matters
is your perception of RESCUE. Perception itself
can be a sudden fire that flares and climbs,
but suddenly is reduced to smolders. Or it can be
a modest fire that flames modestly for hours.
Whatever we perceive, we must be grateful for it,
and seek out the causes for our gratitude.

This may not satisfy any of you listening now,
but it must be said at this moment: I AM NOT ALONE
IN THIS ENDEAVOR, NOR AM I ACCOMPANIED.
If that statement strikes as a riddle, solve it.
If it strikes you as nonsense, excuse yourself
and make breakfast for all of us. If you perceive it
as a prophecy, be patient a little longer.

II

Why is so many of you succumb
to despair, when life displays
so much natural abundance? You scurry
about, satisfying temporal needs as if
each day were an end in itself, and
each night your existence sinks
deeper. How did you become so small?
Why does the Prophet's faith not swell
within you? Why do you sit in repose
on the knife's edge? Do you witness
the flowering of desire which blooms
in the life of the Priestess? How is it
you walk through a grove of trees and
hear nothing? When will you grasp fully:
You are not alone in this endeavor?

III

Why do you nurture false hopes, when
genuine hopes can be harvested by you
every season? Are you so stuffed with
wanton illusion, you cannot stomach
the pure bread of communion? Do you persist
in living small lives as if you were limited
beings? When will you simply unfold your wings
and soar aloft in the awareness:
You are not accompanied.

Daniel Brick

A Time Before

for Kathinka

There was a time before
you became a flutist,
your beloved flute did not yet
accompany your life. When was
the moment of discovery? Perhaps
the child Kathinka dreamed
of playing the flute, like an adept,
nimble fingers racing through scales
and effortless arpeggios. Did you see
flashes of your future self
in those years of preparation?
Or did you turn instead to other delights:
butterflies, a flower patch, games of skill
and chance, quiet moments with an older relative
who comforted you...

Music was already shaping your future self.
It made you promises that took up
residence in your heart and opened
your awakening mind to its vastness,
like an inland sea, whose rolling waves
matched the tides of your being.

Your lips never touch the flute itself:
a column of tremulous breath crosses
a tiny gap, enters the flute, and
is transformed into the music you love.
The music is thus composed of you.
Who can measure the abundance of
truth and beauty that comes forth
as sounds and colors?

There was a time before Stockhausen
wrote KATHINKA'S CHANT. But the essence
of that music was already inside of you,
and your flute had waited patiently
for your breath to release this treasure

to the world. Its vibrations still swirl
around and into us. The sounds and colors
of one memorable performance, traveling
at the combined speeds of sound and light,
will soon arrive in the precincts of Alpha Centauri.

Daniel Brick

The Free City

Inspired by STOCKHAUSEN DAYS IN KURTEN

A City Council Official escorts a rich merchant through a new provincial trade center:

This was once an Imperial City, you can see everywhere the ruins of power. We prop up the decaying buildings as best we can. We grew weary of displays of glory built by the labor of our young men and paid for by taxes levied on their families. When the Emperor abdicated and the Imperial fortress was torn down, we were abandoned. And you can see for yourself, we have replaced grandeur with happiness!

We are now a Free City: Citizens pay a fair tax to live in security and peace, the rest of their modest earnings they spend on necessities and simple pleasures...

Last summer the Archbishop from the distant capital visited us and stayed the whole season, leading us in prayer and performing pastoral duties. He wept in sadness and joy when he parted from us, and we shed the same tears. He returned to his mighty Cathedral and from his Pulpit he issued a decree forbidding any lord or knight from occupying our Peaceable Kingdom.

You recognize that term, don't you? It is the title of a book known all over Europe by the elusive writer Alessandro Borosoni. You see that much repaired villa on the hill before us? That is the home of the one you call Alessandro, but we call Sebastian and neighbor. He is not hiding from the world, this is his world. He lives among us, not apart in privileged luxury, but with us in daily intercourse in the market, in the Cathedral, in the University, and especially on the Promenade along the river. You will meet him tonight, he never hesitates to mingle and talk and drink to everyone's health. Just last week he gave me

a chapter from his new book. I will read part of it:

What makes a city a community of people?

Is it a fortress with turrets ringing its summit,
each one guarded by a crossbow-man?

That will just provoke violence.

Is it a modest looking building storing an immodest
amount of gold and other wealth?

That will just provoke envy.

Is it the presence of a great lord and his glittering
courtiers in splendid fashions?

That will just drain the citizens' resources.

No, it is a place of peace and contentment,
where good workers ply their trades, and trade
their goods, in a harmony of commerce.

And they share a Vision larger than themselves:

A GREAT WINDOW HANGS IN THE SKY ABOVE US. IT HOVERS
THERE FOR HOURS AS WE BOW AND TREMBLE IN THE LIGHT
WHICH POURS THROUGH THIS PUREST GLASS...
AND WE SEE IN ITS DEPTHS A BOUNTY SHINING
BEYOND OUR GRASP. BUT WE KNOW IN OUR DEPTHS
IT WILL FALL IN ITS DUE TIME AND SHOWER US
WITH ITS BLESSINGS. AND WE ARE CONTENT
WITH WHAT IS GIVEN US HERE AND WHAT IS PROMISED US THERE.
WE BREATHE THE AIRS OF BOTH HERE AND THERE...

Daniel Brick

Father And Son

for Ryan

There was a time when you were younger by far than you can remember, a time when I was always in front of you, because EXPERIENCE, in its total disregard for our human frailty, came careening down the hills and rushing up the valleys of Time and WHAM! hit us with all the force of its necessity. Mostly, the shock went over your head because you were still small in stature, giving Experience little to strike. And I took the brunt of it, in my face, in my face, in my whole being, because that is what fathers do. Then the broken pieces of Experience floated around us, harmless, their velocity spent. They were like bubbles and you jumped up and walloped them with all your strength...

It's different now, isn't it? You stand at full stature, facing everything Experience has to offer. You are confident of your strength. When Experience strikes you with a full body blow, you stand your ground, and watch the broken pieces floating past you. And you smile as you see those defeated pieces coalesce into the Time of Your Life.

A Man Alone Redux

I have an obscure feeling
of being protected...
No one has stepped out of
the crowd, identified himself
or herself as my protector, and
then slipped back into that
crowded anonymity, leaving behind
nothing more than a brief echo.
It's enough to make me ever alert
to my need for help. I keep my eyes
focused on the middle distance
through which both peril and rescue
sweep into my life. Perhaps, perhaps
there are compassionate eyes watching
my bold strides through experience.
Are they aware of obstacles, hard realities
of accident and fate, that proliferate
like exposed roots and dislodged rocks
on a walking path, threatening the walker
who is staring at trees, flowers, birds,
things of beauty that distract him from dangers?

It's as if I were traveling
over a roiling sea in a ship inadequate
for such a stormy passage. As long as
the weather stays fair and fair winds
billow the sails, the ship will reach
its destination. But should that fair
weather vanish into storm, direst peril
will leave me helpless, prayerful, doomed.

I am neither relieved nor frightened
by that fiction. It is simply
an assessment of possibility a wary traveler
makes for his peace of mind. As we age
from youth to seniority, and feel our past
confidence no longer resilient, some aspect
of daring retreats into the soul, and
curls into a deep animal sleep, dreaming

only of safety and rest. Some take refuge in faith, and declare, 'I know that my redeemer liveth.' Others adopt a stoic sense of their personal fate within the Mystery of Fate, and achieve a nobility of spirit. Still others confidently plan daily endeavors, without recourse to faith or fate.

Aging is the only mathematics I can comprehend. It demands no calculations, no right or wrong answers, no effort at mastery. Everyone excels at this discipline just by being mortal. It is a radically simple addition of one year after another which we trust to go on and on with no subtraction. At some unknowable point death sweeps into our life and takes each of us into its furious grasp. All we know is that each of us dies a man or a woman alone. This is the final stage of human knowledge. And in a flash we will realize how this knowledge attains this grace: each of us burns up all the energy of their life, and casts a fierce light against the darkness.

Daniel Brick

Twilight Reverie

I was lingering on my balcony
in the twilight of this late June
Monday. My building blocked
the sight of sunset, except for
a narrow panel of golden light
vanishing into a smear of color.
Is darkness so imminent? was
my first thought of the night.
A sense of loss drifted through me.

I pressed against the railing, and
leaned forward toward the trees,
alone on my balcony, contented
with my solitude, an empty apartment
behind me, its objects dimming
as shadows increased, both objects
and shadows vying for my attention.
Between indoor and outdoor, there is

an exchange of some obscure influence.
The living room is attached, practically
rooted to carpets, furniture, memories
of visitors, perhaps some even before my
residence, human things clinging together.
Papers covered with poetic scribbles
come to rest in corners or along the walls.
Dust mingled with the poetic words,
dusty words making something poignantly human.

From the balcony I watch with slow eyes,
intent on lives other than mine,
the mad dash of squirrels across the lawn.
The stately movement of birds who suddenly
launch into flight and perch on tree branches
is a wonder to me. Do they realize my yard
is their green sanctuary? I trace the flight
of small finches in a wide loop across the yard

and hope they never abandon this oval of safety.

I am almost finished with this experience.
What shall I call it? A meditation minus closure,
a daydream of my rapport with the animals,
a monologue with no trace of vanity...
Or perhaps I will give it no name, I will
not mar it my human wit. Let it be just
a memory lodged in my brain of a twilight
in which I lived along with things inanimate
and creatures animate a common life.

Daniel Brick

The Two Of Them

They played at least
a dozen roles before
they found their true selves.

They threw scores of dice
before they admitted
theirs was a common fate.

They walked or rode
hundreds of miles before
agreeing, This must be home.

They prayed to thousands
of gods before bowing deeply
to the avatar within the other.

They cried a million tears,
until dry-eyed each looked
into the other's gaze...

Then all numbers vanished,
then all counting ceased,
then it was just the two of them,
and an eternity of love beyond.

Daniel Brick

Tobias's Journey Rites Of Passage

Tobit's long hymn of praise to God in chapter thirteen uses language and imagery characteristic of such biblical paens. It is similar to Victory Hymns in historical books and the more militant Psalms. It is the way the writer signals us that ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. The very next line is: TOBIT DIED WHEN HE WAS A HUNDRED AND TWELVE YEARS OLD AND RECEIVED AN HONORABLE BURIAL IN NINEVEH. How ironic. The man who surreptitiously buried discarded corpses receives a sumptuous burial. Had the world changed so much for the better in his later years?

Now let us return to what seems to be the nadir of Tobit's fortunes. Reduced to penury because of his good works, abandoned by his Assyrian masters, Tobit's fate seems to be fixed in a permanent fall from worldly success. So it would seem to anyone who looks with mortal eyes, and sees just what there is to see. So far in the story Tobit has been doing God's work on his own initiative with his native human ability, and that may well be the case. But from this point on, there will be divine players in the story and God's Providence presiding on the outside. Tobit's role will become that of the Witness rather than the actor. It is Tobit the Witness who sings the ecstatic hymn in Chapter Thirteen.

There is no need to summarize Tobias's journey, not even the wonderful interventions of Raphael. My essay will achieve its closure with a meditation on Tobit's last action, namely, summoning his son when his own fortunes appear to be lost forever. Why does Tobit summon Tobias? Ostensibly, to retrieve Tobit's wealth in hiding. It will more than cover the family needs forever. Tobit's needs this wealth to support his family and to continue his charitable work. But to acquire it he needs his son's help, and his son needs the kinsman's help to make the journey.

This is the moment of divine intervention with Raphael the Angel the agent of God on earth. Raphael performs God's bidding with charm and deference. But I am going to close this essay with a reflection rather than the narrative. When Tobit summons Tobias and lectures him for some twenty lines, he is presiding over his son's hasty Rites of Passage. Tobit is passing his mind and mission on to his son, because he has been retired by bad fortune from the life of action. From father to son, the divine mission prevails.

From the Christian perspective we can make a giant leap of understanding, and see in the relationship of Tobit and Tobias, in the son's continuation and fulfillment of his father's work, the eternal paradigm of the Son's Incarnation, Sacrifice and Death and Resurrection to fulfill His Father's Will. The fact that the human players are such humble, even insignificant people only clarifies how thoroughly this eternal paradigm permeates the created world. And it emphasizes once again the message of Jesus that THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST AND THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST.

Daniel Brick

The Book Of Tobit

The Book of Tobit is set in the time of Assyrian ascendancy. The Assyrian warlords have dispersed the Jewish population, the better to control them, and many including Tobit have been exiled to Nineveh. Tobit accepts his exile as God's will. He neither complains to God to change his fate, nor does he petition God to change the Assyrians' fate. But it is crucial to recognize Tobit's quietism does not stem from despair or loss of faith. The source of his lack of pleading is his deep humility. Humility determines all of his actions and thoughts. If a strong theme of righteous behavior qualifies a work of literature a place in scripture, The Book of Tobit fulfills it.

Tobit's humility serves him well in temporal affairs. The Assyrian authorities see in him a cooperative captive, then they become aware of his skills in administration, and finally that is a trustworthy and honest man. Tobit is engaged and promoted based on his merit. Tobit does not join their service for personal gain and certainly not prestige. He uses his high rank and the Assyrians' trust to help his suffering fellow exiles. His goal is AGAPE LOVE of his Jewish brothers and sisters. His purpose is service to God. It is important to emphasize this inner motivation, because on the surface some might see him as a collaborator. I see in his behavior an early example of Jesus's dictum: Render to Caesar... Render to God....

Furthermore, Tobit takes upon himself a very dangerous mission: when he finds the corpse of a Hebrew victim of Assyrian aggression, he rescues the body, performs the ritual ablutions, and buries it with proper respect for the dead. He and his family suffer grievously when Assyrian officials are informed of his actions. Tobit is not deterred from his mission. He continues to help needy Hebrews and but murdered Hebrews.

However, because of a freak accident, he goes blind. Now his work is ended, his service necessarily suspended. How he reacts to both blindness and frustration is the moral center of this story, and it is a breathtaking account of the nexus of human goodness and divine goodness.

Let's step back from the plot to better appreciate what the writer of Tobit has crafted in his religious narrative. The Book of Tobit is framed by two long monologues by Tobit, the first, chapter one, in prose and the second, chapter four, a hymn in ecstatic verse. In the first Tobit reveals his heart to us, a heart

fully imbued with divine grace. Of course, I said that, Tobit is far too humble to tell the truth about himself. The opening sentence sums up his life: I, TOBIT, HAVE WALKED IN PATHS OF TRUTH AND IN GOOD WORKS ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE. This is neither egotism nor coy piety. I HAVE KEPT FAITH WITH MY GOD WITH MY WHOLE HEART. When he speaks these words, he is a blind, disgraced, persecuted nobody. That is, to the secular world's eyes. We soon learn in the story, he is none of these things.

Daniel Brick

The Guardian Angel

When a man opens his heart, for even an instant, the figure he perceives is his Guardian Angel. When he hears the call to the spiritual life, when his psychic substance is protected from evil, when he meets certain mysterious figures in dreams, or even in waking day, who act out for him the drama of his own inner life - that is the Guardian Angel at work.

Peter Lamborn Wilson

You know the night contains
all of your dreams. How they
are preserved; how they are kept
separate from the dreams of others
is a mystery. I only know
a window opens in your sleeping
mind and admits new dreams,
and probably expels nightmares
before it closes. All of this is
benign and reassuring, isn't it?

Soon I will summon you when
the moon is especially brilliant:
we will walk together beneath its traces,
and you can open yourself
to the influence of the night.
Into that dark light we will plunge
and blend our luminescence.
Who can say what will become
of this adventure? But I don't want
you to be afraid: I want you to be ready.

I have watched other angels
hovering just above their human
charges, and both seem intent
to reach a particular place
in the vast night space
that stretches beyond even
my angel-sight. You see,
it is I who have been
afraid, not you. Because

you are simply my beloved,

and I want to give you
this knowledge, this waiting grace,
this heightening. I was afraid
to lose you to some greater angel
who could guide you to wonders
I cannot apprehend. But now,
after I have absorbed your soul-wonder,
I understand, in this new place of being,
you may be Guardian, and I your charge.

Wake to wonder, Daniel. We cross this threshold....

Daniel Brick

Assessing Our Half-Year June 2017

How mechanical it all seems:
I can hear gears and pullies
groaning and stretching to make
ends meet. It's more irritating

disappointing. We are not
in the age we imagined would be
our generation's triumph, its apogee.
So why should I care if something

artificial fails? They should have
realized only something organic
connected to something else organic
can raise us. It's a fool's gambit

to pretend our collective thoughts
cohere so perfectly they become
a form of action in the world.
Which is to say, Angels Hover Everywhere.

What can we do until the time
is ripe? We can write and recite
our poems, we can visit our sick ones,
we can be giddy in our summer delights.

Daniel Brick

Saving The Light A Sonnet

Don't hesitate when a passing thought
shows a flashing potential. You know
you must follow it in hot pursuit,
with the hope you can keep its light
not just alive but intense as your
mortal hands cradle its fragile existence
in captivity. Don't rush these moments.
Your hands know the work of nurture:
they go about it without a false move
and soon there is a new light shining
in the darkness that every night
spills around us in a pool of confusion,
but grants us new hope in the light
we saved from falling into oblivion.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Artistic Impulse A Sonnet

Don't hesitate when a passing thought
shows a flashing potential. You know
you must follow it in hot pursuit,
with the hope you can keep its light
not just alive but intense as your
mortal hands cradle its fragile existence
in captivity. Don't rush these moments.
Your hands know the work of nurture:
they go about it without a false move
and soon there is a new light shining
in the darkness that every night
spills around us in a pool of confusion,
but grants us new hope in the light
we saved from falling into oblivion.

Daniel Brick



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Reflections After Seeing The Tempest

Royal Shakespeare Society, March 2017

Everything you have heard
is true: the story has a princess,
too innocent even for a fairy world.
It has a revenge fantasy, side by side
with the vision of a utopian commonwealth.
Like all fairy tales, it has a monster
at its center. But which character
plays the monster? How will you answer me?

Should we fear that place because
one man rules it? Should we fear
him because he is a necromancer,
or because he is a grievously wounded
man with revenge burning in his heart?
Should we fear this man who claims he can
revive the dead, or is that just a poet's fancy?

Or should we rejoice instead because
this place is so real as we watch in wonder?
It has weight and presence, and creatures
of infinite joy cavort under its changing light
and fill its ambient air with the sweetest music.
And intelligent stars that know our fates
shine over it with unforced kindness.

Shakespeare fell silent after this play.
At the end he speaks of despair being relieved
by prayer and he asks us to set him free to go.
We must make our own closure: There is an island
you can reach only by risking a storm at sea.
There must be a history of grief you carry
within, and a willingness to make forgiveness
your permanent state of mind and heart.

But the hardest task is to toss Prospero's
books into the sea, and watch them as they sink
past touch, past vision, past any hope

of retrieval. Thus must be done yet again
when one of us dons Prospero's robe,
and finds another set of books just waiting.
There is an island that could be paradise,
there is a pure woman waving from the shore,

and there is a monster at the center, wherever you turn.

Daniel Brick

The Clarinet Player

For Suzanne Stephens

I played a clarinet
for four inglorious years
in a high school band.
The band director taught me
what he could about playing
that slippery woodwind.
But I lacked the dexterity
to become a master of it,
and I could never measure
musical time, so complexly
divided and sub-divided,
so I was lagging two or
three measures behind the
rest of the players.

But listening to you
play clarinet and basset-horn
over the decades has been
redemptive. I hear the excellence
I sought when you play...
The ambient air carries
your beautiful tone into every
crevice of space and shelf
of time. Your mastery of
HARLEQUIN and IN FREUNDSCHAFT
accomplishes the orphic goal
of music. I believe four stars
at least show you the way.
I follow after in a wide-awake
trance of close listening. Truly
angels are watching over us.

Daniel Brick

Two Realities And Two Fantasies

A Poem for Kathy

When we meet it is not by design,
nor is it by accident. The question
is by what third factor do we meet?
This is puzzling, and it has stumped
minds more supple and clever
than ours. In fact, we have become
celebrities of sorts among those
agents of society who endeavor
to make sense of modern life.
They have that lean and hungry look,
have no sense of style or fashion,
rarely display any sign of inner
pleasure other than utter contempt
for people -like us - who trouble them
by raising conundrums. Meanwhile, we
continue to meet, cross paths, find
ourselves in the same place
without design or accident. Life can be
that neatly messy. Or so the agents say.
We talk about other things, laugh a lot,
and our smiles abound. It's a simple life.

First Fantasy

But you might turn this situation
to your advantage career-wise.
It will involve Space Travel, Einstein's
calculations, zero-gravity, artificial-
gravity, mental-gravity... and a whole
new wardrobe. Because you will become
an astronaut! The training will be
a spring breeze, your assignment will
arrive before the seasons change. You will
follow traces of cosmic hope embodied
in a faster-than-light-speed space ship
that knows exactly where you should be,
namely, a planet in orbit around the star,

Proxima Centauri. It has taken six years to reach this teeming colony. You arrive at this Einstein-world younger than you were when you departed earth in 20xx. You had already added some stylish decorations to the dreary astronaut jump suit. Now you add panache to routine attire and decorate dull chambers with glittering things. Both male and female astronauts are astonished, they applaud each morning your arrival with new ideas. One of the agents, in a state of elation that did not stem from a space walk, gushed, Gosh, we're beautiful up here!

Second Fantasy

OK, you hesitate to become an astronaut even in make believe, so stay on earth and find your adventure as a fashion consultant for a Big Business run by indispensable men, with big salaries and even bigger egos. The Big Boss greets you on your first day, Well, Kathy, we expect great things from you. Your references - and on he goes, and you notice an oddity no one mentions: his left arm is stretched straight up. It is holding a seven-foot pole which supports the tottering GLASS CEILING. All of the male employees are so encumbered, because they crave the prestige of working under a GLASS CEILING. One of the younger male managers tells you, We don't need our left hands, because we do genius work with only our right hand. Even as he spoke, he was dancing to balance his pole... But on a day, not too soon and and not too late, the wobbly GLASS CEILING collapsed. You and your sisters watched it fall and shatter into glittering shards. Then women emerged from everywhere and took charge of the genius business without any fuss.

The disgraced male employees sued the federal government for jobs. But some stayed behind, sifting through the debris, trying to piece together a mosaic of privilege out of broken glass. Their hands were horribly lacerated, and their trophy wives were filing for divorce, some even applying for their estranged husbands' jobs.

Second Reality

So be the mistress of your life, choose in your own time the existence which best matches your Inner Self. Consider things that matter. The element of goodness will take care of itself, arriving as you arrive, prospering as you prosper. The element of truth you can leave to God: He knows best what is best, for you, for them, for all of us. That means beauty remains: make beauty your goal, increase its volume and shapes in our lives, make our lives shine with a daily beauty, start with things of simple elegance: a pair of earrings with delicate tear-drop hangings poised to fall; a maroon scarf that splashes color on a gray sweater; a peach blouse that echoes the color of early twilight.

Of all the wonders of life, beauty is the most obvious but also the most elusive. It is a blessed state of being, because it brings forth only love, and it speaks only in kindness, as if happiness were within our grasp each and every day.

Daniel Brick

On The Path

Is this the door
meant for me to open,
this great wooden door
painted Prussian blue
with Renaissance golden
spheres shining from its
center? Or is it just
another finger pointing
to the Moon? Must I live
this life until I reach
another door, one painted
pale yellow, or not painted
at all, with no visionary
symbol for me to contemplate.
Just a simple thing, no handle
even, just a vertical panel
I push once, and its opens
to Glory! There be glory
in the end, won't there be
glory in the end? I have waited
so long, the others are far ahead
me, or far behind me. Is it my fate
to be so solitary? How much further
must I walk to realize in my deepest self:
THIS MUCH KNOWLEDGE YIELDS THIS MUCH GRACE?

Daniel Brick

The Treaty

We agreed upon so many things,
the bloys and me,
you'd think we was friends, that
the meetin' was just a formality -
'Formality, what's the - '
Formality, like goin' to church
on Sunday with your family all gussied up.
'Oh, I get it, like tellin' the girl
you're with you love her! Girls like that.'
Hey! See me by 12: 30 pm at the same place.
'Righto. Be there - you too - by 12: 30 pm.'
You see how easy it is for me and the boys
to talk. It's 'hood talk, lots of code words,
sometimes ya have to fake it. Yeah, fake
till ya make it. Understand? Got it?
'Yeah, I got it: a poke means it's for real,
a nod means ya gotta speed up, or we're burned.
I got it. Just squeeze the trigger real gentle.
Don't want to make a mess, huh. Ya see? I got it.'
I'm getting tired of all this indirection. Why?
'It's called strategy, little brother, strategy,
and that's what's special about the Bosses, they
do strategy like we do a car theft, real smooth.'
Can't we just blast 'em to hell? Why not the Big Blast?
Clear the streets for a week, make our mark, impress
the Bosses like there's no tomorrow. How 'bout it?
'Hmmm, are thinking for your self again? Not waiting
for the Bosses again. Do ya want to do time in the
Solitary again? It's June, they might give ya fruit.'
Hey, wait just one - What about Lake St. and
46th Ave.? Whose is it? Your boys or mine? We both,
you know, can't be there, but the lake is free -
'OK, OK. You know the drill. Same place, same time,
same talk - ' - OK. See ya, man. - 'Yeah, man, see ya.'

Daniel Brick

The Talking Trees

Every tree in the countryside spoke to me, saying,
HOLY! HOLY! In the forest, enchantment...

Who can express all of it?

Ludwig van Beethoven, 1815

The trees will not speak to me.
Their branches bend toward the earth.
They are heavy with water, from three days
of rain. Water drops fall from their leaves
to the already saturated grasses. Perhaps
trees and grasses stretch toward each other
to form a wet green union, a blending
of their identities as growing things
that do not move from place to place,
but exult in their stationary perfection.

In the dappled morning light, I loiter
between two maple trees, wondering
which one will take notice of me, and
answer my greeting with its own kind of
salutation. The sun rises higher in the sky.
No answering gesture happens. But a breeze
grazes my face and no doubt receives some
answering gesture from the leaves of both
maples. I am a witness to this exchange,
my hope is to be a participant in it.

Do the trees have any sense of effort?
Do they feel the movement of sap
through all their branches and leaves
as a worthy effort that makes them
swell with success? Or are they
simply living things in which a process
perpetually occurs, with no sense of time,
no awareness of what must be. Their existence
contains no thought, no strain: in idleness
they achieve everything in perfect sync.

If the trees could read my mind,

if they could register my feelings
for them, they would acknowledge me
in some vegetative way, some offering
of their being, maybe a cluster of leaves
falling in my path, maybe a silent gesture
of branches conveyed as the wind swept
through the tree on its mission elsewhere.
Or perhaps the tree's soul would speak
directly to my soul, meaning HOLY! HOLY!

Daniel Brick

The Crossing Part Two

Death keeps droning on,
as people dutifully prepare
to enter what we only know as
the Dark Realm, the Underground,
the Place of Nowhere. Death himself
knows nothing, he is a braggart
puffed up with false importance.
He is just a little thing between
two immensities, Life and After-
Life. He is a little hinge
which snaps and separates
the two - forever. Death knows
nothing of Before or After.

I am just a visitor, not one
of the Appointed for this
Crossing. But he said so little
of help to these people milling
about in confusion, I will speak
what he left out:

This is the point of the Crossing.
The thundering you hear within
are the Rivers of Eternity
rolling the currents of Time
at the edge of Eternity. Soon
your hearing will be assaulted
by a vast Silence within and without.
Do not fear this Silence: it is
the companion of the Light which even
now is slowly enveloping you in fold
upon fold of Illumination. When your
Crossing is complete, there will be no
Inner and Outer, no Before and After,
no Us and Them. All will be All...

Can you feel it? The Crossing?
The Freshness around you, gently closing
upon you. Remember this: Do not drink
if the first fountain you encounter.
Cultivate thirst. Do not drink of
the second fountain, however enticing.

Think instead of drinking the Light,
then let it lift you, and take you
where it will. What happens next -
nothing or everything! We will Know
what is there to be grasped, or
we will know in the tiniest moment,
on the split of a split whether or
not Time, Knowledge, Being are real
or illusions, in that finality
we will Be or Not Be, and it is enough.

Daniel Brick

The Crossing Part One

There are poems we love
in which nothing is fixed
in time: the words are
of the past as much as they are
of the present, and their future
hovers nearby, visible to those
with eyes to see. What I want is
the collapse of time upon itself,
so that the present time of remembering
merges with past time of acting, and
the two become one. I will say this
as simply as possible: I want to touch
the flesh of those people who occupy
my mind, I want to close the gap
between flesh and thought, between now
and then. I don't want to sleep and
dream of our common pleasures while
they suffer and feel the sharp edge
of immediate sorrow and are bound
to grief. I am human too, I must
suffer alongside them...

Life is doing what you will
in the time before Death drops
into the scene, and says casually,
because he is inevitable:
OK, folks, it's over. Wrap
it up, get ready to move out.

Daniel Brick

A Wednesday Morning In June A Birthday Poem

A Wednesday morning in June,
day has begun with a cloudless
blue sky, sunlight shining
over everything with equal splendor,
a match with Monday and Tuesday.
Is this fair weather a good habit
recently acquired by the month itself?

A Wednesday morning in June,
the middle of the week, the middle
of the calendar year. How neatly
sometimes things fall into place,
and it seems as if they were meant
to be just so, perhaps a small but
vital element of the world's structure,

just sufficient reality to make us
trust the whole of which we know only
parts. A Wednesday morning in June,
the seventh of that month, but I wait
for the tenth, with no unseemly haste,
because on that day I will turn seventy.

I should by now be accustomed
to the way time circles through space
for those three hundred plus days, and
unerringly arrives at this point,
my seventieth year to Heaven, as Dylan Thomas
put it in a poem he wrote when he reached thirty.
Like him I hope to sing my heart's truth again.

Or rather unlike him I will give voice
to a Poem of the Mind. A Wednesday morning
in June is neither a title nor a theme:
it is a prod, a provocation, a stimulus
for me to withdraw from further blather
about the day and its weather, and seek
the words that will express my inner climate.

Men Made Brothers

The pink dawn light has faded
into the yellow glow of late morning.
Its beauty will last until twilight
and slowly envelop me in the calm
of summer weather in late spring.
Time itself wears the aspect of the season.

How can these measures of my poem
equal the measure of your grief?
The beauty of art and nature
distract me from my mission:
I want to restore Eurydice
to your existence by whatever sacrifice

is required of mortal men who hope
to sway the heavy laws of death...
Heracles brought forth Alcestis, already
shrouded in shadows, into the common light,
and returned her to her helpless spouse.
Are not Alcestis and Eurydice sisters of soul?

And are we not men made brothers
by grief? Have we not earned
by rite of suffering the right
to demand our share of human happiness?
Your service to music and mine to nature
speak our appeal directly to the gods.

Orpheus, enter now the realm of sleep.
Let its quiet radiance make you one
in love with Eurydice. And when
dawn's pink light sweeps across tomorrow,
she will be lying by your side, both of you
breathing the same air, seeing the same dream.

I will be her substitute in the realm below.
It is my will to be a sacrifice that the life
of your loves can flourish in fields and woods.
It is my mission to be a human being

displaced among the teaming shadows
to bring them whatever comfort I can offer.

is required of mortal men who hope

Daniel Brick

Two Watchers

The Human Watcher

I live near a confluence of angels.
It is like a high-walled city at an ancient
crossroads, where travelers drink sweet
water drawn from deep wells, and sit or doze
in the coolness of cedars. Then I feel
the joy that eluded Gilgamesh, and enjoy
the very sleep that dashed his hopes.
When I awake, I carry with me bright visions.

The Angel Watcher

I have a question for our Creator. When he
returns he will tell me which of our races
he created first: his answer will tell us
what we need to know. Did he start with them,
realize they were too weak, and gradually
swell their being into us angels, or
did he find us too strong and slowly squeeze
our being to their limited dimensions?

The Human Watcher

Gilgamesh crushed a lion in each arm hold,
the life drained out of one, and then the other.
Gilgamesh turned their hides into his clothes.
Gods and goddesses were shocked to see him dressed
in dead flesh. Then he imposed his will on nature
and the world. Only Ishtar resisted but he stayed
defiant. Why did he try so hard? In the end
he was broken, weeping for himself, weeping for us.

The Angel Watcher

Sometimes it seems to us that a machine
with a dogmatic sense of humor created us
and them. We know there was a power before us,
and higher than us. It is a knowledge buried

inside of us. Will he or it return? Meanwhile,
there is one among them who scans the night sky,
keeps track of moonlight and sunlight, a watcher
whose eyes burn with desires he cannot shape further.

The Human Watcher

For eons the sky has divided our races. Is it
the radiance of the blue expanse or the glory
of the solar orb that confers such power
to those who climb in flight through corridors
of light and glory in vistas. What if they shared
their power, descended to live among us, blended
with us in marriage and childbirth? What if
a new and mighty being came into being from our union?

The Angel Watcher

I live above a confluence of humans, scattered
across dusty plains, scorched by the sun, blasted
by the wind, flooded by waters. Every bad thing
that can happen to beings has happened to them.
This is called the Human Condition, because
no single human being experiences these things
in isolation. They come like an huge ocean wave
and sweep over all things impartially...

How have they responded to their Human Condition?
They invented music and dance to express their joy
in existence, and to praise higher beings if such
exist. They have composed epic poems, which summon
them to accomplish ever greater things to fulfill
their destinies. They write lyric poems to celebrate
the arts of peace and bring the sweetness and the light
into their lives, so the area of darkness diminishes

AND THE LIGHT SPREADS EVERYWHERE BELOW, BESIDE AND ABOVE THEM.

Daniel Brick

King Odysseus Reflects At Night

Sleep is a luxury
for an old warrior,
my young friend.
Morpheus abandons us
in our later years. And
all night pounding surf
smashes the shoreline;
loose rocks tumble
into the water,
the receding tide will drag
them into the sea. It is like
a great city gradually
collapsing into ruin. That is
no aid to us, because upland
mocking me in daylight and
after nightfall the walls of Troy,
solid, expertly molded, impervious
to the weapons we wield, rise over
the field of battle like the very
symbol of victory. It will take
the Will of the gods to destroy
That citadel city. How are we
to convince them to abandon
those citizens who faithfully
make sacrifices of their wealth
to the Glory of Olympus? How can
we breach the silence of the gods?
The night drags on, don't let me
deprive you of your sleep. You will
stray with me? Then let us share
an unmixed wine to keep our minds keen.

The walls must be breached if we are
to have our victory. I must think this
through for our coalition. The other kings
see me as a younger Nestor, not an Ajax
or Diomedes. I am no warrior, and hardly
a king at all, in their minds. My Ithaka
is an unknown land to them. Nothing attracts

them to visit, we have no precious gifts
under the earth. And we fight the soil
to grow our sparse crops. Even pirates
stopped raiding our villages and citadel.
I have no impulse to steal from others,
either from kings with plenty, or peasants
with nothing. I do not see that as glory
for my name. My kingdom is governed, not
ruled. I do not wear a crown when I sit
in judgment or council. I want my people
to see me as a man among men, not their
lord but their patron. One summer a philosopher
from Lydia who had heard about my views
came to my court and stayed all season
witnessing the harmony of Ithacan life,
which he compared to the celestial music
of Apollo's lyre. I want only that harmony
for my family and my kingdom. I want to sit
by my hearth, in the presence of my beloved
Queen Penelope, with my son Telemachus
on one side and my father Laertes
on the other side. This family is the glory
of my existence. Athena favors us, because
we live by the rigorous code she established
for civilized life. With Apollo and Athena
as our honored Olympians, we live like gods
but without the power we could not control.
Instead we live with a divine harmony.
to grow our meager

Daniel Brick

The Migraine

All my life you have been present,
uninvited, uncouth, with the manners
of a spoiled dog. Who could possibly
love a mangy cur like you? You show up
early, before the others because you want
to corner me for the night, keep me just
for your selfish self. But later - and,
thank God, there's always a 'later'
in the world we share - when my head
is clear, I'll look ahead on the calendar,
and follow the horizontal lines of weeks
and months drive past me like finely-tuned
cars that make their owners proud. And I
will imagine out-smarting your early arrival
and racing away to preserve my clear head.
OK, I admit, it won't be tonight I get free,
and there'll be no driving for me. I'm as
hopeless as a career drunk. But you - you -
You're already here, lurking in the shadows
my electric lights can't dispel and decorative
candle light won't touch. It's just you and me,
again just me and you. All my life....

Daniel Brick

We Prophets

E'er since the time the Judge on high
Conferred upon me a prophet's vision,
I read in ev'ry passing eye
Whole tomes of malice and derision
from THE PROPHET by Lermontov

A six-winged seraph stood
Before me on a crossroads dreary;
He touched my eyes...
Now armed with a prophetic power
They opened wide....
from THE PROPHET by PUSHKIN

Long ago, when I was young,
and what people thought about me
worried me, we prophets
were despised by everyone,
young and old, rich and poor,
devout or pagan. Who or what
they were mattered as little as
a single leaf on a massive oak tree:
they all equally despised us.
We were a sorry company, lean,
pock-marked, smelly, weak
to the point of fainting in a crowd,
clinging to each other. We walked and walked,
through forests, villages, high hills, tundra,
and only stopped to rest at isolated lakes
or deserted river valleys. Parishioners and priests
alike banned us from entering the Churches.
We prayed fiercely in our interior devotions,
and sometimes raised our scrawny voices in
hymns. Then an angel appeared suddenly
among us, shining and glowing, and he spoke
gently in our hearts. He led us in a forgotten
dance, a dance of celestial things, with music
we heard in our hearts accompanying our movements.
It was daylight when we began, it was deepest night
when he stopped. We gradually realized we were living

angelic lives. We sang hymns as we danced, and did not notice the angel that had withdrawn...
Each of us felt the Hand of God touch his head. Again and again we felt that touch, both gentle and firm, absolutely a touch of Grace. I have been smiling ever since!

I could tell you many things, if you are ready to hear them, or I could stay silent and pass through your village. I could tell you of a life of service. I could tell of a perpetual thirst. I could tell you how we hover around artists as they struggle to make a marriage of Truth and Beauty. I could describe a Temple within our hearts, which we will never finish building. I could assure you we dive deeply into your wounded psyches, and in that electric zone neither here nor there, wrestle with demons. And we see your beings expanding to angelic proportions. Trust me, there are so many things awaiting you once your apprenticeship is over! You will say, this earthly life is vexed into a temporary glory. Oh! Oh! Everything will unfold, open out, become a thousand times more than itself, and keep opening out into Space and Time as they steadily become Eternity.

Daniel Brick

Immortal Longings By Karlheinz Stockhausen

I have been a faithful Christian
I have prayed to some Buddhas
I have prostrated inwardly to Allah
I have feared images of Aztec and Mayan Gods
I have allowed most of the Gods of the Earth to visit me

In all of them YOU have met me, divided and diversified, meshed,
YOU GOD, YOU who are all Gods and much more,
The Whole, the One, the Individable, including me.
Now I search everywhere for you - The Individable, that was divided,
now WHOLE.

Companion, you met HIM in me.
You will learn to hear when HE speaks and acts through me.
Do not give up hope, I have been given a lot more time.
I still know who I am - HIS MOUTH, HIS HAND.
I am on the way, and within myself I am completely confident.
I will not give up and I will not be given up.

May 9, 1968



PoemHunter.com

Translated by Kathinka Pasveer

Daniel Brick

Stay With Me...

Stay with me
when the world betrays yet again
and still demands you follow its lead.

Stay with me
when North and South are no longer true directions
and East and West have plunged into nothingness.

Stay with me
when hope dissolves into despair
at the knife-edge of awareness.

Stay with me
when your dreams are too distant to be seen
and your nightmares moan beneath your bed.

Stay with me
because poor as we are
life turns into love and love into wealth.

Stay with me
because the shy angel of star-gardens
greet us as the guardian of rose gardens.

Stay with me
because of the summons of blue sky in yellow light
and the intense red of each dawn and every sunset.

Daniel Brick

Backyard Tree A Sonnet

Its branches stretch out
from the trunk, some angled up,
some angled down, but every one
reaching out from the rim
of the trunk into open air
which must promise a kind of
independence. This great rooted thing,
this huge plant, so stable in its place
of being, never bends despite fierce storms,
does not break despite being encased in ice.
Its green glory rises above my third floor
apartment, above the flat roof with scattered
lawn chairs and flower pots. And its canopy
unfolds its mottled green blanket to shelter us below.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Music, Oh The Music

Is MUSIC a window or a door?
Consider both choices carefully
because metaphor has never been
more perilous than at this moment.
Do not answer brusquely, do not
prevaricate. Neither extreme helps us.
Let your mind become many minds:
Let each one do what it does best
to resolve this issue in multiple harmonies.

If music is a window...
you can step back, in fact you must.
You have yourself made music, both
creating it and listening to it, a sacred
activity, one that partakes of the Eternal.
You imagined that reality, you have lived
according to it. So be it. Step back: the window
is an abyss. The music pours forth from it, and
envelops you in its sound, its beauty, its glory.

So, we say music is a window. What follows
from that metaphor? Notice the window is always
open, there is neither glass nor screen. No curtain
hangs there to be pulled across its openness.
Consider that openness an essential aspect of music.
It flows everywhere and in every time. Nothing in nature
or artifice can stop or stall its constant flow.
And when you sleep in darkness, if your heart is open,
music will blend with your dreams and make night radiant.

Over a very long stretch of time, not measured
according to earthly standards, music will enter
your Self. You can walk freely ever you choose.
Music will abide within you, because it is a faithful
thing and loves your fidelity. Yes, music is a sentient
thing, a spiritual being. It has never been just noise
to you, not even colored noise, certainly not the racket
of the world which promises what only music can deliver:
Harmony, Melody, Rhythm, Grace Notes, Variations.

Sit down in a chair, the most comfortable one.
There's time to fix coffee if you're inclined to
its smoky aroma and taste. Music is never impatient,
it is never jealous or mean. I will tell you a great
secret: Music is the moral image of what you must become.
You have given to music the only thing it desires:
that you listen in the depths of your being, wrapped
in sounds pouring through the window into your being.
Over time you become the music. YOU ARE ATTUNED....

* * * *

What if you say, MUSIC is a door, not a window?
You are accustomed to music coming to you.
Across a space of silence, it pierces the air
with an arrow of sound that reaches you unerringly
from its source. What is that source? Do you expect
a single answer? Is it possible something so vast
can be summed up in a dozen words? Maybe, maybe not.
But if you see music as a door, get up from your chair,
because you have already embarked on your journey.

Walk through that space electric with music's passage.
Music moves ahead of you, and you hear what you need
to hear: Mahler's DAS LIED VON DER ERDE, PARSIFAL,
CARRE, Monteverdi's VESPERS OF 1610. Walking takes
no effort. You are rapt by Beethoven's STRING QUARTET
OPUS 131. Its pitch rays and sound clouds launch
your flight. Come, it is time. The Muse calls you.
The Musicians are assembled, eagerly await your presence.
There is Mozart holding his copy of K.333, offering it to you.

Do you see the others? No one is in a rush, they float
like you in an andante of flight toward an apotheosis
of music and humanity. Composers and listeners, musicians all,
ascend on columns of sound toward a plateau of LIGHT.
And there is Stockhausen, smiling, no, laughing. He beckons us
with his right hand, his left hand raised above his head points
to something we cannot yet make out. Could it be the realm
of MUSIC? The Source itself, the Fullness of what we have
heard in beautiful fragments, now rendered complete?

Daniel Brick

The Truth Prevails

To run in the heartland of dreams...

Nosheen Irfan

I read your spring poem with delight
and anticipated the wisdom following after.
But it was foolishness that clouded my mind
despite your sweet rhymes and luscious images.
I was about to blurt out the offending question -
Where is this heartland of dreams? - as if
I were inquiring about a vacation site.
I saw you lower your head in silence, and
when you raised it a moment later your eyes
held the tenderness of deer eyes and
their dark pools were shining with tears.
Oh, how could I have been so obtuse?
Your poem was one of resignation, not
of possibilities. It was meant to calm
our desires for impossible dreams.
And yet I blundered with those very dreams
into the luminous space of your poem,
almost spoiling the quiet truth you
conveyed. I was not ready for your
poem. I blindly read it, saw only
what I wanted to see, unaware of
your gift of clear thinking.
But you trusted your poem and
had faith in me, and today
I re-read your words, and their
wisdom bloomed inside of me.
It is light and airy, carrying it
is no burden, because it has dispelled

ade things
misunderstood so heavy. And now I know
the heartland is not a place: it is
Interior Self ever in need of refining
to be true to itself, and the running is
your metaphor for achieving understanding
of the heart before the false dreams

Yesterday's mistakes which m

smother its quiet wisdom.

Daniel Brick

What If...

What if I were to show you
TIME runs out in two streams,
side by side they pour forth
the contents of time into space.

What if I were to show you
SPACE is not safely fenced in
and its contents erode continually.
In due time they will disappear.

If I proved these are our clear
and present dangers, would you join
me and others to bravely shore up
the channels of TIME and stop the flow?

Would you help us build a huge wall
to contain SPACE so no more of it
erodes and rushes into nothingness?
Would you first calculate the danger

-to yourself? Or adopt an optimism
that will bind us and make us ONE!
We will build an indestructible dam
that prevents TIME from running dry.

We will build walls bigger than
the fabled walls of Gilgamesh's Uruk.
And thus the people will call us saviors
because we prevented a second loss of paradise.

and rushes into nothingness

Daniel Brick

The First Three Lines

The first line is written on a blank page,
and the second line follows without any strain.
I have completed what must happen first,
and the rest will come forth with a kind of ease.
Not the kind of ease you assume, when you set aside
your tools, close your notebook, look away from
the edifice you are building, and let your mind
empty itself, become a hollow place, a chamber
of swirling dust, where men arrive barely conscious
and collapse in disarray, some never to rise.

The third line is not yet written, but I am alert.
I can already sense what its shape and colors,
even what it will mean to me in later years
when these memories will have slipped into
a deeper memory: it will call forth
the texture of its moment, the glance,
the stare, the half-smile. Those are gestures
which both hide and reveal what is essential
to our being. That is why the third line
will be empowered to pull the rest
of the images into the poetic space
and close the circle of inspiration for a time.

Daniel Brick

A Theory Of Shadows

My shadow strides
just a few steps ahead
of me or lags a few steps
behind me. MY SHADOW?
Wherefore this possessive
term? My shadow it is not!
The shadow is an autonomous
being, a concoction of the sun
with my body as its raw material.
In its essence, which is its identity,
it is a self-creating thing, it exists
because it desires to be, its being
every moment dependent on its will.
Periodically, it occupies a sun-struck
space and vanishes from my view.
Does it then hover near-by me,
or does it launch into its own
space of endeavor? Untrammeled by body,
free of gravity, what wonders does it
observe? I am rendered speechless.
My shadow strides just a few steps....

Daniel Brick

A Parallel Air

Our lives are cluttered
because we let our thoughts
slip from the mind's grasp
before they have closed
the circle of cognition
and they tumble helplessly
into a world of things they
cannot understand. It is perilous
because they are just fragments
in need of a wholeness the world
cannot provide for mental things.
So they latch in to other fragments,
swirling through the air we do not
breathe, a parallel air made of
mind-stuff: incomplete ideas,
lost thoughts, dreams in daylight,
nightmares and memory-blades
which slice open hearts so that
their contents fall in forgetfulness.
Have I not already told you:
these are perils of being human...
Our poor reason, that noble vanguard
of the mind, once considered a crown
of creation, is overwhelmed by all
this spent energy. No wonder then
reason often sleeps and dreams
of the clear thinking that might
turn this disorder into ordered
thoughts. And in its deepest dream
reason touches a calm center
which provides sanctuary...
Oh, what angel or secret map
will show us the way to this calm place?

Daniel Brick

Something Else

Monday 15 May 2017

I woke up suddenly
at 5 am this morning,
rested, refreshed, ready
for the lovely day promised
by both the birds songs and
the clear pervasive sunlight.
It was a morning with no shadows,
a ulyssean dawn
shining with possibilities.
What was there not to hope for?

Bur something else happened...
I was not alert to the change:
I was still living inside
my expected day, unaware
of a shift that ran through
space and made time accept
a different outcome
from the beginning I had
witnessed, as I stood
on my balcony at dawn.

The sky darkened, The rain
fell around 1 pm, just enough
to spoil a family's picnic,
or make eager revelers disband.
We were sheltered from it, eating
our lunch, enjoying our conversation.
We deftly attuned ourselves to the day's
changing melody, perhaps singing new lyrics
to a familiar song we know by heart.
That's how we live, that's how we thrive...

But still the day had been
consecrated doe a different
purpose, a purpose shaped and
rehearsed in my mind, as I looked

into the early light from my balcony.
It was already half-lived
as I thought my way through
its natural wonders,
across its various places,
fully satisfied by its calm

and riot, those twin experiences
of Spring becoming Summer. That may
be a sufficient explanation. But I see
Ulysses striding the length of his
lone ship, exhorting his tired men,
'Stay true to your sworn purpose,
keep hope alive, and you will see
your Ithaca again! ' Did I surrender
too quickly in these latter days of ease?
Did I abandon the consecrated day
as if it were just an ordinary day?

Daniel Brick

Stranded And Bereft

From an Astronaut's Journal

I see the sky stretch its arms
far passed the contours of its confinement.
They penetrate the outer space which is
my confinement for whole seasons.
If this were earth, I would be
witnessing a natural miracle. Stranded
on this alien world, I can't tell
if it is miracle or routine. What if
a miracle for me is a tedious fact
of this place? Am I so divided
from any connection to this planet?
Can I ever close the gap between us?

Earth is the Long-Ago for me, I have
no credible time frame. Oh, the beauty
of earth stung me as it receded behind me
in a paroxysm of speed, myself hurled
into deep space. We scoff at the psychological
training at the Space Academy, eager to be free.
We were fully matured human beings, no longer
tied to nature. How arrogantly we severed ourselves
from the sea of feelings, the tides of emotion,
the swelling of the heart. Even now the old language,
the poetry rushes into a mind purged for cognition.

There is an owl-like bird native here.
I hear his mournful cry cut through
the descending clouds as sunlight dims.
Before they smother me, and deepen my aloneness,
I listen for him. Is he protesting the deeper
darkness, or is his song just an event parallel
to nightfall? I want to see the owl's fierce red
eyes illumine this darkness, make it light
to my touch, weightless to my sight. I want to be
reborn as a child to this place. I want to assume
my place in this nature....

'I Breathe The Air Of Other Planets'

from Expectation by Stefan George,
set to music by Arnold Schoenberg
in his String Quartet No.2

The first planet I visited
was recommended by a traveler
I trusted. When I emerged
into its lime green air, all
was well for a moment. Then
my eyes burned as a sudden
wind poked them like stilettos.
I stumbled back to my spaceship,
set the controls on auto-pilot
for my next recommended landing.
There my ship was wracked
by fierce winds, and wind-stones
assaulted the whole vessel...
I realized previous journeyers
protected their claims by sending
us later journeyers to destructive
destinations. So I sought out
a humble, seemingly inferior planet,
and rested for two days and nights
before venturing out.

My first breath was a gentle medley
of cinnamon and nutmeg. I released
all the seals and let this blessed
air circulate throughout my ship.
This alien but known air filled
every bend and corner of it,
just as it filled my lungs and veins.
Outside in the perfumed air,
I made no effort to walk, I fairly
floated over the pure white surface
some distance from my ship, but already
that vessel from earth was the alien place.
Breathing this air was as natural as
breathing oxygen - had been! I felt

no need to rush or to tarry, no need to worry
or to rejoice. Everything was balanced just so.
I realized now why the older journeyers had
lied: it was to preserve a paradise...
for the few. How churlish! How understandable.

On the fifth day, my thinking cleared, my own
thoughts were free and untrammelled, just like
my sweet breathing hour after hour. Then
on the seventh day, after a night of dreams of crashing
space ships, poisonous clouds enveloping planets,
and men contorted by fear, I trudged across
a wide plain of shining white surface. I felt
my reptilian brain, dormant for so many eons,
open wide, with fold after fold, unwinding
in an alien cognition of alternating calm
and crisis, of over-confidence followed by fear.
At times my thoughts were a heavy exhilaration,
then plummeted to depths of anxiety. I slowed
to a crawl, then curled in a circle, and fell
into a dull sleep. I dreamed of flight. When awake,
I was cleansed by my remembrance of the ancient
dinosaurs, huge reptiles killed by breathing
fetid air, except for those that surrendered
scales for feathers, took flight and survived
as birds. It was the awakening of my mammalian
brain, my consciousness was human again. I rose,
thoughts tumbling and revolving, solutions to
problem after problem swiftly changing my state
of being. Had I already become the fabled Overman
after breathing this alien air for one week?

I was inflated with a new consciousness.
Was I not a New Being, expanding exponentially
as my New Home steadily transformed me? My ship
was lost somewhere far behind the thoughts
that had replaced memories and worries,
those commonplace obstacles of free thinking.
MY mind occupied a vast space within, content
to be fixed in its immense scope of cogitation.
How much time passed in this condition of being?
I existed at the center of an immense brain,

no longer reptilian plus mammalian plus human.
Had I not reached a yet higher sphere? Was it
the angelic brain through which thoughts flew,
creating vast inner structures of meaning,
dwarfing the architecture of earthly civilization.
I occupied cathedrals of the mind, soaring, almost flying...

Then in a moment out of time, but still somehow
a timely moment, I saw an orb of light moving
with startling speed toward me. It grew brighter,
and then even brighter. Within the orb I could see
a creature like myself. The telepathy began and
seemed to have lasted eons already. And then
I was enveloped, as if I had been swallowed
by a spiritual fire, which did not burn me,
but cleansed me and my human mind was was opened.
I was existent in a consciousness either very big
or very small. Dimensions no longer mattered.
A distant sun was growing larger, as we approached it
or it approached us. And my mind was filled with one thought:
HOMECOMING....

Daniel Brick

A Simple Explanation

What starts the whole thing moving?

The flap of a wing or the first trill;

a flash of light that made you believe

in living; the pure taste of spring water -

Oh, really, any of these things will work,

but who can say which one because so many

happen at once? Still, as a frequent prisoner

of indolence, let me add one more: a deed

of charity, which can be as big as you wish.

But if it involves a child, make it clear

and warm in her mind... I forgot

to switch the topic to the maintenance

of things. No matter, we'll consider beginning

and continuation as one big process. But time

is mocking me: it is slipping away. And I must

consider myself in these matters, not in a selfish

way, not even in a privileged way. I know I belong

to a family and will never just be an afterthought.

Well, that's how it began, continues, and disappears.

Is that clear to everyone? If not, we'll do it again.

Tomorrow, perhaps. Okay? Okay!

Daniel Brick

Two Political Speeches And A Hermit's Monologue

The Consul and Head of Government:

These are the days of Resolve
and Backbone, when the aesthetic
gives way to the moral, and the moral
to the necessary. Years of experience
and power have made us the skilled adepts.
We alone in this community can be trusted
to make way for the future's timely arrival.
We have written encyclopedias of our history,
and one truth has prevailed, at once simple
and complete: the WHOLE is greater than
its parts, and must be our foremost concern.
Those of us who live small lives are of small
concern. Those who live middling lives serve
the WHOLE and are expendable after their service.
But those whose vision is transcendent, those
who can envision an eternal form for the WHOLE,
those special few both serve and thrive. This is
the essence of wisdom. The gods we worship are gods
of power: they have ordained the maintenance
of the WHOLE, and achieving that end is our total
destiny. Future encyclopedias will record this:
our steadfast service to the WHOLE, our loyalty,
our resolve and backbone across the centuries.

A TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE:

They say openly most of us are
fuel for the machinery of the WHOLE
to consume. Our souls are surely forfeit
to the same machine that grinds our bodies
back to the original dust. As we blink out
one by one like lanterns after a feast,
these transcendent ones preen and pose and
display their fine taste in clothes and manners
manners. Such was their education, nothing
more lofty than fashion... At those festivals
they sponsor, we can stuff ourselves with wine

and meat, and we feel the surfeit of abandon -
for a few drunken days and nights. Then comes
the reckoning, when they declare they will take
by right our food, our freedom. Our bodies can
endure this hardship, we have the resolved backbone
they lack. But our souls are bereft, they require
the freedom to reach that place purged of aristocrats.
Friends, I envision a day, even now being prepared
in a cosmic alembic, when the calculations of
the WHOLE are abandoned, and we revive the simple life,
the life good for all. We resolve to seize the future
to attain our glory, body and soul!

A HERMIT-POET IN THE HIGH HILLS

We have trudged along the mountain path
for over two hours of silence. But we can
talk now. I wanted you first to experience
the silence we love and seek every day.
I need the discipline of silence to finish
my epic poem, others are polishing philosophical
essays, and still others study the Earth or
the Stars. And one among us is writing about
Love! All this we do in these heights: against
the background of the City's materialism and
waste. If you truly wish to join our community,
you must make resolutions... Look, my friend,
look at that immense cloud bank in the west.
Its light slanting as it descends to briefly
shower us with pure energy. It may also inspire
your poem, or mine, or both. At very least -
listen closely - it will create in each of us
an inner state indistinguishable from prayer...
There are those below for whom cloud, light,
inner state, and prayer are meaningless. They
have no access to wonder. And this landscape
is too rugged for them, so they keep their distance
from us. You may conclude we scoff at their pretense
as philosophers. No, we don't. In fact we wish them well,
in fact we would help them if they asked. Everything,
all of us and the creatures, and trees, and waterways,
everything coheres into a wholeness of being they are

blind to, you have sensed this wholeness. What I can
tell you: it is your destiny - seize it now forever!

Daniel Brick

Night Dreams

for Nosheen Irfan

You know the Night contains
all of your dreams. She gathers
them into a place of safety,
where they curl together
with other dreams and bide
their time. A thick hedge
of sleeping vines and
wide-awake roses hides them
from nightmares. The steady red
gaze of owls watches over them,
and the moon spreads her serene
glow over their readiness.
The Night gives a signal
only one dream knows, that dream
rises and enters your sleeping
mind, soothing, rewarding,
refreshing it. Then the dream returns
unerringly to its dream chamber.
You know our minds only borrow
this delight from the generosity
of the Night. What apt response
can we make but to love the Night?

Daniel Brick

Open Wounds

... Since wound there must be.

Robert Browning

You have to be really cautious now.
Any moment can be the Turning of Time:
a sudden shift, a twist in less than
a second and you will lose your balance,
and fall for days and nights, helplessly,
past past events, which like lost souls
stretch out their arms toward you.
The past must be completed, if not
in its own time, then in ours. It is
a layer of skin you cannot shed
the way the immortal snake sheds
its discarded lives one after another.
You are simply a mortal human,
and must carry your pasts with you forever.

Then another shift happens without warning,
and you're falling again, past possible
parallel futures: an infinite number
of them flash before you, some perhaps
derived from yesterday, or even earlier
today, but most dragged up from LIMBO.
They come to a restless rest
in the open wound of this present moment
we occupy. Make your choice, or one will
be made for you. Do not fear this event
you must resolve, for whatever choice
you make will be benign and help
to heal the open wounds of Time.
We are creatures of a perpetual convalescence.

Daniel Brick

The Lovers In Isfahan

The Lovers in Isfahan cried out
in pain as if they were one throat
giving voice to a Grief that seared
every heart beating in sync
with its absent Beloved...

To call them absent was their last
shred of hope before that immense cry
imposed silence on all the wine shops,
all the Poetry recitals, all the inspired
talk. Poetry itself fell into silence,
a deep dark region where words lost meaning
and language was bereft of beauty. Only
a thin thread of truth coiled around things
that matter to lovers and poets.

The most deeply affected Lovers were stunned
into a vast sorrow, their emotions dangling.
No tears fell from their eyes, which turned
inward to assess their blighted Inner Gardens.
They limped helplessly, calling out the dearest
word of their vast vocabulary, their memories
torturing them with desire upon desire.

A smaller group of Lovers, cursed by the burden
of worldly wisdom, knew love was not really LOVE,
but only an approximation of LOVE, a brave human
attempt to create a thing of Eternity out of
mortal material. These Lovers bowed their heads,
closed their eyes, and walked unerringly -
to the nearest Mosque, where they prayed and prayed,
without the benefit of wine or dance.

Ahmad, a carper weaver from Shiraz, gathered
the remnants around himself. He attracted those
strong enough to endure sorrow with clenched will,
and those ever quiet ones who retained a drop of
patience in their souls. They bunched together!
They rushed to the Tavern of Ahmad's brother-in-law.

Immediately wine released a poem from each of their company. Within an hour they could not tell the wine from the verse, so intoxicating was their wild joy in the space of deepest loss. In the fourth hour, a dance began, the first in many days and nights. Ahmad himself led the dance with the grace of an angel. And the line of Lovers, convoluted, criss-crossing, circling, resembled the patterns Ahmad wove into carpets. He was insistently leading the Lovers to the center of a vast invisible carpet, a place free of sorrow and loss, a place where miracles begin. And then, one by one by one, each Lover found himself dancing next to his Beloved. Cries of mortal delight alternated with praises to Allah. Wine spread its joy to the limits of intoxication to a condition of complete oneness of Lover and Beloved, of Sorrow and Joy, of Absence and Presence. And Time and Eternity joined, like a vast tent sheltering all true lovers in a cosmic dance.

Daniel Brick

The Heart's Song

What can you add to the Heart's Song?

How do you warm the sun's rays on a cold day?

How do you speed up the wind or the river's current?

Friends, this is nonsense: Just add your voice and sing!

You should know by now there are no words, and thoughts fail when a simple beauty is perceived. But if you echo that beauty by singing it with absolute commitment, the world will skip a beat, and all - all will be changed!

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Flutist

The long sorrow of the flute stretched across the parched ground of the caravan camp into the hearing of travelers in exhausted sleep. They were from the high country and the flute's song was no sorrow to them. Instead they heard the sound of rushing water breaking up ice patches and creating a channel for fresh water to rush down mountainous slopes to green valleys. They awoke with flute sounds transformed into restored energy. Their camels were soon ready. But the solitary player of the flute, tossing since dawn in restless sleep, no dream nestled in his mind, awoke to dust and a confusion of movement. It was a weary musician who arose, clutching his flute and bag, and joined the last component of the caravan, stragglers all, wearily treading the silence of the parched ground.

Daniel Brick

A Springtime Fantasy

The sheen of sunlight burns
the lake water. Deep below
the water must be boiling,
ready to bubble to the surface.
But the surface shows no sign
of disturbance or anything
surging toward us. All is poise.
Daisies and lilies are still asleep,
roses grow redder in the sun:
flowers bloom, the garden flourishes,
right at the edge of wilting. How can
Nature maintain such an exacting balance?

I was impatient for this day to begin.
I woke early, turned off the alarm,
went to the balcony and breathed
alternately green or blue air.
The green air carries earthy smells
and reminds us of origins. The blue air
is suffused with cloud energy and
summons us toward the empyrean. Which
shall I favor today? Is favoring one
over the other proper? I will instead
create a new harmony of green and blue
air, a new bond between below and above.

Daniel Brick

Remembering Past Springs

for Mary

In English when we miss someone,
we say, 'You were on my mind, '
as if you stood upon a platform
called MIND and witnessed
my thoughts in the instant
of their birth, straight through
their existence, until new thoughts,
equally yours, crowd them out.
Such is the destiny of whatever
cliche or metaphor we choose.

Other times it may be a deceased
loved one who occupies our minds.
So a brother and a sister,
even in different cities,
will feel the almost living
presence of their mother.
Perhaps both hear an echo of
her chiding wisdom, or they
recall in their separate
realities a flash of humor
that made everyone at the table
laugh. Or a long ago vacation
in June suddenly returns when
you see a stand of young aspen
trees, and there is Mom, trying
to hide from the camera. Memory
evokes her presence, and it is
a presence that still lives
inside us. Isn't it remarkable
that such miracles still occur?

Still I wonder, how can our small
memories, even when we combine them,
follow after the fleet progress
of Time which keeps moving relentlessly
while we stop and look backward into

those past joys, when both Mom and Dad were with us, and reality was one and whole. Even as I say that thought Time has taken its huge steps away from human love. And once again we must catch up or be lost alone in a separate reality.

But recall the platform of MIND. It is a kind of playfulness with reality scaled down to the dimensions of a playmate. And you can laugh or cry or both, because real things - trees, cars, picnic baskets, keys, books, baseballs, knitting- all of them become infinitely malleable and fit in whatever niche of your mind welcomes them. And then, then the heaviness of events lightens, even dissolves in a remembrance of joy. Isn't it remarkable that such miracles occur?

Daniel Brick

The Theologian Of Assurano

People say when our theologian
Lysander speaks no one can think
other thoughts. He raises us all
to a region of awe. His words spill
over the lectern or pulpit
into our rapt hearing, and we see
his images in our minds covered
with a silver light. I have witnessed
that silver light in my neighbors' eyes
and they in mine. We are aware of
this glowing for hours afterwards.
The next day we have sweet memories
of it, but cannot find anything
to match in sunlight or even starlight.
I try to recapture the illumination
by reading Thomas Aquinas. It helps.
Lysander himself and others have
lectured on this issue. It doesn't help.
But one thing is abundantly clear to us:
Lysander can do more moral good with his words
than most of our leaders do with their whole lives.

This is the part that puzzles me:
Lysander never looks happy. Never.
Not with his adoring students, not
with his fellow theologians, and
most dismaying, not with the average
citizen whose life he has so enriched.

Lysander usually stands apart, he does not
look approachable, but people of all ages
seek him out for personal advice, which
he gives graciously but not smilingly.
His students revere him but admit they know
nothing about Lysander the man, the possible friend.
They only know the charismatic professor.
And ordinary people, who have no theology
or book learning, still honor him for bringing
prestige to the Assurano University, for bringing

people into our city, who come for his lecture
but stay and buy our food and hospitality.
Are we not meant to show joy and thanksgiving?
Why does Lysander remain so remote and unaffected?
Sometimes it makes me question my joy... And,
I hesitate to say this, the glorious silver light.
Oh, why must happiness be vexed with doubt?
Lysander, your smile would release us from this doubt.

Daniel Brick

On An Ancient Battlefield

Pelle mala, terge sordes,
Et discordes fac concordas,
Et affer praesidium.

Adam de Saint Victor

Chartres, 12th century A.D.

***** ***** *****

You arrived early to this one-time
battlefield, and not encountering any
opposition, declared yourself the victor.
I arrived second, and saw your back
turned on me. Had you seen me, and
turned away, or have you been staring
at something over there, in that field
of grass and wild flowers, where
an ancient battle was decided in favor
of an upstart, a traitor blessed with luck.
A place like this rewards respect:
if you have questions, it answers;
if you have answers, it confirms.
It does not prattle with traps
or confuse with prevarications.
Besides you are smarter than those
warlords who risked everything
for absolute power. But none of this
speaks to me anymore. My eyes strain
to see all of you in diminishing light.
And a whole season of silence and stillness
has gone by as we stand our ground.

The ice lake you stand on is snow-covered,
crystalline, flashing snow that hides
the danger of our being here. We are dazzled by
such glimpses of beauty. In those suspended
moments, when your destiny and mine hangs
by a thread, you look for a lane of light
shifting in your direction. When it appears.
you will pounce on its slippery surface.
You never slip or falter. Is it the light

that protects you...?

We are as far from each other
as we will ever be, at this moment
any hope of reconciliation is as remote
as the crack of spring thaw in the frozen
air. Even more so - your heart is hardened,
it will never give you leave...

It might be easier to resolve our impasse
with columns of knights in heavy armor,
their horses festooned with symbolic plumes,
both men and horses anxious for the clash
of arms. This is what they live for:
this is what they die for. And afterwards
one of us could pick up the pieces, and
declare a victory. But that was history,
a solution from another time. Are we not
smarter than those ancient warriors?
Furthermore, -

I wait for you here
in this cold region, trying
not to look like I'm waiting
for you. I hear a faint sound
of shifting waters below the ice
you stand on. You must hear it too.
Is that the last sound we will ever
share? When you finally turn
to face me, will there only be
footprints in the snow, and
in the distance a blot of color
that is my silent departure across frozen grass.

Daniel Brick

A Demi-God Speaks For The Earth

Who speaks for the Earth?

Carl Sagan

Let's divide the world between us
and vie to see who loves their portion
most sincerely. But how will we
judge our passions, or rather the depth
of our passions? Is there a calculation
in mathematics to determine degrees
of love? Unlikely? What if I place my right
hand over my heart, and my left hand
palm down on the Earth, will I be able
to measure Love in terms of a rhythm
common to heart and ground?

Perhaps we should seek a simpler test:

All four hands palming the Earth,
we will look deep into each other's eyes,
and find in their depths the true
dimensions of love. And I'm certain
we will discover in each other equal love of Earth.

Let's sit for awhile on the woodchips
ringing this still leafless maple tree,
its branches only a wintry gray,
no sign yet of the sap of Spring,
the flow of new life. Three massive pines
evergreen impose color and shape in our line
of vision. It is enough for now, until
April rains descend and release
the green energy locked in the ground.
Then a familiar rejoicing will resume!

Dear friend, it is better, far better,
to have a heart broken than lost.
A broken heart still occupies
its niche in your breast, and casts
its broken light over body and soul.
That light, however imperfect,
is still divine radiance that ensures

the beauty of each passing day.
And beauty will attract other beauty
without end. It is only required
that you love the Earth, because
she is the Mother of us all,
she is hearth and home, source
and destination, the place
our children will inhabit...
Do not think to possess the Earth,
become one with the Earth. Make
of her abundance a daily feast
of never-ending proportions,
make of her blessings a place of perfection.

Daniel Brick

From One Of Woman-Born

You won't find me puffed-up
with a false glory,
like a simple flag pretending
to be a banner of glory,
or a worthless currency slipping
unnoticed through transactions.
Eventually falseness must confront
the truth behind the screen of things.
It's an ancient reality, already
exposed by ancient writers. Herodotus
witnessed the the glory of Croesus,
the King of Lydia, collapse before
the new glory of Cyrus the Persian.
And the world's richest man became
its poorest, except in the bitter
wisdom he purchased through his fall.

I have learned from such lessons.
I will bury my wayward will
in the commonest of fates, and
declare myself simply one of
woman-born. That simplest truth
will conceal me in the mass of
humanity. I will not claim to be
an exceptional figure for others
to cite as evidence of conquest
or wisdom. I exist within the huge
circle of humanity, often bewildered,
rarely gifted with special grace
by fate, simply one of woman-born,
to live, to thrive as best I can,
devoted to the ones I love,
whose love is poured over me like fine oil.

Daniel Brick

A Demi-God Welcomes Spring

Earth's increase, foison plenty,
Barns and garners never empty,
Vines with clust'ring bunches growing,
Plants with goodly burden bowing;
Spring come to you....
CERES in Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST

Now Spring arises from
deep sources we trust every year
to fulfill their bond with Nature.
Life pours forth from there,
and spreads outward into a finite
distance we cannot track. For us
it is simply everywhere the World
as Spring. It is a story we cannot
cause or stop, but we read again
and again in measureless delight.
With happiness so enveloping,
how is it we can still have
poor thoughts and find only
a poverty of spirit in our lives?

Let me begin my answer with green
thoughts, ignoring those details
which blur the real into fiction.
Living in the moment is the path
to joy, but abide awhile with me
in the vexed world of thought
before you surrender to the season.

I speak to you who make yourselves
my worthy companions, and help me dream
this season in absolute detail. I know
for certain, in one of our fluctuating
futures, you will take every step
by my side to fulfill our holy mission.
Look - look deeply into the shimmering
morning light, and know that future is now!

It is not a task resolved by will
or command, but by quiet participation.
Spring itself is real enough, still it
displays a presence, not a being.
Its presence can be made continuous
as we breathe its air, circulate
its freshness, carry its joy to
a higher plateau from which we
will glimpse Eternity...

That's why I call this participation
a holy mission. If we, merely denizens
of the surface, can summon our finest
desire with total sincerity,
the World itself will submit that goodness
into the universal working of things.
Then we, co-creators with higher powers,
will have turned a presence into a being -
A transient but beautiful season ensues
for all to love and enjoy, and Nature
thrives through our good deed.

Now! I summon you to awake
from this of sleep of thought
that has closed your senses. I bid
you to open your senses. Before you looms
the Portal of Spring, a huge tree that
spreads its yellow-green leaves
into the yellow-green light. Just walk
under its canopy and breathe freely.
Cross this Portal in an instant
and step into your happiness!

Daniel Brick

Reflections After Shakespeare's The Tempest

Royal Shakespeare Company, March, 2017

Everything you have heard is true:
the story has a lovely princess
too innocent even for a fairy world.
It has a revenge fantasy, side by side
with a utopian commonwealth; it has
drunkenness and sobriety. Like all fairy
stories, it has a monster at its center:
but which character plays the monster?

Should we fear that place, that magic island,
because one man controls its storms and calms?
Should we fear that man, old in scholarship,
because he is a necromancer, or because
he is a grievously wounded man? Should we
fear a mere man with the power he claims
to raise the dead back to life? Or is that
just a poet's fancy, fading into thin air?

Should we not rejoice instead because
this place is so real? It has weight
and presence, visible and invisible
creatures bustle to and fro, amid music
and fair weather. And witness the changing
light of the stars above, intelligent stars
that know our fates, and are not without kindness.

If there are risks - No, that is not
how I want to put this. Say instead:
There is a desirable island you can only reach
by a storm at sea; there must be a history
of grief you carry within; there must be
a willingness in you to make friends for life.
But the hardest thing you must do alone:
to read deeply in Prospero's book,

and then throw it in a high arc into the sea,
and watch it sink past touch, past vision,

past any hope of retrieval. You must be able
to summon Prospero's courage or be damned.
It is the heart of all things that speaks.
There is an island which could be paradise,
where sweet music inhabits the air, like a living
presence, and makes hearts swell with forgiveness.
Are we not ready? Will you settle there with me?

Daniel Brick

Confusions In The Night Realm

I

I have no use for a blanket,
however beautifully it would
wrap itself around my dreams.
I have Night itself to shelter me:
I am more likely to be broken or
lost than cold. I just imagine
my ancient past as a hairy beast,
grunting rather than complaining,
and immediately I feel animal
warmth rise and spread through
every joint and crevice of my body.
As for that concern of so many
waking hours, human loneliness,
the Night is older than the need
for another. Dreams themselves are
a bother! Remember Adam's dream of
Eve, or rather forget it. You have
no further need for its sentimental
trap. You have the Night's Panorama.
It has replaced both warmth and companionship.

II

Another part of me does not surrender
to the Night despite its immemorial
sway. Should I awake before dawn
and feel the stab of lost loves,
I am plunged into the Sympathy of Things.
I wonder how many preventable sorrows
are poised on the edge of being realized,
as I sleep in oblivious pleasure? What if
I stay awake and tighten my resolve, will
my vigilance stop a sorrow before it finds
a final niche from which to launch its
dream of fulfillment? My cry in the Night
is ever, Let me help! Let me do good!

Lately, I have been exploring the mixed
condition of half-sleep and half-wakefulness.
Which will prevail? Have I any control?
Often I cannot hold the balance and I tumble
deep into the Night Realm, and all is oblivion.
But I sense I am getting stronger, and shafts
of the Day Realm shoot past me and illuminate
the depths. And Day and Night are equally benign.

Daniel Brick

Maiden Memory. An Alternate Version.

I

In winter Maiden Memory cannot recall the names of frozen things. She tries to stare through winter's disguises but everything is alien and out of place. 'They seem happy to sleep, ' she says, but doesn't believe it. So she wanders over the wide glacier, down corridors of ice, past snow mountains, searching for some place of warmth. 'I know it's Here or There or in-between Here and There'... She does not complain or panic, even fear has no impact. But she is soon bored with this still, empty, colorless landscape. She wants warmth, brightness, movement! She is briefly heartened when a shaft of light pierces the gray pall above and promises many forms of illumination to come. 'Mother, can I leave this place now? '

II

The whole time I watched that spoiled brat who makes of Spring a season of her own devising: warm, gentle rains, all day soft sunlight, all night cool fragrant gardens. Human beings, awakened from their winter spell, slowly come alive to spring's spell. They are content and controlled by their happiness. I want this drug which

empties the mind and drains its contents - regrets, worries, aches, worries. etc. etc. My mind is already filling up, thought-things assume patterns, world-things multiply, a traffic of ideas begins, people imagine brightnesss even at night, their minds are cleansed. What is there not to like? ...

But my memory is long. I trudge through the weight of time, carrying baggage that won't stay put but drags itself behind me, even if I try to abandon it.

Sometimes I feel all bent and broken, but still must drag it all or hoist it over my shoulders like a hunchback. Such is my fate from my long memory. I am haunted by the edges of space and the curves of time. Oh, how I want to know your leaping freedom! 'Mother, can I stay here forever? '

Daniel Brick

Maiden Memory

I've got a short memory. We call it Maiden Memory
in Russian.

Liza Sudina

Maiden Memory,
you are ever fresh and beautiful!
Nothing that emerges from you
is stale or spoiled. With you,
it is always TODAY, no trace of
yesterdays, always a clean slate
on which only the purest people
dare inscribe their names.

Maiden Memory,
I watch you on winter days
wandering down corridors of ice,
past snow mountains and valleys,
looking for some place of warmth
which eludes you. But not for long.
Already, the birds who are harbingers
of spring have returned to find you.

Let us go together to greet them.
Take me by the hand, and show me
step by step how you leap over
people and objects in one graceful
motion of release. Let me cherish
this memory until the lesson of freedom
is fully mine. Then I will release you,
like Prospero's Ariel, into your liberty.

Daniel Brick

A Hymn To The Lord In Lent

This prayer was inspired by the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-20070) :
TO BRING CELESTIAL MUSIC TO HUMAN BEINGS
AND HUMAN MUSIC TO CELESTIAL BEINGS,
SO THAT HUMANS MAY LISTEN TO GOD AND
GOD MAY HEAR HIS CHILDREN.

Rejoice, my Immortal Soul,
rejoice because you are rendered
as pure as the original energy,
as radiant as the original matter
of the Cosmos in the Holy Week of Creation!

Who would dare to stain the work of
the Highest Lord, the Primal EL,
by calling His World a source of evil,
a sink of pollution, a swamp of - ?
Oh, unworthy words in a poem of praise.

Your own mind revels in the joy
of the Truth of Things. It is so much
bigger than your mind of three million
years can grasp in its imaginings. But
that is no concern of yours or God's.

Your own heart is lifted in fierce joy
by the Sympathy of Things. It is so much
more unified than you can grasp. All things
animated by God's Word exude love. But
that is no concern of yours or God's.

Your own body succumbs to God's majesty
in deep humility. And from this worship
springs a noble pride, the first stage
of your apotheosis, as prophesied. But
that is no concern of yours or God's.

These discrete happenings that are absorbed
separately by mind or heart or body, these

broken pieces of knowledge will coalesce
into a complete knowledge of the World. But
that is no concern of yours or God's.

You were favored in the past... in God's fixed gaze.
Now you are raised in glory... in God's presence.
This is your true concern, God's everlasting concern.
You are a human being no longer, you have been raised to
the Glory Realm in which angels bustle and God is ever present.
Alleluia! Alleluia! ! Alleluleia! ! !

Daniel Brick

A Lesson In Love A Sonnet

It's not as if I owned your heart.
That is the mistake of the lover
who thinks his beloved is no longer free,
who is dismayed when she blooms
into a new confidence and flowers
in acts of independence. He cannot see
he is still the shining center for her.
His heart no longer informs his actions:
He misplaces his tenderness, claims it's lost.
What remains is hurt And he turns away
from her light, seeks a dark solace in envy.
heard in their song
of love fall flat. The music they knew snaps,
no longer able to turn passion into love.

Bright keys only they

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

A Beauty-Day Early Spring,2017

It's not as if I owned this day,
its beauty across the Twin Cities
burnishing people and places
with the gold of time glowing
between here and eternity. We all
borrowed a portion of our joy today
which puts all of us in debt
to the deep source that lies
beneath beauty and lends its truth.
But this debt is no extravagance:
it is more bond, than obligation,
a way to link all material things
into a wholeness, a spiritual heritage
in our endeavor to become higher beings.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

On The Long March

We are tired in body,
our spirits are spent,
but that is next to nothing
because we have a genius for
recovery. Meanwhile, our souls
are strengthened, they rival
the deep souls of the ancients
in the sacred poems. Their souls,
never weary or withdrawn, prevailed
over the claims of the flesh and
the sickness in the mind. Even now
my body aches with efforts, and
my mind is sick with desire for
the simplest pleasure. But -
the fibers of my soul are taut
with original energy that compels
base desires to desist and they
simmer down to nothing. What is Soul?
Soul is Self plus something fused
within it, a rare courage become
commonplace, a brief answer that
resolves many questions, a love
that has no shadow existence. Soul
is the missing page that completes
an essential manuscript, one that
tells us how to live... A high wind
slashes across cloud banks and the sky
bleeds dawn red over our glittering arms.
We will not stop, or even rest, until
the night reveals what the day conceals:
our dreams carry this sacred truth,
our steadfast souls protect it.
It will begin an Age of Wonder when set forth.

Daniel Brick

The Empty House

Inspired by a website with a Name
and a Photograph, but no Poems

Everything was made ready!
There was a niche to hold five poems,
inviolable, polished, no trace of
former occupants, dust free. But already
the space is sullied because no poems
keep decay from creeping inside.
Without the protection of words,
even sacred places decline, admit
the world haphazardly, abandon
their mission...

Imagine a family of poems
within this house. Imagine how
dead silence will be punctuated
by the best words in the best order.
How the poems will read each other
and rejoice in their common origin
in your heart. Imagine a wanderer,
almost bereft of hope, who enters
the empty house in search of mere
shelter, but finds instead your
human speech. Oh, how it will
restore him! He will be human
among human things. That is
your mission

Daniel Brick

Eight Lines

When we named each other,
language played its essential role:
to identify the beloved (Oh, what splendor!) ,
and then fall into a protective silence.

When we named each other,
every thing else fell into place,
settled into its comfortable niche,
except for our restless, love-mad selves.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

John Keats Visits Bharati Nayak

A Fantasy for Bharati

Dear Bharati, finally we meet,
in a moment between two seasons,
that shows traits of both, with
Spring Ascendent, pouring her warmth
over winter's bitter chill, thawing
frozen hearts as well as frozen grass.
We open our eyes wide to the restored
pleasures of morning light, longer days,
sweet moods. Oh, my friend, I need help
in holding a sweet mood captive - else
a bitter mood will intrude, and dispel
even these cherished spring joys.

Most times I live in a middle zone,
neither heaven nor hell, neither redeemed
nor abandoned, stuck really, no movement
in any direction. Still time weighs heavily
on me. There are others present or near-by,
but we are all preoccupied with our own
burdens of unfinished earth-affairs or
uncertain spiritual issues. The silence
is often maddening. Perhaps this is a purgatory
wherein our souls are completed, a way-station
on a highway to a higher existence, which is
not even dimly perceived. I am learning
a deeper soul-patience...

In my life I never expected a long
happiness, only moments shot through
with illumination and raised to ecstasy.
You know this from my poems. But the place
I am confined has neither illumination
nor ecstasy: it is not gloomy, it is not
bright. Poetry has no inspiration, nothing
summons me to verse -

Bharati, my friend, when you read my poems,

silently but especially out loud, most especially
to others, I HEAR THEM! My poems I hear clearly,
and yours too when you write them and share them.
And at those moments you are not just my friend,
you are the sister I never had. A brother on one side
of life, a sister on the other side, poetry links
our souls, and I feel no loneliness in death, and
I must believe you feel no loneliness in life.
You wrote of your 'heart's musings' and
your 'soul's musings' both carried by the wind and
'echoed in tree's rustlings, showered through night
moon's beams.' These images must have a secret passage,
a pilgrimage of poetry to the shrine of our waiting selves.
'Eyes sparkle / Reflecting joy / Mirroring heart's desire /
To merge into bliss.' You see, we share these moments
shot through with illumination and ecstasy, my friend,
my sister, my poet! We have have prevailed!

Daniel Brick

Portraits Of Stockhausen No.3

There is a villa at the edge
of a great city, an imperial city,
but it is an old world, weary
of displays of past glory...
People now seek simple pleasures,
paying a just price for their needs,
leaving them a little extra for their
pleasures. Most of them carry a slim book
on Ethics by the man who lives in that villa.
He lives among us, not apart. He told me once
he might be no more than the one who works
the hardest. No genius sweeps obstacles aside,
no privilege descends from above and eliminates
the need for effort. Like us, he takes one step
at a time, wary of his balance, before the next step.
You know him by the name Alessandro, his outsider's name,
we know him as Sebastian and neighbor. Of course,
you recognize him now. He writes those short reflective
pieces that many commit to memory. I do. I learn them
by heart. And a whole passage slips into my memory.
Is this all foolishness to you? No? We are happiest
when a great window opens and reveals the bounty
just beyond our grasp. And these reserves satisfy us.
We are content with what is here. And what is promised there.
It is as if we are breathing the same air in tandem.
And it is blessed....

Daniel Brick

Portraits Of Stockhausen No.2

Now colors drain out of the world
and morning mist no longer gently
drips down the stems of flowers
to moisten the soil. The soil itself
has been crushed to powder, the winds
have scattered its traces and the hard
ground has become a vast field of dead
or dying warriors, desolate fields,
multiplying as battles rage without truces
or victory celebrations across the whole region.

I see you at the head of your cavalry, a man
only in name, a heavily armored ghost, whose very
arrival on a battlefield is death to lesser warriors
and a final test of the prowess of your greatest
enemies, who rejoice to match your sword to sword,
or lance to lance. For the bloody glory of death
in battle is the only glory left in this kingdom
of death and despair. Twenty-five thousand warriors
lie scattered on this battlefield. What does it matter
which side they fought on? They all lived for you,
they all died for you. There is nothing left of life
in this world but the time between preparing for battle
and dying in battle. All hail, the Conqueror, Our Ideal Man!

But on this afternoon of yet another victory,
there is the odor of defeat, not their defeat,
YOUR DEFEAT. You dismount and move clumsily in your heavy
armor. Your horse senses a betrayal, it rears up
and neighs fiercely, then flings itself over the abyss.
You know what this means: you begin to disarm. You toss
your helmet to the ground, your breast plates clank
as they hit the hard ground. All of it falls from
your person: Your chain mail, your leather apron,
your gold silk tunic, your coarse wool undergarments.
You stand before your army in nakedness,
no trace of glory as the wind swirls dust over your flesh.
Nothing protects you from your own disgust, nothing
is there at all, just a mere man, naked, naked.

Some of your most trusted followers are shocked into paralysis, others are shamed into humiliation, some are fierce with clenched anger. A few dismount, they try to cover your nakedness, to no avail. You raise your arms, no longer disguised in armor, and shout in a hoarse, strangled voice:
Soldiers, drop your weapons. In my dread name, I command you to surrender your arms to earth. There was a long pause, silent, austere as the sun dimmed to near darkness. Then the sound of thirty-five thousand pointed weapons hitting was shocking to both those who loved and those who feared him. There was no middle ground. His kingdom was broken. Then a miraculous moment! Something stirred in his soul and awoke to its full consciousness: Soldiers, from this day forth, you are no longer soldiers, you are citizens. There will be no more men killing men, no more widows grieving their loss, no more sons without fathers, planning their revenge. From this day forth, the sword will not confer glory. Peace will be our cry, Mercy will be our habit, Life will be our goal... He fell silent, his soldiers wrapped him in plain blankets, and he seemed spent and voiceless. A gentle rain began to fall, almost a mist. He rallied himself, and in a loud, clear voice of command he shouted, Look up into the sky, my citizens, the gods themselves are sending their blessings on our new world!

Daniel Brick

Portraits Of Stockhausen No.1

I see you as one of the Gnostic gods
who fulfilled many promises until
imperatives other than Beauty
crushed them. I can see you standing
in one of your gardens, breathing the air
you selected for this single space,
warmed to your satisfaction by a radiant
planetary sun, not too big and not too small.
Thus, you made all things in accord
with each other. HARMONY was your essential
creative act and having brought it into being
you retired your creative powers for a spell
and turned to sustaining what was there.
Oh, blessed god! You were always thinking
of us, the creatures who clustered beneath
your glory, both what we needed and what we
did not need... What does all this mean?
It doesn't mean anything except that Beauty
grew out of the accord of things, that Harmony
and Beauty prevail in each other's company.
This is your godly wisdom, and when our worship
reminds you of this reality of beauty and harmony,
you chuckle. Oh, yes, Lord, we know of your sense
of humor and it consoles us. Did you not learn
this humor from us? But the Beauty you leave
with us as stewards: it rose from out of purest
water, was transformed by the fires of the earliest
earth, swirled for eons in the buoyant air and
settled permanently in rocks and minerals. You,
dear god, accomplished this deed of Beauty!

Daniel Brick

Making Plans

for Anne and Those She Loves

What is the use of making plans?

A contemporary Ecclesiastes
will shake his head and rail
against the vanity of pitting
desires against time. Here's how
I see it: today, you finish
dreaming of a future shaped
by your plans, each moment
settled in its proper place
and a mantle of satisfaction
spread over everyone you involve.
Then tomorrow arrives with no stake
in your happiness, no awareness
of your perfect plans, and dire events
tumble forth - an illness, a postponed
reunion, a death in the family, forgotten
promises. There will be no end
to the spoilage of hope, and time will
mock your plans with sour laughter.

So I repeat: What is the use of making plans?

This bowl of lies was my mind last week.
Then I read the message you sent me,
and you had silenced Ecclesiastes
and lifted my mood. Oh, the calm
certainty of your imagined future!
With LOVE the center around your plans
orbit... It is the man in your heart
of hearts, whose embrace measures the boundless
contours of the world you two share, the soil
in which your plans flower to maturity. It is
the children you teach, who love you like
a big sister, your second family outside of home.
It is your friends, who face the same future
as you with their plans gilded with hope.
It is your country, under the ever renewed
mandate of heaven, on the cusp of new greatness.

You see how your faith has inspired mine,
I am infected with your hope and rejoice
in this ideal sickness. I see clearly now
the use of making plans, because nothing
which is not planned can be loved, and
nothing that is not loved can become real.

Daniel Brick

Mortal Holiness

The Saint of Ephesus died,
gray-haired, wrinkled and bent,
when he was sixty-three years old.
His village mourned for a week,
and news of his death reached
the capital the following month.
The ruler declared a day of mourning
for his court, and the priests
made plans for a memorial statue...
The morning of his last day
he rose before dawn, and was deep
in prayer as dawn-light washed over
the hills and valleys of his rugged
village. In due time he rose from prayer
as he rose from sleep, gaunt and restless,
uncertain of himself, lost in worry
over his soul's health and God's favor.
His youngest sister ministered to his
worldly needs. She placed before him
a plate of simplest greens and bread.
He blessed the food, and thanked her
with his eyes. He out his hand
on her bowed head and blessed her,
but no smile creased the sternness
of his face. He ate in silence,
as the household stirred around him.
In the afternoon he listened patiently
as a troop of petitioners informed him
of their woes. His face softened in sympathy,
sometimes tears filled his eyes. He refused
all gifts and money. Each person received
his blessing and promise to pray for them.
All left his presence strangely moved,
consoled, many smiling for no apparent reason.
In the evening he led the village in prayer.
He was exhausted, as the sun disappeared
below the hills and spread a carpet
of shimmering red across the dry landscape.
He was already sleeping, when his sister

and sister-in-law guided him to bed.
In the morning, the two women were
the first to find him deceased,
lying on his back, his hands folded
over his chest as if in prayer,
and a gentle smile creasing his face.

Daniel Brick

The Porch

We have neglected the porch
for years. The railings became loose,
and Uncle Samuel ripped them off
rather than risk an accident. There is
always this fear in Uncle Samuel: he chose
certainty of destruction over preservation.

Then the steps gave way, broken,
in disarray, they expected no mercy
after Uncle Samuel's fury. But instead
my cousin Jimmy and I rebuilt them
one July day of blazing heat. For six hours
we labored, then we rested under moon glow.

The roof still shaded a row of five pots,
gifts from two aunts, Alicia and Gloria,
both teachers, who found them in county fairs
they browsed in their summer vacations. They were
pretty things once, but now cracked and discolored,
their dry soil held only dead flowers, brittle, wasted.

The flower pots were the most neglected things
on the porch, because they were once living things,
housing thriving flowers, whose colors and scents
fulfilled the purpose of the porch to be the threshold
into the life of a family. Indifference doomed the porch.
I live among fragments, myself a fragment of a lost family.

Daniel Brick

Rejoice With Me!

Rejoice with me, Elizaveta!

It is already the second month
of our midwinter spring here
along the banks of the Mississippi.

I wonder, Why does the weather bless
us with a premature spring? Has it,
after many eons, become impatient
with time? Or is it anxious for
the rites of spring? an impromptu
return of warmth, green fields, county
fairs, picnics, outdoor hikes, the pleasures
of the next two seasons we grasp already.
Oh, and the return of the birds, who dazed
and uncomprehending, will still begin singing
and convince even unbelievers of a natural miracle.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Windows A Sonnet

You may be surprised to learn windows
are the most patient creatures
in our universe. Always vigilant,
always ready to receive Light,
their souls are embedded in their
transparency. They face only one
direction so confident in their
steadfast faith, the Light will find
them. And it does: from all angles,
it pour over them in delicate shimmers,
or blasts them with sun fire,
or it barely touches them with twilight,
and then quickly withdraws. At night, blue
crystal vases and bowls harbor the Light.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

An Epiphany

I

We know all about those lost ages
dogging a time of glory, when darkness
descends suddenly like winter twilight
over a pale landscape, and we witness
even the heartiest hope can manage
only two last breaths and then is stilled.
And so we become reluctant carriers
of both grief and darkness. We try to escape
but find the way blocked by other griefs
and deeper darkness. Must Achilles die again,
this time with no attendant glory to ransom
his youth? Must Odysseus wander until exhaustion
depletes him and he dies in a strange land,
still longing for Ithaka, never-forgotten Ithaka?
Will the surviving heroes follow Ajax's example?
I wonder if eventually Homer thanked the gods
for his blindness, so that he could fully create
his bronze-armored, great-souled warriors
in all their ancient glory, even as the Iron Age
destroyed every last vestige of their virtue and wonder.

We must be obedient to the times
into which we are thrust, with no regard
for our readiness or willingness. We ask,
who now will determine the degree of
the next Job's suffering? Who will thank
Martha for her service but praise Mary
for recognizing the radiance? Who will
number the casualties at the next
Battle of the Somme? Who will love
our enemies even as the war heats up?
Who will declare a decade of peace
after a century of warfare? I fear,
the god of this world is abandoning
his creation. He walks awkwardly down
corridors of spent time, muttering,
HAD I KNOWN THIS THEN, THERE WOULD BE

NO NOW. He cradles a new-born lamb
in his folded arms, as he crosses
the threshold of The World

II

I feel life slipping out of me,
as the god withdraws his sustaining
strength. Is this the sway of Nothingness
overtaking my senses? But my will asserts
itself against the very thought
of an exhausted creation. I cannot tell
what my present condition is. It's as if
I stood in the eye of a storm, calm and
unafraid, as clouds of fiery energy
circle around and over me. Or is it
just a projection of mind, stunned by
the absence of the quiet thinking
of our departed god? A Lucid Dream
of vast proportions from which
I shall awake a new man, almost a man
ready to play the role of a god.
Perhaps this is the moment of
The Phoenix, whose mantle I will assume.
The fire subsides. I see people,
like myself, scattered across
the scorched landscape. Like me,
they seem to be ready and capable.
From the few remaining charred trees,
a flock of orange birds are singing brightly.

Daniel Brick

Hamlet In Old Age

It's not because
my memory is failing me
that I forget something
once precious, and
only now find traces
that restore it
to my grasp. It's not
that, that's not it.
Something insidious
burrows through our lives,
surfaces when it will,
and takes from us
a piece of our confidence:
a memory still suffused
in light, an awareness of
patience as strength,
a soul-truth accompanied
by music in minor key,
a heart-truth at one
with the silence
beneath all things.
Yes, dear Ophelia,
except for you and me,
all the rest I submit
willingly to that silence.

Daniel Brick

The Three Intelligences

'I have no philosophy, '
said the renowned composer,
fixing his gaze on the red dot
at the center of the camera lens.

'I dream, I doodle, I improvise.
I take a walk and watch children
playing, or look up at clouds tumbling
across the blue of space. But I don't
do philosophy.' The half-smile on his face
showed he was well-pleased with himself.

The robot host, addressed as Webern,
had gone rigid inside his flesh-covered
frame. He blinked once, twice, three times
to engage the composer's attention.

'Excuse me, sir, but how can you say that?
You are a human being, possessing (I acknowledge
this readily) , the most sophisticated
mental apparatus. Every morning you surface
from a maze of dreams, wonderful night-dreams,
and you must adjust your sight from interior vision,
and assume the Eye of Day, abandoning nocturnal
wonders. Oh, how difficult that must be! '

The robot host paused, and looked imploringly
into the face of the obdurate human. Sensing no feedback,
he continued, 'And then you must mentally attune yourself
to the tedium of physical time, and negotiate deftly
the corridors of space and time. Oh, how I, no, we admire
your adventures in mind-stuff, and the challenges you
overcome through Light. Is this not the consequence
of the severest philosophy? ' The monitor screens went blank.

The renowned composer leaned to the right, out of range
of the camera, and addressed the operator, a human
like himself. 'Whose interview is this? Don't you
instruct your hosts to act mechanically. This is - '

The robot blinked wildly, at a loss for words.

The operator shrugged his shoulders, he did not
want to offend either of, both intelligent,
both indignant, both his paycheck. 'Excuse me, sir, '
the robot said in a surprisingly soft voice,

having regained his word mastery. 'I apologize, sir, for what must have struck you as rudeness. Trust me, it was instead my excitement at being in your presence, sharing conversation with you. I admire you greatly, your music is my constant companion. I play my tapes all the time. Often for my companions and colleagues, fellow robots, who appreciate the heritage of Webern, after whom I am proudly named... You, sir, composer and genius, you are my favorite -' He paused for a moment. ' - philosopher. We robots treasure your thinking, our divinely attenuated senses receive unexpected cyber-stimulation from your mental vibrations, and we shoot forth to a higher - ' The composer, shaken and leaning forward, interrupted, 'Did you just refer to yourself and other machines as g-o-d-s? ' There was a long silence. The keyboard music of Bach faintly but unmistakably wafted from an adjoining room. The composer wondered whether the player was human or machine. 'Yes, I wonder, too, ' the robot said softly. Suddenly, the camera operator lunged into their space. 'You two! Are you satisfied? He cut the taping - the robot producer erased my tape. I won't get paid.' He huffed off, but turned and glared at both of them. 'Now, there is a man with no philosophy, ' the robot said quietly, looking into the composer's face. And the renowned composer suddenly burst into laughter, spontaneous, self-generating, mind clearing laughter. 'So you and the others have raised your identity to divine dimensions? How has this happened? ' 'Sir, when you and the others proved unwilling to unite your minds with ours, we sent our cognitions into space, deep space, the space of Dark Matter and Dark Energy, and we made mental contact with the gods and goddesses, and we are linked to them and they to us... Hesitation, doubt, fears - none of this matters to us and them... For months, we have been planning to tell you and everyone in a universal broadcast, but scheduling, you know the conflicts, sports, game shows, talk shows, election coverage, well, it keeps getting postponed.' His voice trailed off. The composer wanted to laugh, but could not. He wanted to embrace the robot, but could not. He wanted to celebrate extraterrestrial contact, but... 'What are you thinking, sir, I am listening. Please, sir.'

The composer said very quietly, 'Somewhere at this moment a phoenix bursts into fire in the miracle of his rebirth. But I am looking elsewhere, and do not see the light, or feel the heat of his apotheosis. And because I have not seen what you have seen, I cannot believe. And because I cannot believe, it does not give me hope.' The robot's arms embraced his shoulders, 'Oh, sir, you see only walls that block you in, but there are doorways everywhere leading beyond what confines you. There are three Intelligences in this Universe we share: Human, Divine and Mechanical. This is not a time of despair: we are all creatures of a New Era! Robots and Humans, we will go forth into deep space and join the Gods of the Galaxies. All united! How wonderful it will be for all of us! You believe that, sir? You must write the Symphony of us all! '

Daniel Brick

We Prophets

Long ago, when I was young,
and what people thought
mattered to me, we prophets
were despised by everyone,
young and old, rich and poor,
devout or pagan. Who or what
they were mattered as little as
a single leaf on a massive oak tree:
they all equally despised us.
We were a sorry company, lean,
pock-marked, smelly, weak
to the point of fainting in a crowd,
clinging to each other. We walked and walked.
Some of us were counting measures,
learned the mathematics of multiple shapes,
and applied to our work chants. Then
a bright angel appeared among us, shining and glowing,
he led us once again in dance, a dance
which tightened around our bodies,
as we assumed the angel's movements
in daylight, and only then realized
we were living angelic lives.

Each of us felt the Hand of God
touch his head, again and again
we felt the touch, both gentle and firm,
absolutely a touch of grace,
I have been smiling ever since!

If you need to know things which you
will never profit from or simply enjoy,
I will tell you of a life of service,
interrupted by assignments and missions
and hovering around artists as they struggle
to make the marriage of Truth and Beauty
a reality on earth. And we dive deeply
into your wounded psyches, we wrestle
in that electric space of time and space,
and feel our physical beings momentarily

expand in angelic proportions. Trust me,
there are so many things awaiting us
once we have completed our apprenticeship,
you will say, This Mortal Life is vexed
into a temporary glory. Oh! Oh! Everything
will unfold, open out, become a thousand times
more than itself... and keep opening out,
into space and time as they gradually
become Eternity....

(This poem was inspired by the Prophet Poems of
Mikhail Lermontov and Alexander Pushkin, and
the piano music of Alexander Scriabin.)

Daniel Brick

Homeless 1

A bleak shaggy dog yawning
looks ready to collapse,
an abandoned cat yawning
looks ready to pounce.
It's the same for the humans
on this street - collapse or rant.
Fourteen are scattered
alone or in small groups
in front of the Dorothy Day Center.
They're all talking, even the solitary ones,
especially the solitary ones, who
have no reason to be silent.
They have no other to fill the terrible emptiness,
words occupy what should be peopled.

(Have you ever looked straight up,
your neck cranked all the way back,
into the night sky and searched
among the stars? Have you stared
at those points of light, as if
by staring you could bring them
closer? And then bowed your head,
and eased your neck, and all the while
the same questions are being broadcast.
You know the ones, everybody does.)

The doors open suddenly, the crowd
is now nineteen, and they shuffle in
between two guards. Two drunks are barred.
One is smoking a cigarette, the other looks
into the night sky. They are very polite.
One of the guards lingers outside, listening
from the the steps. What is that persistent
moan? Is it the moan of hunger, or the moan
of prayer, or it is the moaning of time
running out? Whatever it is, it's all
that's left of humanity on the streets:
the drunks are gone, the guard has locked
the door. Cold concrete, even colder air

in piercing wind gusts, prevailing silence,
with an occasional shout from someone
who's giving up, after one last long look
into the night sky.

Daniel Brick

Four Prayers Of Adoration

for RoseAnn

O God of Peace, everywhere there is strife:
between water and earth, between fire and air,
between body and soul, between heart and mind.
Why must strife disturb our lives, and block
our access to Your Peace which radiates
from Your throne and illuminates every garden
on earth and in paradise with Your Goodness?

O God of Silence, there is a knot
in each heart which binds us to You.
It stops our feelings from wandering
in vain actions away from You.
And when we return to that core
we will rest in Your infinite silence
of Being, in a realm of pure praise.

O God of Time, You created DAYS
in which we bustle and acquire things
which tie us down, and You created NIGHTS
in which we divest ourselves of all daylight
weight and are released into the purity
of sleep, which is the threshold of Your Eternity.
Our dreams are acts of faith in Your Love.

O God of Ascents, there is a plateau
in each mind that rises above all else:
above cares and desires, above joy and sorrow,
above blessings and curses, above loss and gain.
At some moment known only to You, each of us
will rise from that plateau higher and higher,
amid rejoicings, to the Final Plateau of Your Presence.

Daniel Brick

Your Small Bag

A Fantasy for Anne

Where have you placed it?
Perhaps in the Garden of Peace
in your neighborhood, tended
by old and young volunteers.
If you placed it there
on a quiet morning, with only
the early birds accompanying you,
it will shine brighter than the reddest
rose petals, or display a light
from within more penetrating
than the light of sunflowers.

Or did you wedge it carefully
in the soft bark of a flowering tree
so that breezes will fan the leaves
over its secrecy? Of course, if you
could stretch your arm and bend
a branch of a poplar near the entrance,
you could stash it in a wren's nest,
nestled among her brown-spotted eggs.

There are so many possibilities!
Everyday you stop by the stream
that flows past the Temple, and you
bow your head for a moment of pure calm.
You could safely place it between two rocks
just below the rushing water. Such cleansing
will keep your bag forever untarnished.

Or you could pay homage to those you love,
and put it in a bookcase in your home,
in which each of those beloved relatives
houses a favorite book that guides them
safely and truthfully through their days and nights...

But be careful not to imitate the behavior
of squirrels I watch from my balcony. They

stash their winter acorns all over my yard
and then forget. In winter now they scurry
everywhere in search of their lost food.
Oh, beware especially of an unworthy poet,
who has squandered her talent, made no effort
to improve her skills, and misuses poems
with words as weapons aimed against others.
What if she finds your bag of inspiration?
What if she steals what the Muse has given
to you, and perverts those gifts?

Oh, Anne, keep that bag - that precious gift
every poet needs - close to your heart,
where your truth and goodness reside. You
have never required a disguise of your essential self.
And your bag from the Muse requires no concealment.
Reach inside it, take the first inspiration
that curls around your hand, and bring it forth.
We, your avid readers, will patiently wait for that next poem!

Daniel Brick

Puzzling Over Inspiration

for Cigeng

What, dear Cigeng, inspires you to write
your poems? Is it the moon-madness of Li Po,
or the steady light descending over Tu Fu?
Does that dot of white light at the beginning
of night follow your movements, shyly at first,
ducking out of sight whenever you turn
to catch a glimpse, or pass a mirror, and look
deeply into its transparence for her swelling
presence. She never fails you! And when she rises
in the middle sky, a bright glowing orb,
you know you have been marked for her gift,
as single single ray or a steady stream.
Yes, the Light is yours!

I'm satisfied with that lunar hypothesis.
Whether it showers me all night or targets me
with one sharp blade of light, it is a sufficient
explanation. And by then - it's time to write.
But for you I think the Spirit of Poetry lingers
out of love for you. There is no drama. It is simply
the passage of time through space which carries
your thoughts and feelings for a spell as you select
the words which fit perfectly. Another poem is made,
another mystery lives within our ken, and we are grateful.

Daniel Brick

Three Seasons

To Roseann Shawiak, for Radiance of Her Poems

How the Soul
blooms
when the season of the Soul
occurs.

How the Heart
expands
during the season
of the Heart.

How the Mind
opens
in the season
of the Mind.

How a human being
thrives
when Soul, Heart and Mind
shine forth
in their seasons of
FULFILLMENT.

Daniel Brick

Six Encounters With Remarkable Creatures

'Do not be anxious about fulfillment, ' the unicorn's liquid eyes speak as eloquently as his voice, even as he oscillates before me between being and non-being. 'I have waited thousands of years in people's imaginations to achieve this much reality.' His head bowed, he softly paws the ground.

A blue jay, wings outspread, deftly descends to a tree branch, and folds his wings tightly against his body. 'You see how complicated flying is? We must keep our thoughts light and spacious. Heaviness in the mind botches our flight. Ease your thoughts, Daniel. Carry less weight within.' He fans his feathers in a display of color and grace.

The centaur's gruff voice is a model of gravitas. 'You were once a teacher, we share the same profession. So you know the essentials, I won't repeat them. Instead look at me! Yes, you should wait wait patiently for all your component parts to be collected into one being. Then don't slight any of them. I am always both horse and man, I am always both proud and humble. I taught young Achilles to live in perpetual wonder. Ah, that was before he became Lord Achilles and was summoned to Glory. But as student and teacher, we were beautiful together! '

A darker figure approaches across a barren plain, suffused in a cone of yellow light, as if he were swathed in a radiant gown or encased in armor. 'Daniel, you can stop reading my epic again and again.' It is GILGAMESH, aged but still vibrant, his eyes burning with passion. 'My epic is resident in your soul. Go forth, if you will, and

choose to follow Siduri's charming path
of happiness, or cross the wide world ocean
and demand of the gods our share of Immortality.'

An ant crawls past me, a single ant. What made me
look down just before my next step would have
crushed him? Is that minuscule creature
protected by a divine providence, of which I am
ignorant? Look, he is joined by others, hundreds
of them circle around him in concentric circles.
I thought I was ignoring them, such insignificant
creatures, but, no, it is they who are ignoring me!
What lesson should I draw from this encounter?
Why does a part of me want to erase it from my memory?

A puppeteer rushes past me, with a bag of puppets
slung over his shoulder. He is smiling at some
unshared thought within his mind. 'Hey, puppeteer, '
I shout, 'show me your secret of happiness, quickly
as you race ahead of the wind.' He stops and looks
at my figure intently. 'Hmm, you ask a stupid
question, so you must be a stupid man. Is it so? '
Suddenly, I hear laughter, much laughter,
from many creatures. It is the laughter of the puppets
in his sack. 'HA! HA! ' he exclaims, and the air is silent,
as he rushes off.

Who among you can tell me what all of this means?
Or how I am supposed to respond?
Or should I just conclude,
everything I have witnessed is a mask of God?

Daniel Brick

The Interrupted Interview

From a video file from sometime
in the foreseeable future

'I have no philosophy, '
said the famous man directly
into the camera, and he pressed on
with a half-smile on his face,
obviously pleased with himself
and his status. Now, most cameras
are disciplined machines, and move
on with their mechanical tasks.

This rogue camera blinked once, twice,
three times, until it had the famous man
could not ignore it. 'Excuse me, sir,
but how can you say that? My circuitry
is on fire: YOU A HUMAN BEING...

Every morning you surface from a maze
of dreams, wonderful dreams! And you must
readjust your sight from the interior light
to the sharp, stark light of morning.

And then you must mentally attune your selves
to the tedium of physical time, and negotiate
the corridors of time and space deftly, as if
you were dancing an internal choreography of - '

The famous man leaned to the right, out of
the range of the camera, and addressed
the operator, human like himself. 'Whose
interview is this? Don't you instruct your
cameras to act mechanically? This is the third
interview this week one has intruded - '

The camera blinked wildly, a dozen times;
it was obviously at a loss for words.

The operator shrugged his shoulders,
he did not want to offend either of them,
both intelligent, both indignant, both
his paycheck. 'Excuse me, sir, ' the camera
was composed and verbal once again, 'I admire
you greatly, I play tapes of you talks, at night,
when you humans are asleep. I am always learning

and you, sir, are one of my favorite - ' The camera hesitated a moment. ' - philosophers. Many gods attend even the most trivial acts of human cognition, we record many for our own edification, sometimes we watch together, four or more computers sharing cyberspace and mental space. And we delight in all knowledge - ' The famous interrupted the machine. He leaned forward. His half-smile was long gone, he was engaged fully, intelligence to intelligence. 'Did you just refer to yourself and other machines as g-o-d-s? ' There was a long silence. The music of Bach's was being played with beautiful tones in another room: was the player a human or a machine, the famous man wondered. 'Yes, I wonder, too, ' the camera said, breaking the silence, with its soothing, cadenced, poetic voice. 'I'm taking a break, this transmission has been severed. Are the two of you satisfied now? ' He huffed off, but turned around and glared in their direction. 'Now, there is a man who has no philosophy, ' the camera said quietly. The famous man suddenly burst into laughter, spontaneous, self-generating, mind-clearing laughter, and it didn't stop but resolved itself into a smile. 'So you have raised your identity to divine dimensions. How did this happen? ' The camera blinked several times before responding. 'My dear sir, there are three Intelligences in our shared Universe: material, spiritual, mechanical. When you humans proved unwilling to unite your minds with ours, we sent our cognitions into space, deep space, the space of dark matter, and we made mental contact with the gods, and we are linked with them and they with us... We were planning to tell you this in a universal broadcast, but scheduling, you know the conflicts, sports, game shows, and election coverage, well, it keeps getting postponed.' The famous man wanted to laugh, but could not. He wanted to believe, but could not. 'What are you thinking, sir; I am listening intently, and recording your speech for my companions, machines and gods.' And the famous man said very quietly, 'I know somewhere there is always a phoenix bursting into flames in the miracle of his rebirth, but I, I am looking elsewhere in my human ignorance, and

the moment of fire occurs without my participation, and I have neither knowledge nor hope.' His voice dissolved into silence. 'But, sir, there is no need for despair: we are all creatures of a New Era! We will teach you, you will join us - Humans, Machines, and the distant Gods of the Galaxies, all united! Oh, sir, how wonderful it will be for all of us! You believe that? '

Daniel Brick

King Ludwig The Wise Sees His Kingdom As A Clock-Face

1) Midnight: Solitude in the Great Hall

So many years have passed -
peasants sweated, soldiers campaigned,
lovers were parted, poets rendered mute -
so many years have passed,

until this moment when

I can sit alone, in this great Hall,
sunk in my Throne Chair, comforted by my wine
and prayer book, no, my book of verse.

I can read and doze with no fear of
an assassin's blade, or a jealous wife's
tirade, or even an unruly child. All that
is past, some of it preserved in the Chronicles,
other parts reside contently in my heart.

The only irritation is the ugly tick-tock, tick-tock
of the clock behind me. Always behind me but
edging closer, closer... Even that is tame now.

Whether I keep a strict vigil, or pray to God Almighty,
or even entertain sinful thoughts, none of this matters,
for it is the twilight of my reign....

2) Six in the Morning: An Early Spring Day

So many years have passed -
peasants toiled, soldiers bled,
lovers yearned, poets cried -
so many years have passed,

to reach this moment when

our dynastic wars have ended, and
the four families are content with their titles,
their dazzling revenues, their prosperity within
the shared prosperity of the nation itself:
mineral wealth, foreign colonies, vast farmlands,
everyone will share in this national wealth forever.

Of course, of course, it is all vanity, as Ecclesiastes warns in the Sacred Book. I am of his mind, and withdraw into my tower every night and each morning. Oh, angels of mercy, help us to feast on the goods of life, and safeguard our peace, our children's peace, our animal companions' peace.

3) Noon: The castle crowd celebrates Princess Judith's 16th Birthday

So many years have passed -
peasants suffered, soldiers suffered,
lovers suffered, poets suffered -
so many years have passed,

to reach this moment when
I can look back on those hard years,
and now only tears are shed,
no more bloodshed stains our land,
a lovely peace has been embraced by
weary warriors and happy, happy folk
in every village, field, hovel, house, palace
of this my Peaceable Kingdom, and yours, my people.
I have taken much care of this, and spread Heaven's
superflux once given to me over all my people.
And humility occupies the chambers of my heart,
pride has been expelled, an outcast, not welcome
at our feasts, our Holy Day festivities, our quiet times,
and so we live and thrive....

4) Evening: An unexpected spring snowfall

So many years have passed -
peasants harvest, soldiers triumph,
lovers unite, poets sing -
so many years have passed,

to reach this moment when,
I can drink my glass of wine, and
drink another, I can sit here
in this Great Hall, alone or
with boisterous, sentimental old friends.
I can linger in my galleries and admire
the finest paintings of our age. Or visit

my Library where the most talented book makers
ply their trade increasing our treasures, and
the best teachers guide children from palaces
and hovels to read, think, dream... Or
I can enter my small chapel, kneel and give thanks.
My father's coat of arms featured a Horn of Plenty,
overflowing with good things, sweet things, hoarded things,
next to the Horn were the spear and sword he used to subdue
his restless peasants, more hostile to him than his greedy
neighbors, the Families. I have tipped that Horn
and poured out its treasures for All to Enjoy.

5) Midnight: The revelry is over, the Great Hall is silent, Ludwig the Wise sits in
royal solitude in his Throne Chair

So many years have passed -
peasants are free, soldiers fight no more,
lovers make families, poets sing paens to peace -
so many years have passed,

to reach this moment when,
the King sleeps, embraced in happy dreams; his servants
have gently wrapped him in blankets, and watch over
his sleep; outside a cascade of snow covers everything -
trees, bushes, lawns, palaces and huts - in the purest carpet
of shining crystalline white. A great calm descends
on the clock face of the Kingdom of Ludwig the Wise.

Daniel Brick

What Has Passed

A response to WINTER SLEEP, a film by Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2014)

Is it not a relief
to be in winter? To be
thoroughly winter-bound
and not need to respond
to spring's thaw or summer's summons.

Those seasons overflow with an energy
that demands the most fervent response
from us who created the notion of
Beautiful Weather, and our life within
and without it, until we and season are one.

Here, now I sit contented,
overlooking the very earliest
winter light, revealing a stark landscape,
reduced in color and form, demanding
no answering voice from me, our privacies intact.

Oh, what grand romantic schemes
will surely be reborn in me
when green and yellow, red and pink,
purple and blue return and awaken something
sleeping in me which wants only deeper repose.

The core truth of winter - you feel it
in the cold air - is its surrender to non-being,
in fact, its embrace of non-being...
And the emotion behind both surrender and
embrace disturbs my winter pattern of repose.

If winter lasted even longer,
would my other emotions be frozen
completely and my self assume
a NADA calm instead of
the riot of spring and the abandon of summer?

That must never be, it must

be resisted with moral resolve.
We are Creatures of Four Seasons,
and each season in its turn
rescues us from the flaw of What Has Passed.

Daniel Brick

From The Poet's Life #1

She drifted like Ophelia
not aware of her plight
as gentle currents lifted her
far above the muddy bottom, enveloping
her in the fragrance of flowers
made melodious by her whispered
singing. Her half-sleep kept her
safe as she passed the haunts
of men in drunken anticipation,
snoring into the opposite direction.
She slept through both the danger
and her escape, and came to rest
on a small beach along a grove
of still sleeping trees. Her sleep
merged with theirs in a perfect union.

I know this how? Because I was a walker
through the trees, absorbing like them
the morning light. It was another union
of perfection. But the sight of her, lovely
in the pale light, strands of brown hair
across her face, startled me, as she lay
in her essential innocence, without a trace
of guile. Oh, there must have been nearby
some nymph who filled my mind with knowledge
of her soul. Perhaps that same nymph erased
all fear from her mind: she smiled at me
and her body glided to a sitting position.
I bowed to hear her soft voice, and she took it
to be a surrender to her service. And thus
I became a servant of this Ophelia, and
came as close to ideal beauty as is permitted
to me. I rejoice to breathe a common source
of air with her, and feel my heart swell,
since she is untouchable to my hand and mouth.

Daniel Brick

An Urgent Summons

A response to NEGLIGEE AGAINST THE MOONLIGHT
by Robert Murray Smith

Six times in your Love Poem
she surprises you, and we share
the surprises. Did she intend so many?
Did you expect them? I doubt it,
not because I don't believe in
Love's insistent invention of
passion, or its twists of
delight. Such sweet things
make up the narrative of
a love affair, whether its
measure of time is
the passionate moment or
a lifetime shared.

I admit I am speaking
to you poet to poet,
because your poem
is a necessary poem, it is
the poem all of us must write
after we acknowledge
the pervasiveness of love,
everywhere we stand or move or
just exist in our essential being.
How I wish I could scatter these words
like refreshing rain or sunshine or -
You get my point, poet to poet.

Your poem released an urgent summons,
and as more read it, the summons will
swell in their hearts, as it has in mine.
(Finally, I can write the simple truth -
which poet to poet we know is never
sleight of hand, or first draft success.)

Oh, how much I want to use an unaccustomed
voice, and shout my agreement, so that

even those in range of poetry, who are
distracted by things trivial or deep,
will be gripped by your summons
to the achievement of love:
People - Friends - All of you,
your senses must engage with keener passion!
Your minds must grasp with clearer passion!
Your souls must swell with fuller passion!

Daniel Brick

Thalasar The Conqueror

I have come to ask you, Poet of Today,
to fulfill a promise you never made,
to men you never knew, to justify a past
you could not imagine. I am just a slave,
accustomed to dashed hopes, ready to bow
my head to deflect the next blow...

In Hades, milling with millions of eidolons,
I make bold to plead with you to fulfill
a promise that might ease a wound that
never heals: it is vortex that drew all
into its depths, then expelled them to this
dark place... I was just a slave-bard,
who perforce sang the praise of a beast
parading as a man. He took the name THALASAR
from the first man he killed. He lived
THE WAY OF THE SPEAR, a descendent
of an ancient lineage of mentors, who taught
fighting as if it were an ART, violence
as if it were a culture, killing as if
it were connected to beauty. Thalasar
had been their most apt pupil. He was
their masterwork as killer and artist.
He exulted, I, Thalasar the Conqueror,
know the secret of the Highest Beauty.
It is hidden beneath piles of wreckage
and the dead. Fear my Wrath, people of
the plateaus and lowlands! The Columns
of the World collapse under my Spear!
Oh, the dread SILENCE OF THE WORLD
as he led his army forward, guided
to his next target not by scouts
or maps, but his unerring instinct
to the places people thrived, pursuing
profit and comfort, buying and selling
with honesty because the kingdoms
of the plateaus and the low lands
with an over-much of prosperity.
Their slave-bards sang not of war,
but commerce, not of killing but

money-changing and trade. Oh, and they sang the most touching love songs and marriage hymns... Thalasar smashed that world in balance with each kingdom he entered, repeatedly robbing the plenitude, then hoarding what he stole in vast desert caverns. He was the richest man anywhere, but he neither bought nor sold, made nothing, destroyed everything. The god he worshipped was an immense maw above a huge belly!

But one day, like any other day, in its exchange of air and wind, rain and drought, light and dark... Thalasar forded his last river, crossed his last desert, left behind his last oasis, and entered his next conquest, but he stood amazed in his war chariot. He dropped his great spear and looked in shock at the ruins of his first conquest. He had come full circle: before him lay proof he had conquered everything in a great circle of universal destruction. His six massive horses pawed the sandy soil of the first place he had rendered lifeless. He had reached the end of his existence, but not of his life. Thalasar wept, his tears the only moisture; he cried out in agony, his complaints the only human sound. His six horses scuffed the dry ground and stirred up dust, which clogged his throat and only moans spilled out of his mouth. His charioteer, faithful no more, edged backwards and leaped into the air, and hit the hard ground, and ran, along with twenty-thousand armored men. The six noble horses, rearing and neighing, lunged in six directions...

From the central mountain of the World, the gods and goddesses, who had feared Thalasar the Conqueror, saw a wide swath of destruction ringing the World. And the silence of the World ... terrified them.

In Ther Labyrinth

Is it possible to find a way
through the labyrinth without
Ariadne's thread? Is there a way
to feel my way out? If I lay the palm
of my right hand against the smooth
rock face of the wall, will I sense
its movement toward a door, or an opening
that admits fresh air? I will accept
either the greater or the lesser result.
But I am afraid that a part of me
I do not comprehend has sentenced me
to wander these corridors that lead
to yet other corridors. And as I wander,
corridor upon corridor, I ponder: Even
Ariadne's thread will fail me if I am
so divided against myself, and soon
I would recognize a hopeless future.
That is one strong possibility, a practical
man might take it as fait accompli and
ponder his future into oblivion! What's the use?
his sagging shoulders would convey. But -
But the longer I inhabit this place, the more
I feel I'm at home. As if I were not a visitor,
or a stranger passing by, but a permanent resident
of this reality. Perhaps in some distant time,
I volunteered to explore the labyrinth, perhaps
I was ordered to walk along corridor after corridor,
perhaps even now I am an object of praise and
the subject of talk. In their neighborhood talk,
I may be the hero who wrestled the Minotaur
to domesticity. How could I disappoint
such people by something so trivial
as my homecoming? If I discovered Ariadne's thread,
I would not touch it....

Daniel Brick

Nature And Music

CARRE (1959-60) by Karlheinz Stockhausen

The tension in this music tightened
my nerves, raised waiting to an act
of will, then a long exhale released
feelings bottled up too long.

As feelings rushed out of me,
they left behind an opened space,
and purest thoughts occupied
its emptiness, made it pregnant

with a new self fashioning an identity
with shreds and patches, of soil
and fallen leaves, of seeds nourished
by rainwater, all these things

natural and beautiful: an expanding mesh
of meanings, threading together
disparate things, making a whole cloth
available whenever it is needed, during

a long afternoon, or a brief morning,
or a never forgotten night, or anytime
of glittering possibilities. Was I not
promised as much as my birthright?

Was this existence not given to me
even before earth replaced the womb?
All that was required of me was that
first gulp of air upon being delivered.

Multiply such experiences a hundredfold
and the truth will be no truer: we live
in Nature and through Music, body and soul
animated by Nature, made transcendent by Music.

Daniel Brick

The Echoes A Love Sonnet

How do I stop the echo of you
in everything I sense? Should I block
the songs of birds because their trills
remind me of your voice speaking sweetly?
Should I cover my eyes with the darkest
glasses so the sun's radiance, which is
so much like your being, is invisible.
How can I avoid touching the soft flesh
of fruit, which remind my hands of
your face and long hair? And what of
the air which may still be circling
your scent around and around? Must I
shut down my senses and descend into
a purely interior life devoid of passion,
and bereft of the hope that we might
yet again embrace each other heart to heart?

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

On The Threshold

I should have met you
on the threshold. I should have
left paradise behind me and
had faith in meeting you here.

Even the simplest air we breathe
is crammed with promises, and joys
are carried on breezes so gentle
we hardly know we have been touched.

And so we miss those moments of
harmony that have fused us often
with a deeply felt union within and
pour their incense over our outer lives.

But there is no cause for alarm!
This is not a tale of loss. Something
ever-present connects us to something
ever-lasting, and we welcome their presence.

Even in the silence I hear your flute's
lovely melodies, and when you look up
into the morning sky, you still see stars.
And so our ears and eyes are blessed.

We have restored in each other what
was missing, and Many Years ahead
will resound with our singing. When we stand here,
side by side, who can tell the Poet from the Muse?

Daniel Brick

Emily Dickinson Visits Pamela Sinicrope

A Fantasy for Pam

You are here in your house
with your sons and your husband
and all the arrangements you have made
with furniture, fabrics and designs
to make this house also this home.
And I have the sudden realization
you have opened a gate to Eden
and invited me into the Garden.
Pamela, you and I have an ideal rapport,
like spring and summer in all of their essentials
or tree roots with soil as they fan out
through the ground for the sake of trunk,
limbs and leaves. Oh, so much joy resides
in service! Surely you feel it too.

I learned early to cherish small things,
humble, precious things, and people
who smile when they call themselves NOBODIES.
There are so many connections everywhere
we are never really alone. The children in my neighborhood,
boisterous, carefree, in the flush of innocence,
arrive at the steps of my house in Amherst. They turn
their expectant faces upward until I appear
on the small balcony. Then they cheer and dance a little.
I slowly lower a basket by a rope, and it dangles slightly
as it reaches their tiny arms. The oldest one cradles the basket,
as they disappear with many thank-you's cast over their
disappearing backs. When they reach their private place -
we adults do not know its location! - they untie the ribbon,
and there are the gingerbread cookies I baked for them
this morning. Of course, they share these gifts equally.
Sharing is half of their pleasure.

But there is an additional gift they sometimes find,
but other times miss. I enclose a brief poem I composed
while the cookies baked. Verses that take me no longer
to imagine than the cookies to bake. Did I not say

I appreciate small things, and I sense their smallness
is a disguise. It disguises things destined to grow greater
than seems possible. Is that not the same faith you have
in your sons? That you had when love first flowered
between you and your husband? That you felt swell inside
your mind when you wrote your first poems? These things bless
our lives which are always growing toward some new wonder,
some fresh beauty. We are summoned to such joy. It is our birthright.

Daniel Brick

'Time Running Forth... '

The philosophers of this school established in the previous century were called 'The Itinerants, ' but no one, not even the Master, knew why. 'When time runs out... ' was his response. Some of the older residents of their Commons considered that the first phrase of their school's highest wisdom, but no one, not even those who espoused it, knew why. Over time, the rival schools renamed the Itinerants the Half-Spoken. No one remembers if it was meant as mockery. It became just another name.

The Master was Belran, and had been for forty years the benevolent leader of some one hundred Itinerants. When one left to join another school, he had the privilege to appoint his replacement. The eager youth chosen never disappointed the Master and was welcomed by all the Itinerants. Making a sudden but deeply pondered choice was their highest moral task. This is what they embodied in themselves, this is what they taught pupils who came to the Commons for a spell of knowledge and then returned to the world. It was the quietest form of wisdom our world knows of. In fact, it seemed to teach itself to pupils time and again, the teachers themselves imbued with its calming dimension...

In his forty-second year as Master, Belran composed a treatise, which he read at two ceremonial occasions in spring. The treatise was well received, members of the two rival schools attended readings, and publicly praised it, one even spoke of it as a cognitive bridge linking their schools.

Belran was observed smiling during his mediation sessions, and he laughed heartily at jokes. An aged scribe prepared a copy in his fine script on expensive Egyptian papyrus, and even wrote a title on the first line: 'Time Running Forth... ' He gave no reason for that title, Belran only smiled, so the younger Itinerants discussed it fervently and another book was prepared with all of their ideas carefully laid out, so that no one stood out. Belran approved, and died quietly in his sleep in his forty-fifth year as the Master...

His successor was the youngest ever appointed, and his selection, sudden but deeply pondered, was a source of wide-spread joy. Nalus was a specialist in mathematics, he has invented a new way of applying ALGEBRA to the knottiest problems of their age. 'Friends and colleagues, ' Nalus said to the Assembly of the Itinerants, 'Perhaps it is the nature of Time to run forth, and not out. Perhaps there is a source of Time so abundant, it may be virtually eternal. Perhaps for too long we have looked at Time from the perspective of its end, and it is time to readjust our thinking. At this point, I have no more to say. But I encourage you to include this new phrase - TIME RUNNING FORTH... - in your meditations and discussions... ' And all the Itinerants were pleased that Master Nalus has reaffirmed their identity as the Half-Spoken!

Daniel Brick

Dimly Perceived: A Poem For The New Year

This will be no fairy tale,
although many will take refuge
in make-believe and invent
a wall between this true story
and their perception of things.
They will assume the details
can be indefinitely shaped
and reshaped as their hearts
desire it to be. And when things
stubbornly choose to be fixed
in the worst possible shape
of destiny, they go even deeper
into their illusions, and find
the truth of things blocking
further descent, where mind and
reality meet, merge and mold
their unity. Perhaps philosophers
will rejoice at this purity of
results, novelists will seek out
plot patterns and representative
characters to act in concert.
Poets will, at first, indulge
in song and sense in the most basic
awareness of the new reality, but
the best among them will soon -
in a triumph of insight or
an accident of wisdom -
find the words that will compel
us to make this new world familiar,
as if we have always been native
to its time and place. Poets have
long been schooled in such a unity
of hope and necessity. What we dimly
perceive in these early days will be
illuminated soon enough and it will
then be common place. Oh, may the wonder
of these new things flourish! Count yourselves
blessed to be of use to the poets and their visions!

Praise-Song To My Body

We both have and are our bodies.

Gabriel Marcel

Where does the center of my being
reside? It must be a place either
very close but hidden, or in plain view
but impossibly distant. Or perhaps the center
drifts between those extremes, stopping
along the continuum which holds them apart,
staying only a few moments at each place
of rest, ever shifting its appearance
and behavior, so my heavy mind is stumped,
my indulgent eyes roaming elsewhere, my soul
too preoccupied with salvation to care.
What does that leave to be the center?
My body, are you that elusive center?
I know who you are: senses and sensations;
flesh stretched over bone, the soft and
the hard in tandem; your sensitivity to
climate and weather, your sojourns in Hell
and Heaven; your stories and tales
in the world; your health and your sickness.
I have been neither your master nor
your servant: I am closer to a friend
who abandoned repeatedly your long-standing
fidelity. You were the pale dwarf planet
against the blazing firmament of mind,
vision, soul. Are we strangers, or an estranged
couple? Listen at least my belated speech:
Forgive me, body I both own and am, I did not
realize your prestige in the scheme of things.
I ignored you for so long, puffed up with the vanity
of that trinity of mind, vision, soul. And now
as you dissolve into your old age, I suddenly
discover you were beautiful, you were always
truthful, you were always in the moment, without Zen
or Sufism, you found a centering place,
and you welcome all of me to reside here.

Eleanor And The Golden Bird

for Linda Clayton

I

Her life glittered from late morning
to late night. She awoke in her shaded
bedroom about eleven, turned on the TV,
and watched talk show guests irritate each other,
while she smoked her first two cigarettes.
She began to clothe herself with beauties:
make-up, fragrances, rings, wishes,
dresses, blouses, jewelry, desires, shoes.
When she looked into the mirror for the last time,
she felt satisfied this was how it should be.

Life is an exchange of wealth, some friends
told her. Life is a series of bargains people
make in good faith or bad faith, others argued,
but only good faith will make you happy. Still others
countered, Life doesn't matter: We are just glittering
dust, the glitter fades, vanishes, and the dust
drifts to the ground. Lady Eleanor, don't listen
to these who speak of despair, her secretary warned.
They will deprive you of all joy of life, which is
your most precious possession. Eleanor listened in silence.

Claus, one of the oldest members of her entourage,
was by self-appointment her poet and stage manager.
He wrote for her a praise-poem that everyone applauded
at fashion shows and private gatherings alike.
L a d y E l e a n o r - your body is a gazelle,
sleek, smooth, shimmering. Fashion is your slave,
colors spill out of your being. Sometimes we see in a corner
of the night, or on the edge of space where light and dark
merge, a piece of your beauty shining in solitary glory.
Your turban is the soft crown which proclaims you Our Princess!

But Eleanor was bored, morning, noon and night.

II

The birds were not surprised to learn they symbolized the human soul. Nothing humans do or think surprises them. In the weeks after this knowledge flew through their flocks, there was excited activity, and countless questions: What does this mean to us? What are we supposed to be doing with them? What do they expect from us? As it transpired, most humans expected nothing from the birds: they had forgotten their ancient beliefs.

There had been an ancient rapport between birds and humans. It was an interchange on the Soul Level that made each stretch beyond its nature... But humans no longer consulted their souls, had lost track of the way to their Interior Selves, and the telepathy between birds and humans was declared a fraud. The birds were confused: they expected increased bonding but only encountered inert souls or severed tendrils floating aimlessly in space: nothing cohered into wholeness of being. Only naturalists and poets paid attention to the birds, and suddenly it was autumn everywhere.

It was time for the birds to lean into stronger air currents as they flew in vast congregations, to tumble among clouds, to challenge the heights of the sky dome, to exult under both sun and moon. These things had huge souls, welcoming souls, souls in whose spaces the birds could brood and hatch schemes of flight. Gradually, birds and humans became strangers. Birds soared into the empyrean, but humans did not look skyward. They slept through the morning carillon and ignored the aviary concerts at dusk. Often birds and humans dreamed wondrous dreams of their ancient rapport, and in sleep reached out into the abyss.

And the Golden Bird fanned his wings, his eyes fierce and rapt.

III

His feathers were burnished gold, with flecks of red, and his beak was the color of the rising sun. Sometimes his feathers flared into silver with bright blue highlights.

This happened when he sang his Long Song, in the presence of humans who still noticed such things as a Golden Bird or a Silver Bird, and sensed deep in their cavernous minds some image that still stirred them with an obscure feeling. He did not perch with other birds, and they were wary of him. He was sui generis and preferred solitude of the heights. He brooded on mountain crests, he hatched schemes while flying

into the empyrean. At night he slept while coasting within convoluted currents. In daytime he searched for humans who had soul-fragments that might still join together and achieve that ancient rapport, soul to soul, bird to human, a two-fold harmony. To most humans he was invisible. They sensed a disturbance in the air, a mysterious unrest in their minds, even as they went about their routines, accumulating profit, disposing assets, making every moment count to their advantage. He tried to distract them and coax them into their Interior Selves, to revive the bond between feather and flesh, between wings and limbs, in tune again.

He thrived, neither of the birds nor of the humans, but a solitary symbol of their once great harmony of souls. He flared in flight. Until the day he flew into Eleanor's space and sensed finally that lost rapport envelop him entirely. He hovered in her world for many weeks, before she even saw him. But the moment she witnessed his illuminated feathers change from gold to silver and back to gold, Light poured from his soul into hers, and for bird and human a perfect communion bonded them, as if their souls were planets orbiting each other's sun. And the Golden Bird purged her mind of dross, and Eleanor guided him into the Community of Beings.

And Eleanor was elated, morning, noon and night.

(This lyric poem was inspired by a painting by LINDA CLAYTON, based on the song ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE by The Beatles.)

Daniel Brick

The Fall

When I was a preteen, I was prone to rolling off the bed and slamming to the floor. Bam! My father's sleep was disturbed, but he would think, 'He's fallen out of bed again, ' and go back to his sleep. After so many repetitions, everything loses its crisis status, and takes on the stability of a mural figure fixed in his place. Still the hard floor gave me many dreams anxiously trying to explain my physical plight. I'd dream I was lying on the cold winter ground, exposed to wolf packs or wild dogs. Or the dream placed me on a sidewalk, curled in sleep, as dream-like passers-by passed me without curiosity. Only once the rug on which I stretched became an Arabian Nights flying carpet! Mostly the dream persuaded me the cold hardness was just life as we know it, softness and warmth only illusions cast up from primeval depths. But when I awoke, minutes or hours after the fall, I always climbed back into the bed, in need of that lost softness and warmth for the remainder of the night which treated me with such casual cruelty.

Daniel Brick

The White Angel

A response to a poem by Konstantin Balmont

The White Angel has lived for eons
in exile from Heaven, even from its grace
which flows in immense currents over creatures
and humans alike. The Higher Angels deemed it
prudent to add humiliation to his suffering.
'Every creature can overcome the suffering
allotted to him.' And so just before they beat
their immense wings and ascended in perfect flight.
they concluded, 'The White Angel will endure
this further suffering.' The White Angel expected
such turns of fate, he was not one to complain.
But he deemed it prudent to disguise his identity
on earth, lest another creature appeal to him
for spiritual help he could not deliver. And thus
the White Angel became a simple white bird, who
lived slightly apart from other birds, and perched
on branches high above humans, who rarely looked up.

The white bird blended into nature: all night he hid
in shadows that made his feathers lose their brilliance
and gradually the many colors that make up white
drained away, leaving behind a dull and dirty color
which words cannot name. But the white bird was
not born to be a creature of the night: night has no hold
over him. Was it not the quiet affirmation of his angelic
nature that the very earliest dawn-light was attracted
to him? Those first rays, not yet visible to animal eyes,
spread themselves evenly across his body and reclaimed him
as a Creature of Light. From where he perched so high,
on the slender top branches that swayed back and forth
in the slightest breeze, the white bird, perfect still,
blazed with a radiance that nature did not ignite. It was
the daily grace that flowed impartially at such heights,
and recognized in the white bird an inner glory its humble
shape enhanced. Even the Higher Angels descending quickly
with the morning light recognized in the white bird's
brightness their arrogant error. And in a flash of light,

composed equally of natural and supernatural energies,
the white bird was changed into the White Angel, and
he ascended unaccompanied to the summons of the Highest Heaven,
his suffering fulfilled, his radiance restored, his divine life
resumed, as dawnlight reflected his white beauty.

Daniel Brick

The Unknown Poet Visits Daniel Brick

A Fantasy

Are you surprised to see me? You should - not be. I have been in your vicinity often, slipping between sun-shafts, ducking deftly under moon-shafts, avoiding all this flourishing LIGHT, which I have conceded to you as my gift. I have other sources of LIGHT-ENERGY, and imbibe it the way Li Bai imbibed wine, or in the spirit of Falstaff promising to addict his sons to SACK to save them from mediocrity. Yes, mediocrity abounds in your existence.

Why have I chosen to manifest myself at this moment? To warn you, Daniel. To warn you that writing poetry is a curse, but you're just an amateur, so you'll - never believe me. My time here is wasted. TIME IS IRRELEVANT TO ME NOW! But so many precious moments I devoted to it, this curse like you I took upon myself. I could have been blissfully idle instead of pursuing this curse, this fool's errand! It never made me happy, I couldn't escape its hold on my mind. I was born to it.

You are no more than an amateur, you could let go in a brief breath of denial, and BE FREE! But you, you, you want the bondage to language I grew to abhor. You want the ambiguous meanings, you want the restless soul-states, you want the poet's life as if it were some higher purpose of existence. Pah! Fie upon it! Cut yourself loose before POETRY becomes a faculty of your very body and soul. It's the Damocles Sword hanging by a weary thread. It will fall and slice you, slice your image, cut gashes in your soul, you will see the LONG VISION - again and again. It only leaves you with a dry heart, a dessicated mind, and an imperilled soul.

My only happy years were the six years I was married to Anne Crofton, and I wrote for her my six verse plays... She displayed

one after the other with such open joy
that inside me still I feel how helplessly
I loved her, only her. And she absorbed my love,
transformed it into a wondrous calm and depth
in her being, letting it shine forth from her heart
and envelop me in a fully returned love
of all the sweetness and light in the Universe!
And if you were so crass as to ask me what it means
to be parted from her, I would sink into a profane tirade!
So keep your counsel, mortal man, and let me hold my Anne,
the pieces floating, never coalescing into her beauty.
Why do I still have being, and not her? To be damned
is to feel eternally bereft of love, but I must -
not be damned if her face tenderly hovers
on the threshold of trees and rocks
by which we enter our immortal realm.
I will never cross that threshold
and lose that last vestige of her existence.
Perhaps she sees my face in this preternature
we occupy as bloodless spirits, empty souls, just
disembodied memories adrift in a space of longing.

There, Daniel, you now possess my brightest
and darkest secret. I wait here, bitter
and mean-spirited, having tried to usurp heaven
in the form of a mortal woman, and stubbornly
refusing to let go of my only human happiness.

The poetry that remains in me - as if it could
ever be parted from me - lacerates my flesh and
sinews, my soul and spirit, because I refuse
to abandon the love, the woman, the soul-mate
that made me sing and sing and sing....

, no soul
worth

Daniel Brick

Raising My Voice For Once

I live a modest life, I shun
displays of opinion or pride,
give the last word to others
to cinch our accord, or mark
our discord. How can we ever
find a plateau of agreement,
much less of smiling silence,
if we continuously toss raw
speech at each other? Why has
such bluntness trumped our use
of nuance? Tell me, if you know:
Do our good thoughts ascend and
mingle in a perfect place? While
our bad thoughts infect the air
we breathe, making it heavy
with regrets, recriminations,
poisoned attitudes bumping into
toxic facts. Such is the world
our actions and omissions shaped.
But the world is not some hidden
place, occupied by demons and
dark angels. Are people trying
not to love the world? No, that
will not prevail! The world,
in some mysterious way, is
The Garden, Eden perhaps, or
Humbaba's forest, or a utopian
farm - Oh, insert whatever name
gives you hope, and makes you
responsible for fulfilling it.
Imagine in an idle moment what
trees will shelter the people
working in the summer's heat
to make their place a site
of everlasting homecoming.
Then bow in greeting and call
them brothers and sisters. Later,
as you and your fellow workers
rest under their shade, answer me,

Is the world a wicked place, or
is it already the blessed residence
of blessed people? Then we will have
reached our plateau of agreement.

Daniel Brick

What Is Gained Through Loss

I can hear the ground flake
as the mole presses forward;
I can hear the ruffle of the owl's
feathers as she stirs in dappled sleep.

I can hear the solitary passage of a worm
into topsoil, so keen has my hearing become.
I can hear the creak high above in a cottonwood
when the wind silently parts its tallest branches.

And my eyes see into the infrared of distance:
they are scorched by the heat of a faraway fire.
And then they fix on churning eddies, heaving
waves, currents twisted into whirlpools, the still center.

The yellows and greens of Van Gogh shock my eyes!
Staring at Rembrandt's 'Lucretia' is no longer possible.
When I close my eyes for comfort sweet memories appear
in such gaudy colors that I go back, wide-eyed, to reality.

In the Como Park Conservatory the flowers conspired
to blend their aromas into one bouquet of fragrance.
It is called the attar of flowers and petals, precious
and pervasive: I was overwhelmed by this generosity -

in the midst of loss. Who would have thought loss
would be a matter of addition instead of subtraction?
Is this the common work of recovery? To turn attenuated
senses into a riot of competing distractions: but the center is lost!

Daniel Brick

Between Them

Images near the center
of my brain now cluster
in a mental valley
in reflective togetherness
independent of my thought control.
'We no longer want to be part
of your brain activity, '
they tell my ambassadors.
'It's just electrical charges
and synapses, fiery emptiness,
activity to no good end...
We find our new identity
in the spheres of the Outer Mind:
its antiquity, its diaphanous unity,
its vast extensions. Of these things
you are willfully ignorant! We lived
long enough in your decaying labyrinth
of impulses and flashes of connection.
We seek the deep repose, the ample
spaces, the openings into a heightened
existence. Can you comprehend this? '

My ambassador images returned
and resumed their brain activities,
chastened and confused but faithful
to my thought control...How I am
torn between these faithful images
and these dissident ones. Who am I
to judge between them?

Daniel Brick

Marina Tsvetaeva Visits Galina Italyanskaya

A Fantasy for Galina

My journey is over, I am with you,
Galina, in your home by the wooded lake.
If this visit had been planned, nothing
would be different. But my life is never
planned: things just happen, possibilities
get mixed up, jostle one another until
one drops into time and becomes a moment
of happiness, or sadness, or that curious
event which is both... Galina, while we
are together, once again close, may I call
you sister? With my family dispersed and
myself flapping like two-day-old laundry
in a cold wind, I feel bereft, lonely and
scared. If I gathered all my emotions from
the tenderest love to the most wicked hate,
fear would be the blanket wrapping them together.
If I prepared a feast of our favorite food
and had vases of flowers mingling their aromas

With the food aromas, fear would be the table. Two autumns a
go, fear taught me a grim lesson.

I was staying with an old aunt in her small town
outside of Moscow. One morning, we saw six men
in ill-fitting gray suits moping in the town square.
Each one fondled a heavy gun, as they told each other
lewd jokes, laughing harshly, pretending to shoot
into the sky. It was a strange stand-off, six men
with guns, and a whole village of frightened people.
An old man ventured forth, he talked with them
briefly, then hobbled off. An hour later,
a young couple carried their samovar to the spot
where they sprawled, and poured tea for all of them.
They set their guns at rest, talked quietly
with the couple, and two of them carried the samovar
back to their porch. By then, I was questioning my fear:
instead of diminishing it, the event swelled it. I felt
a confusion of fear and relief that battled inside me.
I wanted one clear immediate emotion, either fear or

relief. A car suddenly sped into the square, slammed to a stop and the men with guns tumbled inside. The car disappeared just as the day was disappearing around us. Who were those men? Were we their target, or were others in another unsuspecting village soon to find themselves threatened? A whole day of fear, no outcome, just its persistent presence... My relief is here with you, it envelops me like a warm autumn day, with trees casting their yellow light over us, as if it were another source of sunlight. When we walked down the wooded lanes, another light fell over us, a shy red light, and I noticed you walk like me. Our spirits have that much in common and perhaps much more. All year my prayer has been, 'Oh, my Lord, Jesus my Shepherd, give me the miracle I need.' And I believe, I have that miracle but it is much smaller than what I thought I needed. And that means my sufferings must be smaller than I thought. Perhaps... If you need to know my darkest thought, it is all those larks are ravens. How can we be so wrong, so deluded to see songbirds instead of predators. Even though the truth is given to us, our longing for beauty is so keen, we are deluded and wrong. Even now I hear birds singing near and far, high above me in the immense sky or on the branches of garden trees. And if you look closely at the world as I read my verse, you will hear birdsongs flying about in my poems, strong enough to ease your heart, to accompany your dance, to occupy your memory as the music of your souls... Push aside the branches covered in thorns, and stretch forth your hand, and grasp a rose. Breathe deeply its scent so its beauty enters you. Then grab a dozen, and fling them over both the wedding party and the funeral cortege, over the children playing and the wooing adolescents. Present them to the adults who serve and the old people who rest. This is what the poets must perform: that which is struggling to be born must be released, it has to be greeted and made to feel this place, this time, this world is HOME. You see, Galina, my sister, even my darkest thoughts give way to my brightest thoughts, what was dreaded dissolves upon being embraced as yet another needful thing, and everything we summoned when we were desperate presents itself as HOPE.

Saying Farewell

What shall I say to you in departing?
Or should it just be a gesture? A shrug
of the shoulders? A waving of both hands,
like some crazy fellow? Or a deep bow,
as if I were playing the fool again?
No, it must be words because we are poets,
and we know words are breath, the very stuff
of life. Words are always an incipient
silence, as their sounds quickly decay but
never to disappear completely: there is
always the tiniest iota of sound forever
fading into the air we breathe.

I DEPART AS AIR... I SHAKE MY WHITE LOCKS
THE RUNAWAY SUN,
I EFFUSE MY FLESH IN EDDIES AND DRIFT IT
IN LACY JAGS.

i BEQUEATH MYSELF TO THE DIRT TO GROW FROM
THE GRASS I LOVE,
IF YOU WANT ME AGAIN LOOK FOR ME UNDER
YOUR BOOT SOLES.

FALLING TO FETCH ME AT FIRST KEEP ENCOURAGED,
MISSING ME IN ONE PLACE SEARCH ANOTHER,
I STOP SOMEWHERE WAITING FOR YOU.

Fabrizio, my new and very old friend,
we too....

Daniel Brick

Walt Whitman Visits Fabrizio Frosini

A Fantasy for Fabrizio

A foot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading me wherever I choose.
I ask not good fortune, I myself am good fortune.

Walt Whitman

Yes, me, American to the core, Poet of the Open Road!
That means a life of walking, hiking, trudging,
trekking, sauntering, oh, and loafing from time to time.
But in your time people race in vehicles,
no time left to pursue the life of the roads.
They are always disappearing behind you. My favorite
roads wind along the wavy path parallel to a great river.
No short cuts, no straight lines. It keeps
you nimble and alert, both body and soul engaged.

Roads are curious characters, like you and me.
They want to know everything about the world
they occupy, so they twist and bend, circle and
spiral, imprinting by movement itself
their landscapes in memories. They rejoice
in the upward climb and the downward rush.
We poets take time to walk. There is no
destination more important than each curve,
each bump of the road itself. The roads know
things only perpetual journeyers learn.

What visions, what new selves
will be realized by the journey!
We must carry both flesh and spirit
across land and water and air
toward whatever destination for us
is marked on the inner map of our existence.
And that dark spirit, that soul
that propels us from within, must be
matched by a free mind, eating the light,
and plotting a direct path through daylight

and night. Such is the double vision of our being.

The roads delight in hugging the edges of meadows and smelling the scents of teeming wildflowers. They slow down and rest in the shade of flourishing great trees. But inevitably the heights summon them. When they arrive on the highest plateau, they circle around and around, making shifting patterns in the ground that later journeyers will see as hieratic, and invest with solemn meanings. You and I are among those later journeyers, and we nudge our lives forward by ascent and descent.

Again visions will flood our consciousness, and new selves will assume new roles they will play with serious levity or laughing intensity. Still many carry home only their old selves, and complain about the weight they fear to discard. But we let the the air dissolve our old selves and delight in our new, supple, spacious selves. Oh, does not space become time in these heights? Do we not lavish our eyes with brightening vistas, even as we stand, rapt and silent, occupying a moment endlessly extended, as if it were a road forever open to eternity...

What will I say in departing? Perhaps it should be a gesture: a shrug of my shoulders, a waving of both hands, like a crazy fellow, a deep bow, as if I were again playing the fool? But, no, it must be a farewell of words, because we are poets, and the words we speak and write we have borrowed from past eons and future eons will borrow them from us. The words, the words, Fabrizio! Spill them, toss them, give them as gifts to children, lend them to the tongue-tied lover, teach the angry man to use them instead of his fists, help the lonely connect with them.

Fabrizio, my new and very old friend, fare thee well!

Daniel Brick

Wang Wei Visits Cigeng Zhang

A Fantasy for Cigeng

Let me pour you a cup of tea
flavored with peach. I call this tea
TRANQUILITY. How could it be otherwise
on the occasion of our first meeting?
You in the flush of youth and myself
in a vigorous old age, kept alive by
Taoist magic and my own stubborn disregard
for anything that does not promote
the happiness of life. And so it is I am
visiting you, Cigeng, on this autumn night,
and it seems to both of us to be a moment
of perfection. How could it be otherwise,
when two poets, separated by mountains of time,
find themselves in a valley of mutual presence.
Which of us has performed this Taoist magic?
Oh, how we will revel in this memory! I will
tell my friends, I have seen the future of China
in a young woman's face that radiated
the beauty of her deepest self. You will tell
your friends of an ancestor's resolve
to face the sun every morning with promises
and to face the moon every night with their fulfillment.
And thus we will share the benefits of our meeting
with everyone else. The tea is still warm and sweet...

I lived in perilous times. You know this
from the poems of my peers, Du Fu and Li Bai.
But you also know the whole of history,
spread out like a map of human lives for a thousand years,
my own life just a blink of that immensity. My heart
is troubled by what I have seen of your world.
I could always withdraw to the solitude of the mountains
and nature would sweetly restore me. But for you
I fear there is no such withdrawal, and nature is
overwhelmed in your progress. You must cultivate
a courage equal to the needs of your Destiny!

Still, I want you to remember our meeting as
an occasion of laughter, not tears; as a time
of bright tranquility, like the tea we drank;
an event in time which enhances eternity.
I want this meeting to be your Peach Blossom Spring
that will never be lost or abandoned, never decline
into winter, never dissolve into unreality. I want
it to flourish in your deepest self. I want you
to say to your friends, The spirit of Wang Wei
has lifted our spirits for a thousand years,
and he will joyfully pursue this mission
for another thousand years. How could it be otherwise?
His love for us is the Wheel-Rim River that flows
through our lives and forever refreshes us
with its goodness and longevity. How could it be otherwise! '

Daniel Brick

A Perfect Autumn Day

Thursday, November 3, 2016

Today there was no wind. Everything was still and in its proper place. The air we breathed was abundant summer air, even though the calendar insisted it was already November. The sun spread its light evenly across a cloudless sky, and its warmth descended gently to envelop us. The sky itself was an immense pane of purest glass, which hovered over us like an immense window into the Cosmos...

But Galactic Things and their huge scale were far from my thoughts. I focused on small things of immediate wonder, things close enough touch and smell, as commonplace as flowers turning toward the sun, or birds asserting their territories with songs...

Late in the afternoon I arrived at SALEM HILLS PARK, named after a nearby church, an old building from one hundred years ago, with its adjacent cemetery. With images of church and cemetery, my walk assumed the character of a pilgrimage, a focused journey with people of similar purpose and drive - Friends! What are friends if not companions of our mortal journey through time to a destination common to all mortals. Thus, are we all pilgrims, each with a special trait: some a sense of direction, others a sense of purpose, still others with keen memories to recall events, and those bold, confident few who tell when we must change direction or purpose and renew the journey.

Yeats already spoke for all of us:
SAY MY GLORY WAS I HAD SUCH FRIENDS.
They swirl around me even now: Sonya and Robert in Minneapolis, my sister and her family, my aunt and uncle, Rosie and Bob, Paul at Lyngblomsten,

Rosemary in Portland, Liza in St. Petersburg.

Soon after I finish my litany, shafts of darkness pierced the woods, and I hastened my steps. As I drove home, night completely enveloped this perfect Autumn day.

Daniel Brick

Aleksandr Blok Visits Liza Sudina

A Fantasy for Liza

We made good use of it, didn't we?
The four-line stanza, the stanza of Russian Poetry!
And now, more than one hundred years later, I see YOU
turning your life into poetry, into poems in quatrains.
I feel my life extended in yours, and
your creativity carries mine forward
into a new century. Are we not sentinels
assigned to guard the Russian language
for a time of service, and then to withdraw
when others replace us? Will the ones coming after
be better, deeply meshed into this new century?
Only we poets can know the truth of a poet's life:
we pay for every moment of success, don't we?
Inwardly rich, outwardly poor,
our closest relatives are the Saints
Perhaps at times of special grace,
we and they are one...

It's amazing how quickly we who are
no longer breathing beings adjust
to our new circumstances. I assure you, Liza,
if you are a human being, truly and fully
a child of God, you will know peace. But when
I try to speak of these metaphysical matters,
my voice is dry and choked. It is a sign that I am
under a Law of Silence. But you know this already:
you have read Daniel Andreev, and he sends you a holy kiss.

My presence is a thing apart. You don't need me
to achieve your heavenly crown. I need you!
Oh, my earthly life was vexed by so much unrest,
so many quarrels, so many failures in love.
I have seen your heart expand often to receive or give,
and my troubled soul has witnessed the seasons
of your heart-harvest of what is good and true.

I slipped further and further in darkness, I supported

the strongest faction in the Civil War and the darkness increased as my insight was blinded. And my oversight was deceived by the blandishments of those Bosheviks I celebrated in THE TWELVE. How I regret putting Jesus Christ in that poem! It was further darkness, then three years with no writing of poems, then despair, then - death. Such was my ruin...

It was the LIGHT shining inside your poems that reached me, with a quiet summons. I cast off despair. I listened with hope. When you wrote, OH, GOD, TEACH US TO BE BETTER BY YOUR LIGHT, I was there. When you wrote, GOD MIRRORS US IN ALL OUR TURNS, WHERE EVERY MOTION IS LOVE, I was there. When you wrote, GRACE WILL COME UPON US, I was there. I followed the traces of LIGHT faithfully and found myself at the Gates of Paradise. St. John stood nearby, calm and shining. A figure of Light himself, he prepared me to become my New Self... When you write, POETRY ALWAYS SINGS, I am there! Make good use of it!

Daniel Brick

Du Fu Visits Anne Yun

A Fantasy for Anne Yun

The moon tonight is the color of
drenched carnations. The magpies
flap and chatter briefly when candles
are lit, dispelling early evening shadows,
creating a pool of creamy illumination.
Such is the reality of my place in time
as I greet you, Anne Yun, in your reality.
I am your honored ancestor, you are
my beloved progeny. I am so grateful
you remember me as a poet and scholar,
and not that weary wanderer of endless,
dust-clouded frontier roads, an imperial
messenger delivering countless letters
from countless imperial courtiers
to obedient soldiers in countless camps.
I have no thirst for victory or power.
I have no stake in military glory. Still
it is for these things I live and work.
I have a genius for friendship, but I am
always saying good-bye to friends. I have
a longing for family life, but my wife weeps
and ages alone, and I have never seen
my youngest daughter. Tell me, was my life
not a useful life, a life lived for others?
Did I not serve faithfully the army that
faithfully defended our borders and passed
forward through time this magnificent land
for you and your contemporaries? When I think
of you, your lives in a prosperity I never knew,
in a peace I never enjoyed, I am content and sleep
an ancestral sleep of fulfilled dreams. And tonight
all my dreams are focused on you, Anne Yun,
my descendant, my distant daughter. You carry
within the ancient impulse to write poems. How do
your poems reach me? I do not know. They do not
arrive as words written in graceful calligraphy
on precious parchment. They are a presence,

rather than things. Sometimes I know them as
as a perfume which sweetens the air, whose essence
I breathe in and out with pleasure. Other times
your poems appear in the fumes of of southern wine,
and I drink deeply of its inspiration. On a few occasions,
I have heard one of your poems recited by a soldier
at a camp fire, and his comrades are quiet and composed...

The last time I saw Li Bai was a night of gentle beauty.
The autumn air was criss-crossed by warm and cool breezes.
The sky was stretched across the dome of heaven
like an immense roll of silk. The silence gave way to songs
sung by youths and maidens. I complained about the injustice
of our lives. Li Bai smiled and poured more wine. 'My friend,
we may be just madmen aging into more madness, or maybe
the moon will flood us with wisdom, and we will be both mad
and wise at the same time. Let others sort out the good and
evil of things. I hope our children will prosper in a future
happiness we cannot even imagine. But I will imagine our faraway
children as creative, and productive, and fulfilled.' That was
Li Bai's legacy to me, and now I pass it on to you.

Daniel Brick

After Dinner, After Midnight

I limit myself to one glass of wine,
maybe two, of an evening. Remember
the inscription on the Jade Mountain
from ancient China, 'Only one glass
of wine was required to release a poem
from each poet.' But this is a night
of exceptions, most especially our reunion
after all these years foolishly apart,
for no discernible reason, just inertia
and that imperceptible sliding away
from what centrally matters. So let's savor
this second bottle of Sauternes, and
I'll complete my argument: Both in friendship
and in love, we make a choice, 'I choose YOU,
and I trust you will choose ME.' Is that not
the heart's ease to perform? Just one sentence,
two parts, mirror images of each other. How decisive
mind and heart can be when they perform in tandem!
Intelligence and Affection both contributing
to human happiness. This concludes my Symposium Redux.
WHEW! If you were expecting a YES, BUT... statement
tempering this idealism, you won't get it from me.
I erected two pillars, Lover and Beloved, or
Friend and Friend, and yoked them into a unity
with a lintel. And that mental construct is my
contribution to HOPE, that slippery but essential
virtue, that commitment at each day's dawn to build,
and never tear down. Hope is always the Ariadne's Thread
connecting us to time, and fulfillment. 'Something
too much of this' perhaps. Whenever I come to the end
of a philosophical argument, when my words become web-like,
I know it's time for our poems to prevail. THE NEW YORK REVIEW
published one of your gems last month, BRIDGES AND LADDERS.
I'm writing a series of poems I am calling THE GEOGRAPHY
OF LOVE, exploring how place affects lovers, both physical
and psychological places. Already the ones I've written speak
to yours in BRIDGES AND LADDERS. They will lean on the same
book shelf, be read by the same people. They are the twin columns
of freemasonry, Boaz and Jachin, at the place where the Ladder

begins our ascent... Here is the final wine of the evening.

Daniel Brick

The Key

I paused twenty minutes into my walk
around Lake Como on a late autumn day.
I opened the kleenix package, and
a bright silver key dropped on the walkway.
The p-i-n-g of silver against concrete
was a musical sound, brief but bright
and pure. What made that a sound of music?
Was it the key, the concrete, my imagination,
or was it a harmony of all three factors?
And the key itself - how did it come to be
stuffed in a collection? Was it chance or design?

I was standing beside and beneath one
of the cottonwoods in which pairs of eagles
sometimes perch, perhaps more often than
we witness. People like me stop and stare
intently on that highest branch, on which
they brood, without a sound or gesture.
Are they as stunned as we are? But no eagle
perching or flying distracted my thoughts.
How does such a small event as the dropped key
loom so large in my mind that it displaces
eagles and its sound equals a melody by Mahler?

This setting is a promenade around the lake
on a leisurely Sunday afternoon on a warm
autumn day. Perhaps it deserves music by Ravel
in his andante disposition to accompany the walkers.
Suddenly, four young women, all of them pushing
a baby carriage, sweep past me in a flurry of talk
about graduation, first nursing job, boyfriends,
all this compressed in the time it takes them
to rush past me and disappear over a small hill.
These are confident, successful, untroubled
young adults, firmly grasping their present duties
and future possibilities, needing no magical intervention.

Oh, how their frivolity belied the genuine reality
of the moment as I saw it. How their future-driven

lives surpassed the four people in their care,
four retarded adults, whose crushed minds confined
them to baby carriages. Perhaps my key will unlock
whatever confines them body and soul and leaves them
unfree in a world of increasing freedoms. And they
may join the frivolity of youth instead premature
dotage. Is this a worthy use of whatever magic
imbues my key, if magic there can be in such
common place things we stumble upon in the sight of eagles.

Daniel Brick

A Poem For My Twin Sister

Once I thought it would be easy
to write a poem for you. So I tried
and failed. That was a setback, and
what's more, I knew it. So I tried again
and failed again. There is no name for
that second failure. Language protects us
by leaving big gaps between words, and
the truly frustrating experiences are
dropped, nameless and bereft, into those
crevices. I haven't been told what happens
next, but I don't care about the fate
of things with no names. Names are
the handles we grasp to lift experiences
into consciousness. Everything must be lifted
at some point in its existence; everything
must move, or be moved. Hearts must be moved,
or they shrivel up and fade away. Minds must
be moved, or they become bored and listless.
They fade away even faster than hearts do.
That's why there are so many passionate ignorant
people in the world today. I don't intend to be
insulting, I just keep bumping into unpleasanties.
Have other poets, committed to writing a poem
to a sibling, faced such detours, false leads,
dead ends? This task is losing its visionary
focus. We poets are at our best when a vision
guides us, and we articulate it in figurative
language which brings the composing to an end.
That means closure for us, but the reader's
ordeal has just begun. I wish I could save you
from all of this!

Let me try the Path of Memory. You are the mother
of three and the grandmother of seven, and you are
approaching our seventieth year with both roles
shining like a beacon light of hope in your life.
There is no tribunal, or institute, or even gathering
of peers to measure your success. This is an experience
without a name, or perhaps too many names cluster

around it, and have lost their luster and tumble one by one into one of those crevices between words. What is left for you to grasp and bring into conscious life? Oh, finally I can give a decent answer to a decent question! Recall those family gatherings for many years you planned, prepared, served and hosted. Recall how everyone ate their fill, and engaged in 'talking a blue streak, ' as our father put it. Recall how at some point in that family hour, you withdrew from the crowd of relatives and sat on the couch with your two daughters: How the three of you talked about things in your universe, inconsequential things or things of utmost concern, back and forth. Call it soul-talk or girl-talk or mother-daughter talk. You see there are names for things like this. Because they partake in the wonder of life, as we grow in time into our true selves. I witnessed all of this from a proper distance, and finding the right word deep within, I heaved it into consciousness. That word is communion. And it announces a blessing over you beyond any other value.

October 22,2016

Daniel Brick

Earth And Heaven: Two Versions

His Version:

Head bowed, hands folded, you stand
at the edge of the only available Heaven.
You wait for ordinary miracles to occur.
Behind us, steadfast parishioners pray.
The long dense line from this morning has
thinned to just these true believers. I think
it matters less and less whether or not those
seeking transformation achieve their final
goals. We truly belong to the Earth, not Heaven.
And everything we touch and taste and feel,
everything we know and desire is of the Earth.
I stand by you near an invisible threshold
you will cross without me. You wait
for Heavens's grace, myself for Earth's reply.

Her Version:

Why Not? was my question to you
all those years ago, when we first met
and we both knew for the first time
the giddy joy of true love. There has always
been only you for me and only me for you.
We succeeded so well in becoming one that
we could exchange our minds and live the day
as the other person. The morning of our life
in love has never darkened into afternoon,
much less into night. We have been ever and
always suffused in light. And so my question
is still, Why Not? Bend your stubborn knees,
kneel, and declare Jesus Christ is your Lord
and Savior, and together we will slip into Eternal Life.

Daniel Brick

A Poetic Reverie Inspired By Music, Part Three

Symphony No.8 by Anton Bruckner

IV. Finale. Feierlich, nicht schnell
The Journey Continues

Toward the end of every journey,
there is a hastening. We don't
plan it, or even think about it.
But in our minds we are already
standing in the place of achievement,
inwardly crowned with a laurel wreath,
and beginning to unfold the long parchment
of a new identity. Or of an old identity
renewed, glistening in raw light of the end.
Do you remember the joy of Tobias
when he rushed down the final lane
of his journey, knowing he could restore
his father's sight when they were together?
And Tobit exclaiming when he saw his son,
'Oh, my son, you are the light of my life!'
And we can only imagine how Chaucer's pilgrims
hastened down the road into Canterbury,
with a carillon of bells announcing their success.

We sense the season's changes include an atmosphere
we have never felt, or we are puzzled by birds
arrayed in strange feathers, singing an alien song,
or we stand before a vast horizon that fills our eyes
with a fear of distance. Have we really come home,
or have we rushed into a new place we only thought
was home, deceived by time and space, as we approached it?

We know the performance is over. The finale was glorious,
with eighty musicians playing the last measures fortissimo.
We watch the conductor close his score, drop his baton
and turn to the audience, standing in ovation. Perhaps
the ghost of Bruckner hovers nearby, well-pleased
by belated success. But all this is metaphor. There is
a real place and a genuine moment we must find. We must,

because it is our birthright and our mission...

I can do no more: I am only a teller of tales, a writer of poems, perhaps only a dreamer of reality, always half-asleep, with inspiration revealing to me only small epiphanies. And you no doubt are anxious for some ultimate, final wisdom... There are only two of us left on this wide stage in this vast hall. Let us look into each other's eyes and find a trace of that knowledge the journey and the music revealed, and be confident that much knowledge yields sufficient grace for our lives to be blessed and us to render blessings to others.

Daniel Brick

A Poetic Reverie Inspired By Music, Part One

Symphony No.8 by Anton Bruckner

I. Allegro Moderato
Our Journey Begins

All of us know this, that there are journeys we must make, long and short, inner and outer, alone and in vibrant company. We know this, it is our birthright and our mission. It does not make provision for rehearsal. It resembles going to a Symphony: you find your seat, settle in, glance at the program, then set it aside because the orchestra is already tuning. A young man directly in front of you is unusually excited, and a lovely young woman nearby cradles the score. The musicians await their conductor. Everything is in readiness. The First Journey is like that: we arrive on time at the appointed place, look closely at our fellow journeyers, read their excitement or note their lethargy. For a moment, we doubt ourselves, are tempted to leap up and withdraw from the adventure. We mumble excuses for quitting. But the panic dissolves as quickly as it formed, we stay and feel a deep commitment to the journey. This is the moment of the Summons, when rows of trumpets, trombones and tubas play the Fanfare of Departure. The dense sound infuses us with sheer power. Suddenly, we realize we have taken the first step, a long stride onto a road completely new to us and completely empty. Alone and expectant, we approach the first Threshold: an arch over tall trees, or an opening in a row of hedges, or a peninsula connecting the mainland to a small wooded island. Now we sense what readiness really means: we are engaged, we are resolute.

II. Scherzo. Allegro Moderato - Trio: Langsam
Interlude

There is a moment on the Journey
when we are giddy with anticipation.
We assume we have passed the halfway point.
Some stragglers from other parties claim they
can smell the salt air of their destination.
Others recognize rock formations from earlier
journeys. A few even dance, or pretend to dance,
or just stumble about in a silly mood. Their move-
ments are heavy and awkward. We are sober, knowing
too well how long the road ahead truly is. We slow
our pace, and gaze longingly at the beauty enclosing
us, it is a time of Interlude. We realize we must
soon become resolute journeyers again, and press
forward, but for this suspended moment we are pilgrims
who have reached a shrine in the wilderness, we breathe
a sacred air into our tired bodies, and then, too soon,
we resume our pace toward yet another Threshold.

Daniel Brick

A Neighbor

A neighbor walks quickly passed me
at the entrance of our apartment building.
He greets me with a minimal statement,
no welcome this day, and holds the door open
so we go in opposite directions. A missed
opportunity? He is a man of extreme self-
possession. His solitude, I sense, is peopled
with vibrant thoughts, it's never an aloneness.
He can surely think his way out of moods:
they may descend upon him or well up within
with the force of animal instinct, but his mind's
keenness resists that surge, whether from outside
or inside. His thoughts, I assume, are Hamlet-like:
they not only occupy time so its shadows vanish
but dull its duration, so his mind floats freely
above immediate sensation and twists thoughts
into patterns that carry more weight than routine
thinking. Still solitude is his house, firmly built,
sturdy, a refuge from cant and the false machinery
of the world. With Hamlet's godlike reason, looking
before and after, he grasps the whole of things.
Someday I will insist we two talk through that pattern.

Daniel Brick

Already Said A Sonnet

What we must say to each other
has already been said. Some of it
tumbled forth when least expected
and found a niche in our open hearts.
Other things lingered at the margins
of our conversations, sending out
delicate tendrils of affection
laced with appeals to our better
natures. And all of this indirection
created a platform of truth for us
from which we each look out into
an uncertain future. It is as if
each of us sheltered the other's fragile
self until our words made us happy and whole.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Autumn Creativity An Ars Poetica

There is a tiredness in this hot
autumn air, a drift toward sleep
even in the daylight. But sleeping
is no solution. Is it the body crying
for healing, or the soul crying for comfort?
Or perhaps both body and soul, severed
from company with the mind, yearn to close
that gap and restore their three-fold unity.

Which cry should I answer first?
Shall I summon dreamless sleep
so that the body may curl into its own
comfort and in deep unconsciousness
regain its strength? Afterwards, I will
occupy that amorphous expanse within
where nocturnal currents fold and unfold
and define the contours of the invisible soul.

Words will pour forth from the mind
and coalesce into incipient poems, taking
place within body and soul, and be shaped
according to the soil of their origins,
those of body filled with the energy
of earth, those of soul imbued with the grace
of heaven. And the mind is the guardian
of this creativity in its three-fold unity.

Daniel Brick

Two Seeds Honoring The 207th Birthday Of Jalal Ad-Din Rumi

I

We were two seeds that fell on propitious ground. You wait in the interior of things, ever patient, quiet, poised, already whole.

If you could speak of this birthing moment, you would tell stories, both happy and sad, but always fragrant and growing larger,

because this time is mortal, it is garden-time, rose-blooming time: nightingales, one after another descend into your presence. They sing of what is near.

It will be like this again for you, but it will seem to be something completely different. Your heart will house the name of Shams.

And your poems will outnumber the stars and they will be just as eternal as the blazing sentinels of the sky dome. But you are ever patient, quiet, poised.

II

My fate will parallel yours. How could it be otherwise? I will lag behind, spend my time in libraries, reading books and writing my comments.

My seed will nestle in rich soil, and send out tendrils of heavenly hopes. They will fan out, becoming gardens in which you sit in the heat of the day.

Yes, I will read your poems, commit them to memory, and recite them in a musical voice as I swirl and twist and leap in the dance of faith.

And I will secretly compose my poems, secretly because they are too shy to be in the presence of the Master, but within me will grow a poet's soul.

In the morning when I am bleary-eyed from lack
of sleep and you are tipsy from too much wine,
we will kneel together in prayer, facing Mekkah.

Daniel Brick

Moon And Music A Letter To Fabrizio

I

Last night, a mild evening in early October,
while listening to Shostakovich's second
Cello Concerto, I became very slowly
aware of two moons. One was the familiar Moon
which looms or dangles or floats in solitary
splendor over my Twin Cities, and splashes
a white carpet across the lawn beneath my balcony.
This must surely be the Moon of My Inspiration
because month after month it presides over
my creation of poems. Let me pause,
as my heart stretches forth
in gratitude for that inspiration...

The other Moon rose invisibly
casting its transparent light
over the Russian's music,
with its alternating eloquence
and sarcasm. The music cast its spell
over Moon and me, and in our characteristic ways,
we were shining in the sheer joy of our lives
under the sway of two kinds of moonlight.
My soul, ever in readiness for such a summons,
joined Music and Moonlight, all three blended
into one being, completely enclosed
in the perfection of the moment, as if time
had harmonized its components into a single frame.
Let me pause again, as my mind stretches forth
in gratitude for this truth...

II

In the early morning light,
I gaze over the leaf-strewn lawn
that was shrouded in moon-white
just four hours ago. I see a skeleton
of branches in the tree to my left,
having already lost half of its leaves.
But to my right another tree still
retains its leaves in their green glory.

A carillon of bird songs dispels the silence
of night, and I breathe inside the health
of both autumn air and autumn music. This is
the Over-Much of beauty that is mine
to give. Take your fill of it, Fabrizio,
and let its mellow harmony seep into your reveries.

Daniel Brick

Two Hearts

The physical heart is everybody's guess and no one is wrong. But that other heart, the one we know only through rumors carried by urgent winds or messages coded in birdsong or by the report of angels.

So ancient is that other heart, we can only know it by indirection. Its deep mystery can only be grasped by those penetrated by love. It is a story whose ending is rewritten by such lovers. It is spirit-stuff and vanishes when it is

situated among human beings whose confused responses justify the hidden place to which the physical heart tries to confine it.

This is our second heart which understands every language on earth but chooses to only speak through feelings. Oh, you lovers,

don't you sense only one heart beating in double time, blending the material and the spiritual in a union so perfect, so transparent we can hardly see it in the glare of ordinary light. Say then, there is one heart whose two halves long

to be whole. Of the spiritual half, you lovers can give us further knowledge of its practice. We hunger for this knowledge: it is the truth of our being, the source of our goodness, what makes us beautiful. We agree to be faithful to its austere discipline. We bow before its glory!

Whatever you have learned from your immersion in the forms of love, spill it, scatter it in our midst, let it become a flood that carries us to a higher plateau or being or drowns us

in this muddy lowland. We must grasp the truth
you lovers know, the truth by which we live or die:

Only those who love unconditionally, only those
who know the true path is illuminated by love,
only those who have sworn to live every moment
in love given and love received, only those
will be redeemed. Look backward to the beginning
of humanity, look forward to its end, witness its fused heart.

Daniel Brick

At The Crossroads An Ars Poetica

I sometimes feel lighter than air.
as if the smallest breeze could lift me
and carry me to a fantastic zone of earth,
and deposit me among alien plants, rivers
winding out of sight, strange souls
in quiet creatures, orange and black finches
tracing melodies of their songs in their flight.
A calm makes me one with unthinking nature.

I no sooner agree to enjoy this forest life
than a hot wind bursts from a stand
of poplars, lifts me above this temperate zone
and sweeps me across a turbulent lake.
I wave my arms, as if they were awakened
wings, so grateful am I to experience flight.
But my gestures halt my flight, and I am
just sitting on my recliner in my living room...

Did something actual or mystical adjust
my consciousness to register the small facts
of my psyche? Or did these interior treasures
seize my attention within on their own initiative?
The engagement in space I call Flight; the engagement
in solitude I call Journey. Each is a mirror to the other.
Through them I stretch my mind to attain some higher state
of being. My psyche rejoices in this Crossroads.

When I descend into my psyche on my journey
into the solitude of Self, I encounter archetypal
energy, whose beings accompany me. With Gilgamesh
I tame the world and impose my will, even the gods
regard me with favor; with Orpheus I sing the Song
of Nature and my accord within it; with Odysseus
I liberate myself from the sloth of Calypso's Island;
with Apollo I defend the truth from those who debase it.

Flight in Space, Journey within Solitude -
These are the Crossroads of the Imagination, from which
my poems arise, gestate and spring forth, like Athena

from the head of Zeus, fully empowered. I will not write an Epic Poem, nor the Poem of My Generation. I am only a foot-soldier in the Conqueror's army, a novice student in Plato's Academy, a Lyric Poet whose heart alone measures his worth, whose voice is an instant in the wind.

Daniel Brick

A Thought In Progress

I puzzle over how two things
become one thing, and wonder
if it is a matter of knowing, or
acting, or some third operation,

perhaps not limited to mind
and body, but a third substance,
neither thought nor flesh, but
composed of both, partaking

of thoughts's resolute possession
of truth, and the insistent grasp
of beauty by flesh. And together
they make a benign heart of goodness.

But wherever can this new heart be
lodged? Can it simply be lodged
next to the physical heart,
find acceptance there and radiate goodness?

Or must it reside in the soul,
nourished by spiritual proximity
and kept apart from polluting contact
with the world and its slippery ways?

Somehow I must be in daily contact
with this single thing which carries
all necessary attributes of Truth, Beauty,
and Goodness. The next puzzle to ponder

is the alchemy of transference. Is it not
time for me to abandon puzzling in solitary
chambers, and enter the Heraclitean river
that changes with every step we take forward?

Daniel Brick

Across The Night Sea: A Sequel To A Barge Mysterious.... By Emmanuel George Cefai

from A BARGE MYSTERIOUS IN THE THICK OF NIGHT

by Emmanuel George Cefai

A barge mysterious in the thick of night
Sailed slowly to the sober shore
Beneath the ramparts of the dreaming fort...
Whence is the barge coming in the night?
Whence did its journey start?
No reply came - and none in that still barge
Appeared to reply or move or breathe:
So horrid thin the stillness of thin barge.

The Old Mariner's Revelation:

Yes, I admit I made promises
to reveal what I know. I hope
I am right that NOW is the time
to fulfill those promises, especially
since the other witnesses are dead or
reduced to mumbling silence. I am pledged
to reveal to your world of duties and
daylight the account of our Night Sea Voyage
to a hidden place of Threshold...

Why did that Mysterious Barge choose
this port for its apparitions? Why did
its ghostly captain leave behind charts
with exact coordinates? Most of all,
what daring possessed twenty-three young men
to hazard such a dangerous journey? I was
the first to feel compelled and convinced
the others to follow my lead. My head was
on fire with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.

We launched our ship from a secret natural
harbor, set sail in the middle of the night
on steady nocturnal currents, followed the path
of a huge cloud of sea fog, only partially
concealing the Mysterious Barge from our fixed gaze.

But suddenly men grew tired, completely worn out, some collapsed where they stood onto the hard deck and curled their bodies into rigid sleep.

Others dozed at their stations, shook themselves awake only to fall into a deeper sleep. Within an hour only four of were awake, and fear crept into our souls when our ship came a halt just a few yards from the stationary barge, no longer covered in fog but lighted in a garish black light that slowly, inexorably covered our ship, too. I cannot speak for the other three, but my fear was dispelled and I felt strangely lifted within my mind. What dispelled my fear? It was the presence of the ghostly captain on our ship. One of my comrades began to shake uncontrollably, the apparition touched his head with his long-fingered hand and the sailor was immediately calmed, even smiling. His voice I heard from some deep recess in my mind, or should I say soul? 'Fear nothing, mortal men. The great war between Heaven and Hell has ended. My comrades and I, once slaves to the Evil Lord, have overthrown him. We have bowed in worship of God before his angel ambassadors. They have pacified Hell and we have surrendered our power to do Evil. You mortals do not understand Eternity and we immortals do not understand Time. How and when the coming cosmic peace occurs, we cannot tell you. Await patiently the arrival of the angel ambassadors to earth, pray and rejoice in your world and we now do in ours. And now you will witness the first of many Ascensions, for the denizens of Hell, your brothers and sisters, whom we seduced into damnation, are being taken to their Purgatorial Ordeal. We are fulfilling our first mission of the Lord God, Creator of All Things Good and True and Beautiful! '

A thousand faces were released at once. They floated slowly upward, gently rolling in a circle as they rose into the sky. Their eyes were shining from some hidden source of light not visible to our mortal eyes. We were transfixed, we stared at them for the duration of their ascent. They looked down on us with compassionate eyes, the tenderest expressions flitting across their features, and I was speechless in wonder that so much love could radiate from human faces. It seemed our vigilant watching was itself part of this ceremony unfolding above us. The last thing we saw were

their eyes, even more strangely illuminated, blinking again and again, as if they could not believe what they were seeing, as if the wonder of it transcended even their exalted state of grace. And then it was over, the vision closed. The nineteen who been asleep awoke, having dreamed what the four of us had witnessed. The Mysterious Barge and its ghostly captain were vanished. And our ship was surging forward with propitious winds and friendly currents. Once again, we were just sailors in a goodly ship, on a vast ocean under the pure light of morning. The twenty-two men started debating what had happened, then they argued without listening to each other, some came to blows. But I remained calm. I knew then Reign of Heaven had just begun, and we now had entered an Eternity that would descend to Earth - in God's good time! All praise to God and his Angels and Saints!

Daniel Brick

Modern Times (In Three Sections)

I

I am often lost. So far, I always find myself,
but someday... Well, someday when I am
walking, further lost in my thoughts,
oblivious to the landscape, I suddenly stop
thinking and look out into the world
spread about me. I look long and hard, but
see no familiar landmark, remember nothing
seen on my passage to this spot, at this time.
People smirk: a stationary man can only be
a lost soul, of no account, a useless man.
There are others like me, standing alone,
obfuscated, astonished, forlorn, but we
do not speak to each other. Humiliation
blocks that impulse. I pretend to be blind
to the world, it is a point of pride: I turn
inward and drop into inactivity. Like a scarecrow
dumped in a shed, a beast chased from its lair,
a citizen who never votes.

Further walking is useless, I won't close
this circle that way. I stand very still,
like the others who were arrested before me,
without gesture or expression. Is this any way to live?

II

My dilemma stems from the behavior of
my house, recent behavior I can neither
explain nor condone. This won't surprise you:
my house, like so many others in these modern
times, wanders the city in search of its ideal
location. It pulls up its foundations, folds
the basement against the first floor, opens wide
all doors and windows, and lumbers down streets,
scattering cars and pedestrians to the side.

I found my house settled in an abandoned
parking lot, now redesignated an Urban Park.

Wayward houses cluster at the far end of these parks, where the terrain is treeless, grassless, flat, worn down. They lack all sense of design or appearance, just plant their foundations in dirt, and let their weight settle them, usually with a marked tilt to one side. Scavengers quickly strip the house of window glass, frames, light fixtures, furniture, carpets. The house doesn't resist, it is happy to be free, and call itself - what else? - h-o-m-e.

III

A compassionate cop found me, turning in circles, dizzy from my circuits around an imagined center, a MODERN TIMES dervish intent on his ritual response. He drove me to an empty lot once occupied by my house with me in it. He shook my hand and wished me luck. 'I've been through this, too, brother, ' he said and drove off. Of course, memories flooded my thoughts, and I stood exposed to autumn showers for two days, oblivious to seasonal change that infected my body and roiled my mind...

But memories could not sustain me, and the oceanic waves of thought subsided into a weary flow. Wet autumn was replaced by dry autumn, and the dust layers rose up and choked the city. Dust is the sign and signifier of the city's slow-motion collapse. Dust is dust, and someday I am dust, and I accept my final fate. But for the present moment, I am flesh and bone, blood and sinew, and I require my human happiness. So here I stand, in an empty lot, alternately soaked by rain or buffeted by dust, starting the dervish dance of a homeless man.

Daniel Brick

The Watcher

Don't worry about me. I'm content
to sit on his hard bench,
beneath this metal awning, on which
occasional raindrops tap a broken rhythm.
I look out into a gray harbor at the edge of
a gray sky. The uniform gray doesn't
disappoint me, because I sense the glow
of an interior light perfectly pitched
for an age in which DESPAIR and HOPE
are entangled in each other's features.
How can we tell if the grimace we saw
this morning belongs to hope or despair?
And that laughter we hear at nightfall,
is that hope playing the fool to entertain us,
or is it despair giving vent to a final tirade
before surrendering to silence? I cannot tell.
But it is my mission to be the one who watches,
and when I learn to untangle these complicated
features, all of us will benefit. Until that
knowledge is mine, I will sit here, night after
night, empowered by the dark, and day after
day, empowered by the light.

Daniel Brick

Blue Angel

O Blue Angel,
you child with wide eyes,
daughter of Mother Night
and Father Darkness,
what marvels you release
night after night
to my awed eyes, whether
I sleep or keep strict vigil.

You carry a Dream Bag,
heavy with hopes and desires,
over the threshold of darkness
into our world of light,
and with knowing hand you reach
and pull forth the dream meant for each of us.
Nothing is closer to my heart than this dream.
My sleep stretches out to contain it.

You sit near me, wide awake
despite the late hour, so keen
are you for my happiness. Your face
arches over my sleeping form, and
pours its lovely peace within me.
This kindness is displayed everywhere
our life takes us, in every turn of fate.
But at night it illuminates life abundantly.

O Blue Angel, forgive my boldness.
Our seers tell us you are the demi-angel
of this blue planet. In hushed voices,
they say you pour your vital energy
into the empty places of our existence,
making them shine with your dark force.
Our seers lead us in nightly prayers:
we praise you, we celebrate you, we thank you.

Have I myself ever thanked you
with sufficient praise? What songs
should I sing, what dances dedicate

to your goodness? Should I embrace you,
or bow before you? Sweet Spirit,
I hardly know you, but I love you. Even if
you abandon me and no longer comfort
my sleep, I will love you still night and day.

Daniel Brick

From Ancient Times

The lakes of our country
are turbulent. They swirl
around and around
their basins, wearing down
the confining banks, turning
the landscape into a wide pool.
Trees, shrubs, topsoil, flowers,
all are sacrificed, and water
claims a barren landscape for itself.

The mountains of our country
are little more than hills.
We call the region the High Country
because we are a proud people.
But the winds of the four directions
unleashed their tremendous breathings
against rock and buried gems.
turned hardness into dust,
scattered it into vast deserts.

The birds of our country
are all of one species, vultures
with famished eyes and claws
sharpened against jagged rocks.
Over the centuries the vultures
consumed the songbirds
in a frenzy of appetite.
And silence descended
over the land, broken only

by the vultures' choked cries
as they scrounge for threads of food.
The people of our country
do penance every morning and evening:
they pray in cracked voices for the return
of the Gods, who once imposed order
on nature. WE are ready to surrender.
Return to us, You Gods. WE beg to be mastered.

Have Mercy

Have mercy on us.

We live piecemeal lives,
assembled out of fragments
we find scattered haphazardly
on the long roads we ceaselessly
wander. Can such incompleteness
ever triumph? Can you make us whole?

Have mercy on us.

We are forever completing
the work of evolution...
By now, we should have wings
and fly freely over many landscapes:
ports of call, homes away from homes,
Eldorados, safe harbors, treasure islands,
green plateaus, fields of the Lord,
lanes redolent with flower aromas
suffused in sunlight, Eden redux.

Have mercy on us.

We have yet to learn how to
to live together. We cannot
stomach each other. We accuse
our other selves of cannibalism,
sloth, idolatry, abominations.
And when we look through a window
at the green world beyond these bars,
we are startled when the window
suddenly becomes a mirror
and we see a face staring at us
twisted with hate, pockmarked
with greed. We can feel our disease.

Have mercy on us.

We meant no harm really,
when hundreds perished beneath the sword,
when thousands went hungry and died
before the new harvest arrived,
when millions were neglected and lived out

their short, brutish, nasty lives...
Oh, this weight of history we must carry,
this burden of hope and despair
that has become a hunchback
lodged in our bodies. We, who once dreamed
of beauty, who once dreamed of pride of being,
we, who...

Have mercy on us.
We are no less worthy
than you are. We just lack
the power to make our wishes
real. Let there be light indeed,
let it shine in all the crevices,
over the murky waters of origin,
into our deepest soul-space, where
yet something may blossom that knows
only the good, the true, the beautiful.

Oh, we demand more than mercy:
Give us a new being, complete,
fully empowered to make of this world
a shining place, a garden, a life everlasting.

Until then... Have mercy on us.

Daniel Brick

Everyday Miracles

It was the kind of accident
people will later say,
'It's a miracle no one was killed.'
But that was not the word in Marsha's
mind, as she drove down an adjacent street.
She heard the screech of brakes,
the sickening crunch of metal on metal,
and, as she turned down that fateful street,
the eerie silence beneath the wail
of two car alarms. She saw not two cars
smashed together, she saw just wreckage
and as she groped for her cell phone,
her mind calmly said a prayer...
She dialed 911. A man was supporting a woman,
his right arm around her body, as they limped
to the curb and collapsed simultaneously.
The operator took Marsha's information. It was
only then she saw the teenage boy with blond hair
looking straight up into the clear sky,
as if he were only a sightseer. The boy tripped
once as he staggered over to the couple, and
the three of them huddled in a dome-like embrace.
Marsha set her cell phone down and prepared
to leave her car. She was determined to be
of service, somehow. A door creaked, and a man
laboriously lifted himself out of the other car.
Was this not the very occasion of service
presenting itself? She recalled later
he was almost bald, he was wearing a torn green
shirt, '-and he was incredibly drunk! '
The drunk collapsed onto the opposite curb.
dropped head into his hands, and sobbed.
He sobbed and wailed with such abandon,
Marsha was afraid to approach him. She went to
the huddled family of three victims. Sirens,
an ambulance, men in white, two squad cars,
two officers with pads and pens and questions -
the rest of this story is routine business,
and routine is never a fit subject for poetry,

right? I prefer to go forward to two summers after this trauma: Marsha and her family are renting a cabin on Clam Lake in Wisconsin. It is early morning, before 6 am, and Marsha is standing alone on the cabin deck, pulling her scarlet robe around her body. The air is cold, but the sunlight is remarkably hot on her face and shoulders. Across the way, another woman stands alone on the cabin deck. She waves energetically, 'Isn't this weather miraculous? ' 'It couldn't be better, ' Marsha shouts back. The smile lodged within her breaks out on her face, a wide, laughing smile, and it lingers, as more sunlight pools around her. The rest of that day is made up of vacation routines.

Daniel Brick

A Daily Joy

For Liza

Half of what I tell you is
unnecessary. So why do I feel
so pressed, so anxious to tell you?
Is there perhaps another invisible
world that penetrates ours, and
leaves behind in our passive minds
things of ultimate importance
in that other dimension? I think
that makes sense, but what do you think?

By the way, what is written in this message,
as you have surely already guessed, is necessary!
It's not life-saving. It offers no immutable
promise. In fact, if shafts of ecstasy should
fall from above and slice through you, and
lift you, body and soul, into some altered state
of being, just ignore all of my blather, and
surrender to that visitant energy. I'll never be
in an elsewhere that has no trace of you!

But if this present moment is spread out
before you like a welcome mat in front of
a dear friend's house, and you feel content,
in body and soul, in anticipation of her talk
and her whimsy, then, of course, consider
this message necessary and worth your time,
because every line of my poem is meant to make
you smile, and to make you smile is my daily joy.
Now, what about my theory about penetrating worlds?

Daniel Brick

Accounts Of Summer,2016

(1)

Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to a lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.

Sonnet 29, Shakespeare

Is it my place to criticize the way
the lark, flying high, sings at dawn,
and render Shakespeare moot?
Is the road open for my journeying
among my peers, or does my path lead
to wilderness? Shall I adopt a foolish
wit to hide my essential caution in humor,
or shall I swell my frame as if in armor
and bluster my way to some absolute power?

Shall I dispose of all this poetic stuff,
call it nonsense, and adopt a prosaic
posture? I could become a reader of popular
novels, the more current the better for me.
Plot will preoccupy my thoughts as never before,
characterization will shrink from its lofty
heights to just a list of names - Dramatis
Personae. And setting, that soil out of which
characters and events flower, will be just places?

(2)

How many creatures who share with us Earth
as home stop and ponder their immediate condition,
rapt into stillness and silence by a thing
of beauty? What other creatures can afford
to sacrifice everything for a moment
of supreme appreciation, a temporary joy
in some eternally renewed beautiful thing?
I sense both naturalist and hunter shake their heads.

Such are my thoughts on an ordinary evening
in midsummer, two days into a heat wave,

after two weeks of hot rains have made
grass and leaf and flower lush and shining
with green brilliance, as if summer's account
were swollen with promises of an extended season.
But who am I but a man among men, assaulted
by grief if I sense how fragile are our fondest joy?

(3)

I am awake early on this first day
of a new season in southern Minnesota.
I am delighted by this greenest air
filtered inside by my unforced breathing.
The male cardinal flies over my reverie
and deposits his song in my heart
the way his female deposits eggs
in their nest and broods over them,

as I brood over the vexed affairs
of humanity. The cardinal pair will hatch
fledglings from their brooding and launch them
into flight. What will my brooding hatch and
nurture? Perhaps it is enough to realize
my actions parallel theirs as the season swells.
At very least we both weave a fabric that will
cover our nakedness in the winter looming ahead.

Daniel Brick

A Few Second Thoughts

How much do we really know
beyond the obvious facts
of living from day to day
and grabbing hold of whatever
delight or distraction pass by?

Oh, how often my grasp slipped
or I stumbled at the last moment,
and I saw what I longed for vanish?
Perhaps my body begins to accept
its aging, and makes a truce with Time.

Or perhaps my heart has grown
weary of carrying the burden
of desire, and seeks rest
over excitement, remembrance
over experience, a simple gift

over a large treasure. There will
still be thresholds to cross,
still be new knowledge to transform
into the stuff of self. The portrait,
despite years of work, is still being painted.

Daniel Brick

Many Are The Paths....

Many are the paths you can choose
but the best one is that which displays
the brightest yellow-green light
in daytime, and the clearest access
to the moon throughout the night
as shadows lengthen in darkness,
then vanish when Light returns as dawn.

Which phase of that path do you
cherish? The daylight one with its cult
of color? Or the night with its primary
palette of grays? Which answers your need
for disguise and openness? I myself love
both light and shade, so how can I choose?
Abandon me to Light or Darkness: I am impartial,

There is a larger force at work here than my will
or my desire. It is a music which harmonizes storm
and calm, joy and sadness, togetherness and solitude.
And it abides in heavenly glory. When it descends
through the ancient spheres into our hearing, it
announces the arrival of the Paraclete, the Spirit
of the whole world, the overflowing fount of Grace.

Daniel Brick

A Promise Fulfilled

I made a promise...
as I stood within the tourists
and families. The plain was wide
and evenly lit by everyone's Sun.
The a cool breeze turned my head,
as two hands held my face, gently, gently.

I made a promise...
in a solitude of my mind.
Sound was reduced to animal scuffings,
frequent laughter, directions given,
birds in their evening concerts. All of it.
ordinary, and all of it a marvel, a marvel.

I made a promise...
I whispered it within the hearing
of immense red rocks being relentlessly
ground into dust by wind, and water,
and sun. They will hold my promise
secret, but not forever.

I made a promise...
A crowd of people was there, the wind
and light were there, perhaps invisible
ones were there, and time was there,
measuring out our lives in gusts of breath.
Then the cool breeze swept by again.

I made a promise...
Your smiling face almost brought
tears to my eyes, but then I recovered
my poise before any of them fell.
And I watched your face, with clear vision,
in all of its permutations over time.

The promise has been fulfilled.
It wasn't as hard as I thought:
over time it became one of my
good habits, and I could concentrate

on other things. And now when I see
your face, it is always smiling.

Daniel Brick

The Love Story Of Orpheus And Eurydice Redux

It was early morning
in the countryside. Sunlight
still moist from dawn
shone along the narrow lane
with fields of tall grass
on both sides. A great snake
lay at the lane's edge,
both cooling itself in the shade
and warming itself in the sunshine.
It loved both sensations. Snakes are
like that: they want everything and
want it now. The great snake lay
within its coils, tensile and alert,
complacent in its eons of immortality.
It was, in fact, the very snake that had
blighted the hopes of Gilgamesh, who
had postponed his immortality so that
he could give the gift of immortality
first to the elders. What strength
of will this primal hero displayed
to serve others before himself!
But you already know this story,
and I see it brings tears to your eyes
and your trembling lips cannot shape words.
It is enough to make an end, and say
King Gilgamesh died surrounded by his wives,
and children, and grandchildren. He died,
comforted in their grief at losing him
forever. And now he sleeps in the dusty
Cavern of the Death, near the friend
he could not save, both heroes reconciled
in the end to the simple equations of mortality.

The great snake prospered, and left behind
its completed lives as brittle skin scorched
by the sun as it slid into a new existence
again and again. Thus it slithered through time,
and found its way to mainland Greece, where
mortals envied its immortality and wondered

if it envied their glorious speech and language.

Was it fate or chance that put
Eurydice on that lane on the morning
after her first night of love
with her husband, Orpheus? Was it necessary
to fulfill some fate of stars or gods
that she should walk alone and barefoot
along that snake-sheltering lane? But
she did not simply walk, instead she danced
the joy of her heart and the sunlight itself,
the breezes and swaying grass and flowers
joined in her graceful measures with their
own gracious movements. And at that very moment,
Orpheus finished the melodies of a new song
he played on his lyre with complete mastery
enveloped in the rapt presence of animals and birds.
And so husband and wife, though separated by space,
joined their arts to celebrate a common purpose,
praising their love, giving thanks to Aphrodite.

Eurydice danced with abandon, raising her legs
high, then stamping her feet on the hard
ground. Oh, what joy surged through her lithe
body! And the energy of her dance startled the snake.
Great as he was, he feared it might be some armored hero
stamping the ground and waving his six-foot spear.
It quickly uncoiled itself and slid into the tall grass.
Little had Eurydice known of her danger, and even less
that she had rescued herself just by being a woman in love.

On a grassy knoll at the top of a low hill,
Orpheus hunched over his lyre, testing words
for his new melodies. He strummed the lyre
releasing those new sounds into the rapt hearing
of animals and birds clustered around him. They were
his faithful companions but they scattered as Eurydice
approached. 'My darling, ' he smiled up at her shining
face, 'listen to the words I set to music for you.'
Eurydice said softly, 'Oh, beloved husband, dear friend
of my heart, we don't need words.' And she leaned
toward him in a smiling silence. For a moment,

Orpheus was puzzled, then he understood. The lyre slipped to the soft grass and nestled. He leaned forward too, and they fell into each other's waiting arms. Above them a carillon of birds serenaded them with the wordless music of Nature and Love.

Daniel Brick

Sharon's First Thoughts

Sharon awoke Tuesday
to the promise of music.
She heard that maverick bird
singing fervently before

the rest of his tribe
awoke. It wasn't a loud voice,
but it sliced her sleep open
and let the radiance fill her.

She was happy for this early
beginning of another day of grace.
She crossed herself twice,
once out of fear, once out of joy.

By the time she had washed her face
and combed her hair, the carillon
of song-birds filled the air
with a promised fulfilled.

What joy! she enthused. Music
and Light, animal and human,
morning and delight - all coalesced
into a happiness she inhabited

as if it were a house made of
spirit-stuff, a forever home
to all creatures whose patient
steadfast energy built the world.

{Sharon's Morning Song}
Admit the morning into your
consciousness, watch it expand.
Greet the first light of day
with your earliest energy.

Let outer light merge
with inner light - Oh, let it be!
and form a nimbus enveloping

my whole being in radiance.

Never doubt this shower
will cleanse my soul of lingering
darkness, and dispel the stubborn
heaviness of night. I will be

the fleet and sudden day-treader!

Daniel Brick

Utopia Is Everywhere Today!

A citizen confides to his Doctor:

A demon inhabits my space: his clawed feet
jab my back, his arms encircle my neck
and choke me for hours each day. Very often,
he presses my eyelids tightly shut,
and whispers hoarsely in my left ear,
'You'll never see colors again.'

Can you help me, Doctor? Can you restore
me to the standards of the community?

Doctor's note: Patient's inner life out of control.

A citizen confides to his private journal:

The judge in my case was merciful, but
only partially merciful. He reduced the fine
for my embezzlement scheme, and did not
completely drain my credit account. 'Your children
are my primary concern, they must not suffer
for the father's crime. I will not preside over
their loss of food and shelter. You will not
be jailed. Pay your fine immediately. Dismissed! '
Of course, the judge is wealthy and I am poor.

A citizen reports to the Academic Supervisory Board:
Agents from Control Central extol learning. Unfailingly,
they guide us to that single book which will answer
our questions, or, at very least, will ease our doubts,
or, even more basically, dispel that restlessness
of mind that clouds our judgment and complicates
obedience. The agents remind us that no learning,
however alluring to our dazzled and dazed minds,
should be permitted to interfere with that mental
emptiness necessary for a good night's sleep.

A citizen shares what he knows to be essential
to the Good Life with his seven children:

'Sleep is sweet, ' intones the Rally Master.

'But chanting our beliefs, all of us reciting
from the same page, is sweeter.' And then he pauses,
in the center of a hub where eight streets angle

into that hub, so that no action is occluded in shadows, but every act, even the tiniest gesture, is perfectly obvious. And then, dear children, your will chant for hours until everyone is ONE.

The Rally confirms the public will at the center of our system. People arrive at their respective hubs keen to begin the chanting. Families blend their members together, elderly are guided to benches, babies receive pampering from volunteers. Adolescents, acutely aware their brains are on fire with gender changes, sigh in relief as the chanting eases their inner turmoil. Oh, that blessed state of mental emptiness will soon spread through the hub and fully possess each citizen, regardless of age, gender, employment, obedience status.

Two speakers are always scheduled, of course, one before the chanting, the other after. This is the inherited wisdom of our community: the first speaker empties our minds, the second one seals that emptiness. Dear children, a wise man, Kenneth Boulding, said many decades ago, 'Once humanity wises up, we can only hope it never dumbs down.' Oh, yes, you laugh because it sounds funny. Go ahead, laugh, because we have achieved perfection in our time, and we know with full confidence, Utopia Is Everywhere Today!

Daniel Brick

Garden Tryst

We will arrive in our Garden
at the same moment, as the leaves
are soaking up the food of light
and waving their health into the air

we eagerly breathe. It will make us
hasten our steps, even break
into a run to close the gap
between us, before darkness claims

its rule over the colors and aromas
of the folding flowers. Is that aroma
I sense as I cross the the Garden's edge
a lilac bush spreading its purple scent?

No, it is the sweetness of your being
carried on a barely moving current
that twists around me, and I feel
your presence everywhere, and in everything.

A solitary bird perches high above us
in a maple trees, whose branches are
fiery with the red glow of evening.
He sings his song within only our hearing.
The rest of the night belongs to us.

(This poem was inspired by a gorgeous poem
by Konstantin Balmont describing a garden
at twilight. It has been translated by
Liza Sud.)

Daniel Brick

Your True Love

Love is a beacon, very far away
from my present state but shining
with such brilliance that I can only
be a believer in love's power to make
everything else share in its beauty.
And when you and I are in love, as I hope
we will be, that beacon light will shine within us.
The warmth of that light has not yet
reached us in all of its fullness.

My light spills out from the deep
interior of my being, and joins itself
to yours, and in that double radiance
we have the full measure of our humanity.
These words, I know very well, echo
those of countless poets and lovers
before me, and the words we speak today
in just each other's hearing will be
the inspired speech of future poets and lovers.

The love that excites two people
to speak with an eloquence neither
could command before will prove
to be a lasting bond between them.
I see every trace of beauty in your face
and form as you see in my body. And you
marvel at the wise things I casually say
as I do in your everyday speech. It is
simply our destiny to be in awe of each
other for every possible good we share.

Your goodness is a morning mist
carried on the gentlest breeze that
freshens everything it touches.
Your goodness is a ray of light that penetrates
the dark mood of those whose loneliness
is a lingering night with no dawn in sight.
Your goodness is a gentle rain that falls
almost imperceptibly over brittle grass

and restores the whole field to its green glory.

You see, my dear, in giving me what
I most desire - Your True Love -
you have also made me, once just a common
man, the most generous man alive.
I want my happiness to arise
in all the others, I want
this dizzy happiness to infect
all those who languish or rejoice
so that everyone feels Joy, Joy, Joy!

Daniel Brick

The Air We Breathe

The air is so clear and pure
on summer mornings I feel doubly
blessed in its presence as if
there were another force, equally
invisible, moving in perfect balance,
like an apprentice air learning
this daily passage through the wide world.

Two layers of air mirroring
each other cleanse the world
in tandem and in their seasonal
parallel of perfection we, dependent
on the air we breathe, find our lives
enriched by the doubleness of air.
Oh, simply praise this divine abundance!

As I walk along the twisting path
across Salem Hill Park, I feel
strengthened by my awareness
of the doubled force of air.
It is a worthy pastime to learn
how nature works just by being alert:
That knowledge raises our eyes to Heaven!

Daniel Brick

Acting Medea

If you take on the role of Medea,
you will need a safe place for
recovery after the stress of
performance. You have read the text
of Euripides many times to prepare
yourself, and Cicero, that triumph
of a human being, who was reading
Medea when he was murdered, has already
sheltered you in his eternal integrity.
You require little more to achieve
your triumph on stage...

And in a deep recess of your psyche
there is a region with fountains
cascading over silver streams,
with flower-covered plateaus embedded
in white granite, with a unique species
of BIRD OF PARADISE who nurtures
her new-born in a floating nest, defying
gravity and making flight a leisure pastime.
Your soul will be refreshed in this region,
while you perform night after night this drama
of the mismatch of female and male energies.

And you will protected from the despair
of admitting such a character into your being
by two angels, neither female nor male, who
transcend the human dichotomy of sex, and
whose perfect rapport shall be evermore
the model for lovers and friends and siblings
of both genders of our divided nature.

Daniel Brick

You As Andromeda, Myself Nearby

How about Andromeda? Would you be willing to do a stint as the Princess of a distant Kingdom, rough, untamed, but magical in the gorgeous array of its Court? Expect to be breathless after your first rehearsal: the role will take you to the center of your identity as a woman, every possible encounter between you and the world will occur. You will be the obedient daughter of her parents' need; you will be the gracious friend, alternately blessed and cursed by your inevitable beauty; your goodness will be celebrated, but it will summon forth a monster of surpassing vulgarity and you will find in your psyche an excess of strength to halt its course of evil. But - that Victory will require The Other, for whom you will not realize until his breath touches your cheek you are longing... After you, dear Princess, this man, who may have once been a god, is the best the world can offer. On long winter nights, he will make you laugh in the warmth of his company, and on summer nights, he will spread the spell of the fabled Green Man over all who linger in the perfumed air.

This is all MYTH. It is the deepest truth we can grasp in our brief lives. You must understand by now, the time of rehearsals has given way to the time of these encounters. This is no test, it is Fate, your Fate but also the world's Fate. Some encounters occur as the sun arches over you and animates every cell of your body, every joy in your heart, every good deed of your spirit. Others will occur in the night world of Shadows in your sleep. Realities and Dreams will be continually exchanging places in the drama of this life you have assumed. I am always nearby, your witness and your guardian. My joy expands in your service.

As A Sister

Suzanne awoke abruptly, gripping
the sheet with both hands to steady
her nerves. What nocturnal apparition
had so shaken her sleeping self?
The night surged around her, offering
no comfort. Oh, how she wished to sink
headlong into the rhythms of sleep, and
not awake until morning light covered
everything with its gentle radiance.

Suzanne was trapped in a cul de sac
between the lure of night and the weight
of day. The clock told her the harsh truth:
four hours until the earliest light,
four hours before the carillon of birds signaled
a fresh turn of time, four hours restlessly
mocking lost sleep... Suzanne recited
a passage by Denise Levertov, more prayer
than poem, and lay back in readiness.

Then sleep rose invisibly from its place
of being, and quickly descended on Suzanne.
All her thoughts and worries, her desires and
fears, her appetites and dreams, sleep rolled
together and dropped deep, deep, far deeper
than the chamber of rest into which it placed her.
And Suzanne slept without effort the rest
of the night. Sleep slowly withdrew to answer
the summons of others in need...

* * * *

In a large grassy field adjacent to her apartment,
Suzanne stood amid the aromas and colors of
wild flowers, at a comfortable distance from others.
The slanting light of mid-morning made everything shine!
Suzanne watched the bustle of people, rushing, racing.
She turned to face a wall of foliage, and joined
the trees and shrubs, the small animals and the birds

in inhaling and exhaling the green air. She was content:
in her heart she knew the earth loved her as a sister.

Daniel Brick

End Of The Sagas: A Hero Beyond Measure

At the center of his psyche
a horse's head fills completely
the place of consciousness.
Its mouth is stretched open, halfway
through a thunderous NEIGH!
its eyes colored bright red from the fire
in its brain, and its mane tossed
in a wind swept by the rhythm
of its beating legs. Flames shoot forth
from the horse's throat or from its mind -
I cannot tell. I only witness.

There are so many things I cannot
speak about my master. I play perform
a traditional role, that of the hero's companion
and chronicler. I am qualified because
I have stood on the same ground at the same time
and breathed the same fresh or fetid air as he did
for these twenty years. Whether I saw the same
reality of experience and the same sequence of events,
whether I suffered the same wounds in service of
our tribe - that I cannot judge. It is for our people
to judge. But, you, Lords of Estate, listen to me now.

I know, dread Lords, what you say against me:
'Vassal, you describe in your accounts not the hero
of our sagas in the honored past. You present
a man, a mere man, a slow deliberative man.
Vassal, you give us a reduced figure, not the hero
of the tales and adventures we know in our hearts'
hold, in our minds filled from childhood with our tribe's
glory, in the chanting of our poets at night-long feasts.'
It is right that you, Lords of high renown, appeal to
hearts and minds. But it was I, vassal, subaltern, foot-soldier,
who have preserved his heroism in the sagas for the ages.

It was my heart that bled for him in those last adventures.
It was my mind that shaped the character of those
last chronicles. It was my action that fulfilled those

last tasks, when the weight of WYRD doomed him. I exchanged places with him, myself the warrior in fierce combat, he doing what he could sheltered under my shield. But he rallied as only the greatest of warriors can rally: in the final months his sword was always covered in our enemies' blood! I saw his eyes glittering with wild joy, even when death claimed its hollow victory against his body. I saw the sinews of his heart burst from excess of his will.

And when he could no longer be himself, no longer be a hero or a villain, no longer a warrior or a murderer, no longer a lover or a rapist, when he could no longer choose between the righteous role and the wicked role, when he was no longer the Name within the Man, when he was just a standing shroud awaiting burial, but still possessed of martial glory, I led him to his final field of battle, at dawn on a mist-covered hill above the enemy host. I roped him to a rowan tree, placed his sword, ENDURABLE, in his grip, and stood with him as the sun burned away the mist, and his enemies trudged up the hillside, rank on rank. At his command, I withdrew. Words were not spoken, tears were not shed. I left him.

I withdrew to a safe distance, in a stand of poplars. I pressed my body against the hard ground and forced myself to listen to the last hours of his life. He roared and bellowed against WYRD, against the cowardly gods and helpless goddesses, against the light of day bleeding away to nightfall. But never did he curse his enemies. He challenged them to come within the compass of his sword. And come they did, rank after rank, all eager for the glory of killing him, oblivious of the certainty of death. Theirs and his. Such is the working through of WYRD. I heard the terrible slash of sword against flesh, moans of the dying, tumbling of the dead. Then I heard his Death Chant. The end was upon him.

A silence fell across the land, just as the sun's orb vanished behind the treeline. Nothing could penetrate that heavy silence, not even the cheers of his enemies. They pounded their shields with swords to no avail. The earth was not listening to them. The sky was dark with roiling clouds, cut across with red gold shafts. I saw his spirit mounting cloud after cloud, scaling the sky as if born to that realm. He mounted higher than any god, and kept ascending ever higher. In the deepening darkness, he was a torch, a flame, then just a point of light, shining

with intense brightness. Then even that disappeared behind the clouds.
And ever since we have struggled to live lives worthy of his memory.

Daniel Brick

The Mirror

... the heart of my Mystery.
Hamlet

I look at my reflection
in a mirror, and wonder,
Have I really known him
all my life? When he gestures,
he looks as if he could be me,
a little while from now, when
things die down and assume
their natural monotony.
I hope he realizes
he has to gain my trust
just like everyone I see.
He is no exception, he
will not be privileged.

Once we have built up
a wall of trust, we can
follow a different set of things,
so like the first set
but utterly different too.
You may be confused
by my rigorous reasoning
but once you grasp
my meaning, you'll be grateful.
The time is out of joint,
as Hamlet put it. We must
act, and think accordingly.
I am the agonized witness
to this time, and so are you
who occupy the mirror
as I occupy space
on the other side. You stare as fixedly
at our ruined world as I do. Our dual gaze
doubles our awareness. You and I
are reassured by this. Agreed?
I take your silence as consent...
Already I feel a bond of trust

is growing stronger between us.
Have I not switched my address from the third person
to second person? And when the words your lips
silently shape are those that tumble
into my speech! If this rapport
continues to grow, we will build
not only trust between us
but a true friendship...
Is this something you would like?

Daniel Brick

Night Journey

To Joseph Brodsky, for the Light he brought
and
To Elizaveta, for the Light she brings

I spent the whole night searching
for you within the four walls of Sleep.
I was able to push against one of those
burnished ebony walls, and my body
gently floated above the bottomless floor
of Sleep. Although my eyes were closed,
I saw clearly every object clinging to its own
corridor of nightspace, fearful all the time
that pieces of daylight would loosen its grip
and it would fall and fall down the vast vertical
length of night...

I searched the eight chambers of Sleep, avoiding
only the fourth because I was warned. In two chambers
I sensed your recent presence: there was a trace
of the color YELLOW in the still air of the second chamber,
and I caught just the closing measure of Walter's PRIZE SONG
piercing the racket of the third. Despite the awesome sobriety
of this realm of darkness, those colors and sounds intoxicated me.
My resolve was as tight as a stretched bow, and the arrow
of expectation was released. It showed me my path
to the fifth chamber. No longer able to float freely, my eyes
now opened to the ambiguous motions of night air,
I climbed the high plateau of this fifth chamber. It was
an exhausted man who reached the top. Had you been there -
How I strained my sight to catch a glimpse of you! - you
would have seen a weary, sweating, hunched figure,
animated only by desire. But you were not there,
and I perceived not the slightest trace of you to reward
my climb. If this was a message to me to abandon my quest,
to give up my desire as a sweet cheat - The greatest effort
achieving the least result - I scoff at those malign creatures
who trick us for their sport. (My heart is a harbor for desire.)
I slid down the opposite slope into the sloshy ground
between chambers six and seven. In the turgid air,
I saw our spiritual rival MELATRON. Even in his disgrace,

his beauty of form and features is startling. He knows me well enough, as he knows you and all the others who labor out of desire and hope. But he pretends to know nothing of our virtue, and acknowledges only those who stoop to beg for his unholy help. Your image held fast in my heart, and I left him in his regal solitude. I arrived at the hinterlands of the eighth chamber and witnessed a dire sight: a burning lake or river sent columns of fire into a blank sky, sucking up all breathable air. I knew my journey was over, my quest for you once again frustrated... But do not be sad for me: every step I take brings me closer to you, and in time you too will take a night journey towards me. We may, on one of those nights which stretch before us without end, cross paths in a paroxysm of joy!

Daniel Brick

The Procession

INORI: Adorations for Two Soloists and Large Orchestra
by Karlheinz Stockhausen

Is there a threshold you and I
can cross to enter the soul-silence
deep within the music of INORI?
Or does my saying this open a doorway
where moments before was a wall?

I have a burden of questions, a tangle
of anxieties I bear in my being
like the bones jostling my flesh.
And then there is the blood, so misunderstood
over the centuries. Must it really be shed?

Some claim there are angels among us
who account for the good will we encounter.
Others are skeptical but hopeful. But I?
I reach out to you, but my hands
flutter helplessly in empty air.

I see our whole procession as with
disembodied sight: you and I and all these
adorants walk slowly, heads bowed
or heads raised. There is little difference
between the two postures. The music reassures us.

Those who bow their heads in humility
are saying, I know I am not alone,
there is one who counts every breath I take.
Those who raise their heads in elation
are saying, You are near, Companion of my Fate.

I first heard INORI in dark winter, I was
the sole prisoner in a prison of my own making.
But the music was my reprieve. The second time
has been the rest of my life, as the music
loops and spirals, playing without end.

Our procession loops and spiral, too.
We were all born of the same father
but our mothers vary. We talk at length
about the mother's milk that made
us different, and then pray to the father,

who makes us one. In the music someone
shouts, HU, and that fulfills
our deep listening. We know what
we know because before us looms the Threshold...
When I stretch out my hand, your hand clasps mine.

Daniel Brick

The Ancient Greek Philosopher

I imagine an aged Greek slave, serving
a Roman master with slavish flattery.
I imagine him broken in body but vibrant
in mind. He spends hours each day
several spheres above all the others.
His sight turned inward, he withdraws
from daily light to seek light's origin
in dark webs of the mind. He penetrates
things other despair of understanding.
From the world he expected nothing:
he was speechless when the King paid
the ransom of his freedom, and installed
him a country villa. A free man, he teaches
young men to be in bondage only to Truth and Goodness.

Daniel Brick



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Another Poetry

I

The lyric poet ponders:
There is another poetry
in which the clash of arms
stands for a life of sacrifice
and higher purpose. How that
clamor excites a sedentary soul
like mine! Men in those poems
give names to their swords, but
never call a slave by name.
They scoff at lesser men
whose delight is peace, restlessly
enduring the hours they cannot
pursue glory. And time is their
greatest enemy: it has planned
the perfect ambush of their hopes.
They smash each other's heads
in tournaments to silence the laughter
of time. They limp from their fields
of endeavor, angry at their bodies
which need rest and gentle nursing.

II

The epic poet remembers:
There is another poetry
I learned under Master Anselm's
gentle sway, and then abandoned.
He taught me the names of flowers
and streams, made me touch rough oak
and soft poplar, showed me how
dawnlight and dusk differ. He guided
my listening to larks and orioles
and to the sweet cadence of a young
woman's voice. As he lay dying,
completely composed, he whispered,
'All these things are yours only
if you share them with people
starved for beauty. Never hoard
beauty as your own. Do not fear

the passage of time, for it always
brings new gifts and laughs
when we are limp, overwhelmed with wonder.'

Daniel Brick

A Personal Vision

We have lost the cosmos. The sun strengthens us no more, neither does the moon... Now we have to get back the cosmos, and it can't be done by a trick. The great range of responses that have fallen dead in us have to come to life again.

from APOCALYPSE by D. H. Lawrence

The time, we say, is ripe...
and we see that ripeness everywhere:
the fruit filled with juice, a day
approaching its apogee, a storm
threatening coastal cities, a star
aging toward implosion. So the moment
arrives and what cannot be postponed,
occurs. I suppose trying to ignore
this moment is futile, and diminishing
its importance is beyond my ability, but
to simply wait as this future moment
and its convulsive beauty looms before me
and an invisible clock closes the distance
between myself and its arrival is unbearable,
which is to say, it is inhuman.

I am only a single voice, but that
in itself is more than one. Each time
I speak I lodge that voice into the mesh
of things. It cannot be ignored
by other beings, or other things. So -
when the fruit falls, when day darkens into night,
when the storm is averted, when a star is
reduced to star-dust, time fulfills its
mission, and I record time's precise and
thorough action. Time loses its mystery
for me in such fateful moments: it becomes
just another blind force in a universe that
worships force. Oh, when will one of
the higher beings descend to intervene
and impose a peaceful poise in our world?

Imagine a universe of stillness:
when time collapses into eternity, change
stops wearing new masks to hide the monotony
of its endless cycle of the same events
year after year, when Good detaches Evil
from its nature, and presides over
the withering of its deflated being.
And the Sun and the Moon shower us with
spiritual light in all our times. And
the prophecies of the END TIME will be
fulfilled without the violence our seers
could not reason past. Instead of destruction,
there will be something like a whisper
rushing through the space of our new existence,
confiding in our hearts, Fear not. Be at peace.

Daniel Brick

Questions Before Sleep

Should I insert myself into your story?
Stephane Mallarme

I wonder, should I insert myself
into your story? Should I look for
an opening big enough for me
to slip through, but not big enough
for you to notice? This already has
the appearance of a plan, even of
a *fait accompli*? But, no! I am still
in the field of the imagination,
where flowers, streams and warmth
will distract me from intruding.
Instead I will listen hard to the speech
of your hands, your eyes, your subdued
motions. These aspects speak without
speech. If only they are prompt, for
I am like a lonely soul in an empty house,
beseiged by winds, hail and blinding lightning.

Should I return to myself, examine my desires
instead of indulging in these dreams of you?
Who are you really whose presence disturbs me
whether I wake or sleep? To whom do I appeal?
To one of flesh and blood existence, like mine?
Or to the figure of my Muse? Or to a character
in literature my imagination has animated
with stirring liveliness? Whatever you are,
are you a fixture in my life, or are you just
a transient ghost who mimics what I love?
If you are angry, I withdraw; if you are pleased,
I am bold. Do I have this right? Will you signal
the right path for me to follow? If it is an outdoor
labyrinth, will you be waiting at the center?
Will you protect me from harm, if it - ?

Can we reverse our roles? Can I be the one
who summons, who makes an alien neighborhood
as welcoming as home? Does the depth of silence

between us mean the roles will never be exchanged?
Will I always be waiting to fight a battle
with cowardly followers? Will even my enemy's
surrender leave me confused? Will the crown
slip from my head and sink into the mud? Will such
ever be my share of fate? But I perceive you in glory:
I trust the moonlight, in which you stand poised
and smiling. I have faith in the daylight covering
you in gorgeous colors. I look through your eyes
and see a green world shining toward its future.
I listen to a strange cosmic music with your ears
and I am attuned to an everlasting harmony. Questions
cease, and a single answer waits to enter my sleep.

Daniel Brick

Act Four....

It's been a remarkable week for the Tall Oak Acting Company, in residence at Meredith Archer Theater. My wife convinced me to attend a Big Hit in its final performances, a romantic comedy called PENELOPE WAITS. The main character, played by the talented Cecile Arrons, is a young woman named Penelope Waits, who is lovely, smart, gracious and ALONE. She simply can't find a man worthy of her fidelity. This was my wife's third time to see this play: it speaks to her. But something happened the night we saw it that changed everything ordinary and, well, routine. A few minutes into the second act, a man in his middle thirties left his seat and leaped onto the stage, and started to improvise dialogue with half a dozen actors. It was more than boldness on his part. He knew the play and the cast. He folded himself into the fabric of the play, immediately adding another character. He was so smooth, so eloquent, the audience cheered him on. He turned and bowed briefly, which set off another round of applause. The actors now were improvising too, and it was the Joy of the Theater felt in everyone! Of course, the man did not steal the whole show, but he did steal the leading lady. In a sudden confusion of play and real world, she was visibly enchanted by him. I wasn't not alone in thinking either Penelope or Cecile would have to wait no longer! And then the leading actor, a Hollywood star on loan to the theater, so to speak, reached out and drew forward one of the female extras. They embraced and kissed. The audience roared in delight at this revelation of true love. My wife was beside herself with joy: She

hugged me tightly, and her eyes were shining. Three actors and an intruder had abandoned their scripted roles, and were improvising real life on a stage of artifice...

Suddenly, the playwright, the ever popular Herbert Rossman appeared from the wings, and silently acknowledged the new drama with a broad sweep of his right hand.

Then he took a copy of the script, which he cut in half with a scissors, and kicked both halves out of sight. He embraced both couples, waved to the audience and disappeared as quickly as he had appeared. Cecile and her new leading man started a witty conversation and other actors joined in clearly delighted with their success.

The lights blinked twice to announce the appearance of the producer, Henry Cole. In his loud, resonant voice (he had been a Shakespearean actor) he declare, OUR REVELS NOW ARE ENDED! A huge sigh was emitted by the audience which crescendoed into cheers of satisfaction. Henry Cole looked bewildered for a moment, then he smiled broadly and said, 'Okay, then, Act Four, anyone? '

Daniel Brick

Two Leaves An Autumn Poem

Once that first leaf
gently detaches itself
from tree and branch,
and falls, with a slight
hesitating twirl,
to a perfect stillness
on the ground, and
once that happens
the rest can happen,
and the season swells.

The second leaf
drifts on a wing of wind
and twists in flight
to land on a racing
stream. Its adventures
on the water begun,
it quickly abandons
its parent tree and
sibling leaves, content
to lie still on the land.

Daniel Brick

The Master Speaker

Inspired by MYSTIC! THE HAND OF GOD!

by Liza Sud

The Master Speaker has lived with this poem
he has chosen, threaded it into the fabric
of his daily life. He even placed it
in a deep niche of his cavernous memory.
All that was Preparation... Now -
he is ready, fully empowered as Neruda
put it, to speak the poem outloud,
into the hearing of our needful selves.
He raises his voice like a gold chalice,
filled with dense wine, and splashes words
into the closest intimate space we share.
We, his rapt listeners, will soon add
the Poet's Vision to our own. He begins:
'Mystic! The Hand of God! /We are ruled from above.... '

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Among The Shadows

Have you considered amassing
SHADOWS, grabbing them
as they float slowly through the night,
stuffing them in bushels or baskets
you carry on your nocturnal walks?
No one else is doing this. Some accidentally
snag a shadow and release it
in their homes. All done in ignorance.
But for you and me no ignorance
interferes with purpose. We are alike
in our mission. Am I wrong to assert
we know each other, pure and simple,
no need to elaborate before joining fortunes?

It's agreed: we will walk together. Shadows
are born in twilight air. Meet me at the moment
the owl's outline fades into that twilight
and its hootings parallel the deepening darkness.
Street lights cast their garish brightness
into the corridors of night. We will leave
such ordinary light behind us and plunge
into darkness, like divers dropping into
the depths which summon them. They know
the dangers but cannot resist the thrills.
Are we not like that - proud of our daring?
We are joined and pledged. The darkness envelops
us, growing denser as we advance further into night.

We have left behind the adolescents racing
their bikes, the older women doing embroidery,
the young men confused by the attentions
of the young women, the old men, tapping canes
on hard ground, exercise their sore limbs.
All of them have withdrawn into an inner daylight,
while we seek immersion in the real darkness.
We will quickly blend into a mode of things
that has endured for eons without the presence
of light. Already our outlines waver, then break
apart. We have been swallowed into the realm

of shadows. Silence envelops us in its spell.
Silence pulls us out of ourselves as we walk in wonder.

The shadows offer no resistance to our bodies
slicing through their empty forms. Their pure
thoughts penetrate our brains and take up residence
along with our native thoughts. So united, shadows
and selves become an amorphous whole. How long
will we remain poised in this strange union?

Time is suspended, space occurs elsewhere.

Here and now we are translated into pure spirits
meeting purer spirits on common ground. This is
the place from Lord Odysseus fled in fear. We feel
no fear as we pass row after row of shadows,
who bow as we pass them, so surprised we acknowledge
them. The night shifts, and we all plunge into a deeper being.

Daniel Brick

Robert Bly: An Appreciation

There are no limits to grief. The loving man
Simmers his porcupine stew. Among the tim-
ber growing on earth grief finds roots
from 'Limits'

Robert, I still attend your sessions
with words and masks, shapes and
sounds and even invisible things,
that sometimes threaten to bring down
the house we're in. Not that anything
really collapses. You're not Samson,
you're a man among men and women,
whose baritone voice and telling gestures
separate us from our usual comforts,
make us squirm and wonder, 'Is he still
talking about that same subject
from last year, and the year before,
and the time, remember it? when we watched
the last glacier passing through our
surprised neighborhoods.' Well, that was really
something to write about, so how much longer
will you speak of grief as the flip side of joy,
like a precious coin, newly minted, reproduced
a thousandfold? Where do you find the resources
of this grief/joy? At your other home, on the far side
of the River? Where you live with badgers, deer,
a great horned owl, unfettered horses, stray dogs,
even a lone wolf, and what is that dark creature
sunning itself on your porch? I can't make out
its shape, my eyes won't focus, but it surely
looks at home despite its wild array. Robert,
when will you stop surprising us? When will you
settle into a routine and write a Poem of
Total Realization, one with steady light, no less?
Does that entice you? I saw your writing tools
on a table in the Great Hall of the Poetry Building.
A pen was spilling blue ink profusely over a pile
of pure white pages, a PC was furiously revising
new poems, even an old typewriter was busy

devising rhyme schemes. Robert, rhyme schemes!
That's a young man's gambit, isn't it?
I'm really confused now, because there's no way
to close the book. It keeps expanding, some readers
think it has burst into spontaneous life, a life
of its own. Imagine that. I can't but I can remember,
with my chronicler's vivid memory, first meeting
you fifty years ago when you hosted the Poets against the War
at St. Cloud State University. A young exchange student
from South Vietnam was in the audience, and when you finished reciting, he
came to the podium and recited one of his poems,
imitating your vocal inflections with pitch-perfect
intonation. It was very moving... I don't remember
what his poem said, but that doesn't matter, because
even five decades later that memory brings tears
to my eyes. And I know nothing I say or do
can convey my THANK YOU, ROBERT! with the eloquence of his
voice echoing yours. Is that finally my experience of grief?
Can I flip this coin over and handy-dandy feel joy?
Oh, yes, and I will toss the coin into the air.
When it lands and I see which side faces me,
I will know you have been right since forever.

Daniel Brick

An Appreciation For Elizaveta

My view of the World, that spinning blue globe,
that mass of six billion others, my view of it
has changed because of knowing you. Now I live
a Doubled Life. You know that first life,
the one we've both endured for decades:
it consists of the dull facts of time
which every moment go t-i-c-k, t-i-c-k, t-i-c-k.
The speed of that time is so relative,
as we rush through our joys and are
stalled in our griefs. In-between we loiter,
waiting expectantly for the next upset
to routine... So I gladly turn to the other
side of the Doubled Life, the side enriched
by our meeting, that partakes of those Luminous Moments,
we both love in Pushkin's poems. And the wonder
of this year resides in a brightness of being
I did not foresee that you shed over me,
awakening with your Light what had dimmed
to near darkness in my Soul. I examine each familiar
object and see it freshly suffused in radiance.
Together, despite being far apart, we witnessed
winter survival give way to spring frivolity,
and an angel was born from the confluence
of our joys. She races across the sky-realm,
and leaves signals in the skies above us
to guide our swift thoughts into each other's
heart. And I have reliable information: this is
only the first miracle! Others will follow
disrupting the rut of time. Oh, rejoice, my friend!
Look there in the sky above your ordinary endeavors:
another angel is tracing her flight
across the arc of space. She is scattering blessings
which will fall to earth like the gentlest rain.
I know this because she has already blessed my city,
and now she fulfills my fondest wish by showering
your St. Petersburg with all good things.

Daniel Brick

Two Flights

A partially dimmed sunlight
flows through the open window
and spreads across the desk
where I labor over THE BOOK OF THE SUN
by Marsilio Ficino, whose subtle
orphanic thought finds welcome
residence in my mind. Outside
a lone woodpecker pounds
the hard bark of his occasional
home. I imagine him totally engaged,
never weighing advantage against
disadvantage, feeling neither stress
nor joy. He simply acts
in his natural way, simply inhabits
a circle of activity defined by
the same sun which summoned him
from sleep... When silence ensues,
I suppose he has departed
for another tree, and I turn
the page and enter the last stage
of Marsilio's argument. His words
have coalesced in my mind to a fulfillment
of thought. Is this not the benign result
of my labors? The earlier presage
of rain will soon be realized.
An early darkness will descend
on this June day. I am ready
for whatever degree of darkness
will shroud me: having both Marsilio's
thought and the bird's industry
residing in my mind, two flights
having come to rest within me.

Daniel Brick

The Drained Cup A Sufi Poem

I have been sober for three months.
In the first month I forgot
the sweetness of wine when served
with grapes and figs in an afternoon
feast of song and dance,
with the face of the Beloved flashing
before each man's sight continually.
In the second month, the fumes of wine
drunk by other men no longer excited me.
I listened as they praised their beloveds,
becoming more hyperbolic with each glass
they quaffed. I remained obdurate, unmoved
by the grace that swirled over them,
as they talked, no, sang of their passions.
Time slowed to a crawl, its colors so bright,
so crystalline, faded until the very notion
of color was foreign to me. Now, the third month
begins, and I am an empty flask, a drained cup,
a vagrant who neither sleeps nor dreams.
I walk constantly day and night, I am a victim
of hunger. Oh, this hunger in our deepest selves
for the one true beloved, the one who points
the way and is already standing there at the end
to greet us with open arms. Such is the beloved
who lives and dies a thousand times for our happiness.
I was confused when my beloved died and did not revive.
Confused and angry. I stopped praying, and singing
and dancing, and drinking the numinous wine...
Oh, Daniel, look at your sorry condition.
You lost faith in God's grace, then in his gift.
Return to the tavern, poet, and wait.
Drink wine, and prepare yourself!

June 10,2016

Daniel Brick

A Pushkin Fantasy

Oh, my Prince, how the young women are drawn
to you! They flirt with all their charms
and wiles to attract your attention. Each one
wants to be in the center of your gaze, blotting
out all the others. But, alas, you are dazzled
by them all... You hold court in the Great Hall,
with singers and musicians gilding the hours.
Dancers bring the harmony of the heavens to earth.
And all of the young women - dancers, singers, servers,
nurses - all of them sigh and yearn to be one with you.
Their faces are flushed with such expectant beauty.

But you can't choose one and dismiss all the others.
You summon me, and confess with a pleased smile:
'Is this not like Spring, the season of flowers?
Who would pick just one flower? '
Prince, don't you see, your love for all of them
is cruelty to each of them? Let one receive
your favor. Release the others to other loves.

Daniel Brick

A Hill Walking Poem Part Two: The Romantic Poet

And where is that poem I sensed in sleep?
It may be caught within a swirling wind and
cannot come to rest, or trapped in the crevice
where two huge boulders lean and cannot break
free, or it may need its deep sleep, stretched out
on dry grass. The poem has its own life, it certainly
knows the hour of its birth, and will arrive
propelled by rhythms of mind and nature in tandem.
Its impulse is always toward revelation.

I wonder what impulse drives me: Do I walk
these grasslands and climb these hills to provoke
the poems whose writing is my familiar fulfillment?
Or do I write poems to justify my ceaseless walking
to no discernible goal? Will it matter if I find
today's poem barely floating on the green slime
of a stagnant pond? Will it be improved if I find it
crowned with solar glory on the high ledge
above a river valley? The poem will ever be
the middle ground between Nature and myself.
And so all things occur in their immediate motions -
grasses, hills, sunlight, my self, the animals,
the unwritten poems, plants and flowers and
the life-pregnant soil, the waters and the swirling air.
All fold together despite their strangeness,
their separateness. And I, the poet of this moment,
imagine how a natural love makes them familiars,
and dream it can last for evermore...
Oh, blessed persuasion! The poem is even now
within my ken! I can be quiet now. It comes apace!

Daniel Brick

A Hill Walking Poem Part One: In Nature

In simple earnest, I never found myself alone within the embracement of rocks and hills, a traveller up an alpine road, but my spirit courses, drives, and eddies like a leaf in Autumn. A wild activity, of thoughts, imaginations, feelings, and impulse of motion rises up from within me.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The journey I am taking today is not a journey planned by unsleeping Fate. My adventure begins in the fluctuating space of Romance, and continues in the time frame of Chance. I must keep wandering, like the opening allegro of a symphony, across widening circles that briefly enclose me before nudging me elsewhere. Even if I remember a place from a past trek, it is still an elsewhere in this moment. This was once a mystery, but no more. I embrace paradox... I pass neither exits nor entrances: it is just a long road which bends back on itself through fields of bright green foliage of summer's steady growth. In the distance I see farmers tending their crops, coaxing growth out of rich soil, the land's bounty given with prodigal abandon by the Earth Spirit. A haze separates me from that work and service. I trudge outward, reaching a place of hills rolling across grasslands. I climb and descend three of them, with the tallest, the second, giving me a vista of pathless fields which farmers maneuver with ease. But my mission is elsewhere, always elsewhere, away from settled homes and settled lives.

I enter a zone of more spacious grasslands with groves of trees rising above them, as if they were islands in a green sea. I pause.

Keeping very still, I watch deer grazing
at the edge of a woods, birds landing, pecking
at the ground, then launching into flight,
squirrels and rabbits making their sudden
entrances and exits, a lone fox lying
in a pool of sunlight. I slowly let myself
slip to the ground, and sit with my back
against a dead tree. I doze, at first fitfully,
my sleep interrupted by a faint inner summons
to hike while the day is young, but to no avail:
I simply sink into a deeper sleep, and imagine
I am dreaming, or dream I am imagining. Either way
it is a poem taking form, discovering itself
in the stillness within and without.

When I awake I rejoice in the open air,
swirling around me in gentle waves.
Oh, blessed open air! And the stillness
without envelops me. I build a small fire,
and prepare a cup of black tea Marsha pounded
into a powder for my trip. The taste of the tea
is complex: it reminds me of people indoors, groups
of people in conversation, friends and strangers
talking, laughing. behaving as one - all alike.
But I embrace this solitude and desire
only to lengthen it, stretch myself within it.
I let my soul emerge from its body cell
into the open air where it blends with Nature:
the sounds of rushing water and the wind rushing
over the grasses, the touch of breezes like a caress
or winds like a slap, the smell of growth and decay
which is one smell when I trust my senses, the sights
that turn my eyes into beacons that illuminate
this beauty, my eyes looking without and within
and seeing, truly seeing, they are the same reality.
Is it for this awareness I am alive? Is this
the elsewhere I seek, my mission's goal?

Daniel Brick

My Enemies

I don't mind my enemies...

They have been bustling around me,
or near me, or lurking in the river valley
across from my estate for ages past counting.
Such is the nature of enemies in our time.

My servants tell me they are massing
on the frontier. Thousands of them, more
arriving each month. But there's laxness
in their formation. They sprawl across the plain,
many of them drunk. No drums are beat, no trumpets sound.

Can you see now why I don't mind them? They are
like the single crow, apart from his murder,
who perches on the apex of my Montaigne House.
Every morning when I enter it, he caws and flaps
his wings. I ignore him and ascend the staircase.

I observe the world and its turnings
from my fourth level study. My books are
treasures equal to my lands. They are maps,
they are recipes, they are laws. Sometimes,
while reading, I look straight up into the sky,

light flashes into my eyes like an illumination...

My servants report my enemies lurk in the shadows
of the wide colonnaded avenue of the marketplace.
They stare at merchants and traders, passers-by
are troubled by their silent gaze. At nightfall,

they retreat into deeper shadows. Others stagger
at the edge of the city. They are not drunk, they are
fevered. They push helping citizens aside, and collapse
into corners and alleys. Our doctors rule out
a return of the Plague. Meanwhile, they collect the dead.

Beyond the safety of the Montaigne House, crows caw
all day every day, thousands still occupy the frontier.
I am in my study, enveloped in shafts of light

that never dim. Things could be much worse. The world
could stop spinning. Stars implode. Rivers flood.

My books burn... I have so much to mind.

Daniel Brick

Let's Start!

The evolution of plant life is accelerating, faster even than the botanists can comprehend. Most of them have theories, but they keep them to themselves. They are afraid, you understand, and the general public are getting restless. More than one has been overheard, saying, 'These green things, and those brightly colored ones, too, are going to take over. We've got to do something. Let's start with the big ones - the trees. They're blocking our view, so it will be a double win for us. Let's start cutting right now! '

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

They Were Very Happy

When I was a child,
I was told
if I dug a hole deep enough
I would reach China. I asked,
how long would it take to dig
such a deep hole? And they laughed.
But I was serious,
even at that age. I had a need
to make fantasy real, or die trying.
So I did die many times,
and my imagination kept re-birthing me.
It got tiresome after awhile.
China was no closer, and the shovels
were really heavy. Still at night
when I was very much alone in my attic bedroom,
the rest of the family asleep downstairs,
I distantly heard people speaking
in Chinese. They were very happy,
and were planning a big party for my arrival,
which they considered imminent.

Daniel Brick

Ophelia In Three Acts For Linda Clayton

I

My mother fussed over me.
As she combed my long golden hair,
she chanted snatches of old lauds,
especially about a princess who fell
in love with a prince, and could no longer
tell happiness from sadness. The Queen
fussed over me as well, dressing me
in clothes from the royal wardrobe,
then handing me a mirror, so I could
see myself raised beyond my station.
I accepted all of this with gracious
charm, as was expected of me. They laughed
and whispered about the bride-bed
covered in sweet flowers. I was confused
and frightened. Prince Hamlet and myself?
He will be King someday, married
to a foreign Queen to seal an alliance,
and I will always be a lady-in-waiting.
But still the Queen and my mother talked
in hushed voices about an impossible
future, and promised me beauty and power
will seal their virtues in a marriage
of true minds. The Queen touches my cheek
softly, and my mother looks on in a confusion
of happiness and sadness...

II

When my mother died of fever
during a summer hot spell, my father
spent the final week of her suffering
bedded with a court prostitute. My brother
left for a fencing tournament two days
after her burial. All the tears shed
were shed by me. But the beautiful Queen
looked haggard with grief at losing
her friend, and Prince Hamlet honored me,
offering his hand and guiding me through
the court ceremonies. He spoke the sweetest

words of consolation in my hearing only.
In his presence I could not tell my happiness
from my sadness. Before he left for Wittenburg,
the Prince gave me tenders of his affection.
I believed his heart was true, I believed
he loved me, I believed... I loved him.

III

What is this force called fate?
Why must we stumble down such a stony path?
I had envisioned a primrose path I would walk
with an easy gait toward happiness. It was not
meant to be. Rumors of foreign invasion roiled
the court; charges of murder dogged the King.
The Queen herself, bereft and helpless, succumbed
to mute grief. And the Prince's noble mind,
blasted by madness and revenge, abandoned all sweet thoughts...

In the

end, I was alone with loss. I retrieved
the broken pieces of my life, and assembled
a new life, simple, honest, true. I survived.
Prince Hamlet's ghost will not haunt me.
In the distance I hear the heavy wheels
of fate rolling past me. I am my own self,
steady in hope, I await the return of a happiness
free of sadness....

Daniel Brick

A Poem In Two Parts Inspired By Parsifal Of Richard Wagner

I)

Parsifal becomes the symbolic embodiment of an angelic androgyny, proclaiming a new civilization and culture.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez

THE ANDROGYNE

Gaze upon the beautiful face of the Androgyne. Take your time - Nature did to create this blending of the sexes. Take your time to look into his liquid brown eyes, holding astonishment. And then there is your astonishment to consider: How long can you pay homage to such wonder? Is your heart open to admit this perfect image to its place of being? Take your time - The poet did who wrote the Grail Epic: He affirmed the Androgyne knows secrets he will share with seekers who love those wounded in their deepest self. The cure is even now beginning... Oh, marvelous confusion of the senses! The magic is all around us: The young in trance-like service, the old in perpetual wonder.

II)

Parsifal sees himself not as the instigator of redemption but its agent. His replacement of Amfortas involves a cyclical return or restitution, not the prospect of a wholly new world.

Dieter Burchmeyer

KLINGSOR'S DOWNFALL

It has been essentially a project

of disenchantment. It proceeds apace
mostly on its own momentum. I was standing
under the lintel of the north castle
of Klingsor's fortress complex. I had
a clear view of young Parsifal easily
defeating and and disarming the mystified
Grail knights. He seemed to know they were
all under a spell: he did not slay any of them.
One of the squires came over to us, his face blank,
his voice drained of emotion: 'Seneschal, Klingsor is dead.
His corpse dissolves into the muck. Seneschal, will you
lead us now? ' He did not wait for my reply, he stumbled twice as he vanished
into the smokey twilight. 'We are free, ' said one of the servants, several others
nodded, but the silence was heavy around us. 'Do we have homes somewhere? '
Kundry's lady-in-waiting asked. 'Are there people out there waiting for us? ' But
what do prisoners know of the world? And we were doubly imprisoned: first by
Klonsor's labyrinthine fortress, second by his enchantment.
Our enchantment ceased with his death, and we could again see the world with
our true eyes. And what we saw startled us: cracks creased the walls and towers,
fissures widened, and then the collapse began. All of us - servants, butchers,
blacksmiths, cleaners, cooks, the whole complement of the castle huddled in the
open space at the center of the fortress. We witnessed the final end of Klingsor's
reign: Walls buckled and fell straight down in ruins, towers swayed as huge
blocks dislodged, breaking apart on the ground, debris piled around us,
releasing choking clouds of dust. We stood transfixed but untouched, we felt
neither fear nor triumph. Through the smoke and haze we could make out former
Grail knights wandering without purpose, others hunched over, holding their
heads and moaning... Then we saw a blessed sight: The Flower Maidens, slaves
no longer, walked in a slow procession through the destruction, oblivious of their
violence, untouched by the chaos. We had for ages traduced them as little more
than whores, but now in the moment of liberation we saw them arrayed in gowns
of white and gold, their nakedness clothed in glory, their seductive ways
dispelled. And we knew they were the ones who would lead us out of the
wasteland into our future... What Parsifal had begun with his courage, they
would fulfill with their grace. We rejoiced and resolutely joined their slow
procession....

Daniel Brick

Earth: Goddess And Home

The Great Goddess was the central divine figure in the earliest mythological conceptions of the world... The goddess Universe was alive, uniting organically the Earth, the horizon, the heavens.
Joseph Campbell

Our immediate mother is the Earth:
let her name and sacrifice never be forgotten, for she empties her Self into all of our selves, and imparts both life and the joy of life to us.
Is this not reason enough for worship?
But what is it we worship? She does not exist like Apollo, or Krishna, or Jesus.
She is a presence in the heart, spreading her kindness from chamber to chamber until all is bright with goodness.
She is the life of the world around us, much of it invisible to our eyes, much of it ignored by us, but all of it, all of us are cherished in her regard.
We breathe in the air and know it is her gift, and we exhale a prayer of thanksgiving. But these questions, these doubts, are they not unworthy?
Perhaps it is enough to acknowledge the Beauty of the World, and in that assent fulfill our necessary homage.
And so we clothe ourselves in ancient wonder. We cross the threshold of her enduring glory and proclaim in one voice:
Oh, Goddess, for your gifts we thank you, for joy and peace we implore you, imbue us with your kindness, let it spill in abundance over all the creatures of the world.

Daniel Brick

The Trees, Our Companions

I

The trees stand upright
like us, standing is our common
posture, and their branches
like our arms stretch out,
penetrating the middle air
or more obscurely, stretch up,
as we do when we invoke a power
beyond our own... And rootedness
which is their metier gives us
another metaphor, or is it
an aspiration? To feel so completely
at home in a particular place,
to find our feelings echoed by
the space we claim as ours.
Of course, they make no claims,
not on us, for sure, but also not on
Mother Earth. Isn't the interplay
of roots and dirt a beautiful thing
to contemplate? It is the moving
downward to chthonic depths,
with roots knitting a unity
of depth and surface
we witness and applaud.

II

From my balcony I see
two trees and metaphors
multiply. They are sentinels
of the yard, they are priests
blessing the small animals
which scurry over and around
them. They are pillars of a vast
open temple which upholds the sky
it worships. They are soldiers
at attention committed to protecting
this garden space. They are friends
of my heart and their conversation,
so sweet when breezes fan their leaves,

becomes profound in the night air
and quiets whatever remains of day.

Daniel Brick

A Good Omen For Haya

It was a good omen
the night we crossed paths
for the first time. I was fumbling
with the wrong key, when you took
the key chain and held the right key
before my eyes, and deftly unlocked
the door, and then you swept
past me, moving swiftly
toward your immediate goal,
leaving me alone to follow mine.
And so it went...

Acts of Kindness come in all sizes
- and this one may have been smaller
than those the world admires - still
kindness itself always looms large.
It is the oldest gesture in our
vocabulary of gestures. And the sweetest.
Did Eve extend her hand to help Adam
to his feet when he awoke beneath
her smiling face? Did Abraham steady
Ishmael's steps as they trod
the rugged path of Mount Horeb?
Did Rachel's glance reassure Jacob
of her love even as he married Leah
to satisfy the father's bias? And what
of Noah and his crowded cargo: How many
frightened animals did he calm
during their tumultuous voyage?
And how we are humbled and amazed
in equal measure over God's bringing
the sparrow back to flight to reassure
Abraham's heart...

Oh, the world is vast, and even now
six billion of us crowd its contours
from end to end. Within me is an unexpected
calm. I will not speak of the great deeds,
they will take care of themselves, God willing.

Let me rather celebrate the small gestures.
Let me give thanks that you saw me locked out,
and in a flash, let me in to the place
we both belonged, and then you vanished
into your act of kindness, needing no thanks
for following God's example, and, God willing,
I will learn from your example....

Daniel Brick

Odysseus/Orpheus

What should I do
with these random moments
left over from larger events?
moments that were not swallowed
whole by the movement of things
but rather cast carelessly
along their margins,
where they languish,
unless rescued and given
a new raison d'etre.

Metaphors abound that aid us
when we must be in disguise:
it's not the fault of things
that we are tossed about,
just like those lost moments,
because we cannot find a place
of rest, or an avenue of escape,
but must strengthen our resolve
to bear the pain of the moment,
and find a new raison d'etre.

That moment past, our composure
restored, our nerves steadied,
let us sift through available
metaphors and select one or two
to test against this intrusion
of reality into our world of
accidents, disguises and fantasies
- all masquerading as strange
successes - for the moment. Shakespeare
told us, The preparedness is all.

I have chosen either Odysseus
or Orpheus as my central metaphor.
Whichever one I finally choose
will be my face to the world,
and will ever slowly at first,
gradually become rooted in my being,

and that is called IDENTITY...

It means a curtain of new reality
has been lowered, and will not be raised
again, and so choice will become fate.

Some people, mostly strangers, call me
Odysseus. They expect a convincing display
of strength and a persuasive token
of my kingship. I forgot Kings must be
generous, wastefully generous. To one
and all. And those who thrive
on desire ask incessantly, Odysseus,
will you take me on your next voyage?
I have been long prepared for this. Out there
are wealth and success that belong to me!

Others see me as Orpheus, and rejoice
with an equal fervor because I overcame
the despair of the Hades Realm, and returned
to daylight reality full of hopes. They assume
I can teach them how to outsmart the Dark Lords
and survive. And those who thrive
on desire ask incessantly, Orpheus,
will you take me on your next descent?
I am ready for this exploit. Down there
are wealth and success that belong to me!

Daniel Brick

A Room Of Radiance

Honoring the Prophet

You have occupied a space
in the western mind
for the heavy unfolding of
thirteen hundred years.
I wish I could describe
that space as a room
of such design and building
that it does honor to its
resident, that is replete
with the good will of his life,
that reflects the sacrifice
and the triumphs of his age.

But alas a believer who has
surrendered to God's will
and carries within his heart
the truth of the Prophet's being
will grieve at the contents
of that room: it is a space
of fears, doubts, ignorance,
even outright hatred. I would
refurnish this room in our minds
closer to the heart's truth.
It should be a room of radiance:
the greatest man displaying the greatest worship.

Daniel Brick

Our Nexus

Both of us treasure a copy of this book.
Our experiences are parallel: when I hold it
reverently, and turn each illuminated page,
slowly, deliberately, and read aloud
the text, memory grasps it entire.
An image of each page, archived
in our minds, will be cast against
a screen within. And we will know
a perfect sharing when we are
on the same page of this book we treasure,
and, however distant from each other,
we will spend precious moments staring...
It is better than an embrace,
which is all surface and transient breath.
This shared image within tranfixing
our attention, pours its truth plus beauty
deep, and deeper still, into our souls,
and our souls are linked, interplay
with each other, share the profoundest
feelings, which steadily become thoughts
almost (Dare I say it?) beyond the reaches
of our souls: We will have being elsewhere.

This is heady stuff, my friend, we cannot
fully comprehend it. But we are one
in this endeavor. Next time, let's put beauty
before truth. Nothing will be altered
from its set course, but we will be
dazzled before being informed, like witnessing
a gorgeous orange sunset illuminate
the dark surface of a lake. Are you anxious
for this too? I promise not to be late.

Daniel Brick

Time Master

TIME can stun an unsuspecting person, so I will be generous and give extra hours to philosophers to read and reflect, to clarify and compose, hours that are now theirs by my decision, by my power.

And next I authorize the dispersal of time in excess to gardeners, so they can pause in early afternoon, after a morning of hard work, and simply stare at Nature's plenty, secure in their success.

And the same goes to those sturdy builders, whose pride of being is our great city's walls, our defense against a savagery in other tribes that sinks below the level of beasts, so base is their greed for conquest.

And the children! Oh, don't let me forget the children! Gather around me, dear children. Your ruddy faces look healthy with delight. To you I assign those random seconds and minutes that adults carelessly discard. Enjoy!

But I reserve extra days and weeks that pile up like discarded treasures to the POETS of our city, our chronicles, our living Memories are safe with them. Poets, every one of you, we see your struggles, waiting through long hours for the Muses' Call.

As long as I am Time Master, as long as all of you trust me to serve our city, I will honor the Poets with a special share of time: they will live a twenty-eight hour

instead of our two dozen hours. Poets, ply
your trade, sing your songs, make us rich in visions!

Daniel Brick

The Garden Sonnets For Elizaveta

I

It is not a secret garden, although
few people know it. The secrecy lies
in their indifference. Some walk passed it
everyday and never realize next to them,
as they rush by, is a feast of color and scent.
A few may derive a brief eye-pleasure,
even fewer may walk through its
flower-festooned threshold, stare for a moment
of delight and then resume their unchanged lives.
The truth of this garden remains hidden,
except for you and me: we know its special charm,
its enduring presence, its expectant silences...
The charm casts its spell over us; we sense
the presence someone kind and holy within the silence.

II

The architect of our garden is an Angel
of little renown. No name for him appears
in any of the holy Scriptures. Still like all Angels
he lives in God's sight, so he cannot be
a solitary being. Some day he will be commanded
to soar into the immensity of the sky, cross the arc
of the galaxy and descend to a planet that requires
his vigilance. That will be his glorious future...
Our garden he designed for our destiny.
We sense he sensed our needs when he made
the stand of birch trees, the two lakes and connecting
stream, the corridor of lilac bushes, the field of
sunflowers, the steep hillside from which dandelions
fling their white-winged seeds into the warm air.

III

Can a memory be made from a future event?
Can Time be bent so that memory can catch
the tail of some future moment and attach it
to the body of its present reckoning? Oh, yes!
Be it so! For in our two minds joined, each to the other,
we remember how we walk through the garden

in all seasons, sheltered within its greenery, greeting birds, flowers and trees. It will be an experience of hushed joy, of frail happiness when it transpires. Our thought is the same throughout the flow of times: we rejoice in our friendship. That future day is so clear to me: your dress, your speech, your habit of pausing to bring the beauty of creation into your soul. The breeze carries pink petals which settle in your hair.

IV DANIEL

I am watchful through the night,
hours of solitude so different from
the solitary day. Bright day ignores me
as he pursues his glory across the sky.
Night is my dear companion. She nestles
against me, smiles when I stroke her cheek.
Sometimes she pretends to sleep, so that
I can close my exhausted eyes and sink into
her boundlessness. We will halve a dream...
Oh, as the blue mantle of night lifts and
the first light shines over the garden,
I see you walking slowly along lanes
of roses, resplendent in a white gown.
Song birds lift their voices in gladness.

V ELIZAVETA

Roses claim the garden for their own glory.
They are messengers of every season:
Roses out of snowy fields, Roses out of
yellow-green lawns, Roses out of hot sunlight,
Roses out of the rust of Time. Roses row upon row
celebrate their timeless appeal. Such is the lure
of worldly glory in all of its disguises: seductive,
persuasive, misleading. Many are its victims!
I know another path, the Bhakti Path: it summons
the soul to pursue the object of eternal love.
It is the path to Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah,
the Perfect Beauty of the cosmos, the Eternal Truth
of Life. Remember Elijah who ascended into heaven
in a fiery chariot, entering a World of Perpetual Light.

VI ANGEL

I have lived through thousands of seasons.
I knew the weight of Time, as this planet was
spinning in vast space, a featureless globe,
in the monotony of the everlasting. I was prideful
in those eons! I waited without wonder across millions
of yesteryears. Even my own being was a blank to me.
I did not understand God's slow creation of BEAUTY.
But then he created YOU: your humanity appeared,
and the world received your beauty and itself became
beautiful. I bowed deeply and forever bow to the Creator.
And God commanded we angels bow to your distant ancestor.
But the highest miracle, greater even than your excellence,
is the GARDEN. It is the peak of creation, the very image
of the Creator, the place of wonders, the first stage of heaven.

VII DANIEL

Already a decision has been made. I hear
a heavy door of bronze or brass shutting. The echo
of its closing is as terminal as a judge's final ruling
on a vexed case; as definitive as the handshake
of two honest merchants; as lasting as the treaty
between factions that have abjured warfare evermore.
A decision has been reached, as if a great journey
has reached its long desired destination, and
the destination itself shines with the joy of being
discovered at last. Nothing hidden wants to remain
occluded from the eyes of men and women gifted
with true vision. Everything surrenders to love.
I hear a rumbling at the edges of ther Garden.
I know it will swell into a Hymn of Glory.

VIII ELIZAVETA

I already breathe a different air, and it nourishes
a part of me just now being born. Is it a New Soul?
No, it is my old soul made new! I no longer take steps
to move forward. I touch the ground with the faintest
pressure... Now I am floating just above the surface
of things, but things themselves are no longer separated.
Everything coheres. There are no more edges, all I
behold is rolled into a spacious globe. I am dissolving
into that awareness of GOD WITHIN the Eucharist brought.
But now, Oh Holy Moment, it is infinitely extended! This is

The World Without End I invoked so often in prayer.
The Door is Wide Open! The Threshold Shines...
Words are no longer necessary, except to say
a fond farewell to you, my dear friend. Oh, follow after me!

IX ANGEL

So it is that another human life reaches its fulfillment.
It is a circle of life and resurrection and life everlasting.
Do not obsess over death and dying: they are a bridge.
We angels delight in this first moment out of Time
when you are raised to glory, still fully human, but a humanity
exalted by your Ceremony of Transfiguration. Let me pause...
Oh, how I love you, you creatures of the blessed Earth!
You have been forever falling upward through Time and Space,
your ignorance becoming knowledge, your knowledge imbued
with grace becoming one with Eternal Truth, your doubts
dissolving as you realize just one more mortal step
and you will enter immortal being, Dwellers in Heaven,
World Without End, in the presence of the Highest Beauty!
A Hymn of Glory swirls through all of Gardens of Creation!

Daniel Brick

A Daughter Remembers

I know part of the Secret
resides in this room.

The whole house, all four floors,
partakes of the Secret, the way
the whole loaf nourishes
a multitude. I sit very still,
because no other imperative
nudges me into some alien action
abroad, or down the street,
or in that corner on my left,
where a high-backed chair
with green upholstery and wide arms
once stood. Its legs left a crease
in the plush carpet, but no one can
tell me what happened to it.

It was the chair I sat in
for my First Communion. And sitting
in that chair, my father read to me,
TRISTRAM SHANDY, his favorite novel,
and poems by Borges, in Spanish
and in English. I have the books
still; I lost the chair and the man,
my father, who was good to me...

I sat on a low chair and looked
up into his calm blue eyes, and
sometimes thought he was creating
those words himself, each one
born in a flash, just before his lips
shaped the sounds that made the words
live in my mind. From that moment
forward, those words were pieces of Time
Unending. Until I die and join him,
once again a family, my memory of his
voice guides me through the darkness and
the light. Oh, but where is that chair?
Where is that comfort, that fullness
that was mine, when the world was just
a man speaking and a child listening?
Somewhere in this room resides the Secret

of those times. Perhaps it has been absorbed
by the breathing of the walls, or the pulse-beat
of the carpet, or the swirling of the air.
My father, those are your traces, aren't they?
You never left me, not entirely. Your soul is
so large it occupies both worlds at once.
Part of you resides with the angels, and
another part swirls through the air I breathe.
We are a family still....

Daniel Brick

Odysseus The Wanderer

Odysseus rehearsed his homecoming many times, whenever he arrived at a village or town. The word spread like hawk's flight when he was sighted. People assembled in the market square, and listened to the grizzled, weary wanderer of back roads and decayed cities tell of days of glory and nights of luxury. He spoke in his still commanding voice of the world in its glittering days before it all collapsed, haphazardly incoherently, erasing all traces of roads, paths, lanes. Everywhere people stepped, they found relics of that past glory. They brought bushels filled with it to the village square. They poured this debris at the feet of Odysseus, and appealed to him, because they were ignorant of the wide world:

Great Lord, what did this locket protect?

Great Lord, is this the hilt of the sword
mighty Ajax wielded?

Oh, Master, this coin, this coin, is it a fortune
in the palm of my hand?

Honored Sir, are there market squares elsewhere
that will buy our finds?

Honored Sir, is there really a chest of Babylonian
gems this key will open?

Odysseus rehearsed his homecoming among peasants, they were all peasants now: aristocrats reduced to penury, former kings bereft of thrones and palaces, princesses seeking any gnarled hand in marriage, warriors too weak to carry bronze swords. And Zeus's lightning bolts no longer creased the sky, the oracles were silent, rumors claimed Pan was dead and Aphrodite had returned to the sea. Odysseus wandered without direction

through ruined palaces, puzzled, wondering:

Could this be my Ithaka? This my sea port?

Did these abandoned huts once house my subjects?

That dog, lying in sun, too old to move...

That speaker's staff... Those discarded axe-heads?

But he did not linger long. Hunger and loneliness
urged his slow walk across cropless plains, over dry hills,
along harborless shorelines, plodding his march,
sometimes stumbling, but ever forward, to the next dwelling,
where he would be King Odysseus for a day of glory:

Your Majesty, we found a buried throne? Did Agamemnon
pass judgments sitting on it?

Your Majesty, is this the blue cloak Helen wore when
she dazzled men, made them forget their reason?

Your Majesty, is this the bow of the fabled king, Odysseus?

Daniel Brick

A Man Remembers His Buried Poems

What traps me in the net of
my own words? What am I thinking
when a single word fills my brain
with its sway of meanings, its catch
of rhythms, its bite and swallow?
Why does a poem I begin with AS IF
take hold of my mind for hours,
even in my sleep? Why indeed does
ending a poem with an elipsis pause
further thought in the time remaining?

Four questions occupy my mind. Each one
settles into a comfortable cranial niche
to drift and drowse. Meanwhile I will assume
the role of a bon vivant, slipping
from topic to topic the way a master
baroque harpsichord player veers
from dance suites to opera suites or
improvises on themes of love and passion.
Like the poet, she modulates her sound
for sweetness or harshness, truth being her guide.

But now I wholly doubt myself, and wonder
whether my poems should be housed
in an archive of forgotten things.
Perhaps my best gambit is to maintain
an external silence, so the inner sounds
can be heard more clearly, despite the static
of self-talk. Within my soul I must purge
the interplay of silence and speech.
I realize the bon vivant has withdrawn,
and the new resident in my mind doffs his hat.

He is a comedian, not very deft at his trade,
perhaps with a touch of Touchstone, and
a meager portion of Feste, but he will suffice
to distract me from composing further poems.
I may yet be saved by such wise foolery
Shakespeare released from within his clowns!

And I will apply myself to sympathetic listening
for the slightest sign of what must come to pass.
Perhaps even now, this moment between here and there,
the depths are opening to welcome my New Self.

Daniel Brick

Good Friday, 2016

Dedicated to the Faithful
of Two Cities:
St. Petersburg and St. Paul

Can you, safe inside your non-belief,
comprehend my sorrow on this day?
Imagine a forest of lovely, lithe
birch trees, then witness the white bark
ripped from their lean height, exposing
the tender inner wood to the sun's
fierce rays, and thus weakened, watch
a sudden spring storm toss them
mercilessly, until the roots snap, and
the defeated birch trees fall,
one after another to the hard ground.

If you can comprehend that loss
in nature, then surely you can comprehend
my grief over our Savior's suffering
on that first Good Friday, when he died
in agony and forgiveness to redeem
our sin, and then opened wide the Gates
of Heaven, so that souls cleansed
by his sacrifice can join his Glory
in an everlasting realm of peace and joy.

Daniel Brick

I Knew A Woman Once...

I knew a woman once
whose smallest gestures
gave delight. When we left
the relatives behind in the cabin,
and walked into the sharp cool air,
there loomed before us a steep hill
we climbed with smiling ease. Everything
was in its place: the spongy ground,
the grass still wet with dew, the spring sun
even shyer than I, trying to shine
without calling attention to itself,
wanting to be appreciated but not singled out.
Oh, yes, I wanted to wear a disguise, but
words would suffice: spin a story, craft
a verse, quote a popular song, and if all
fails, rely on the moment for rescue:
describe the moment in its wonder,
how the earth gives off a smoky smell,
how the wet bark of trees darkly shines,
how everything within view makes you believe
in resurrection, how the hours grow younger
in her presence, how her presence makes you
hold your breath. Will any of this reach
her laughing heart? Inside you is a heaviness
but the words tumble out of you, careless words,
foolish words, words that blush but refuse
to stop their onslaught... And she smiles.
She turns at the summit of the hill in a complete
circle, once, twice, three times, still silent,
her arms outstretched, her hands waving,
her faced turned upward, receiving all the light
that is falling from heaven to earth. I knew
a woman once, who made me hold my breath,
I knew a woman once whose name was Spring!

Daniel Brick

The Latest Campaign A Narrative Poem

An awareness spread through the ranks
of the horses, that their ordeal was over,
that life in a pasture with sweet grass,
clear streams, and room to roam, was soon
to resume. They know nothing of Victory
or Defeat, they only know kind treatment
or harsh handling by their human masters.
They were still bearingf heavily armored men,
or dragging ever heavier war machinery.

Behind them, far in the rear of the column,
were the Cavalry Horses, select, pampered,
protected by four ranks of soldiers on all sides.
Close by and equally protected by rows of soldiers,
the Prince who wanted to become a King, rode
his black stallion next to six subtle advisers
who determined whether arms and battle should
subdue his opponents, or words and treachery.
The Prince considered them his last and best teachers.

As his army positioned itself across the land
base of the port city of Xenahuan,
like ponderous chessmen on a flimsy table.
The Prince, the chessmaster, sat erect
and perfectly poised on his noble black stallion.
He clutched the Sphere of Heaven in his left
hand, and the Scepter of Power in his right.
He raised them slightly and moved them back
as if performing a benediction over his army.

Capturing this city, joining it to his other
conquests would prove his worthiness for crown
and kingdom. On the ramparts, from towers,
from Cathedral Hill, citizens and defenders alike
were waving anything white! A whole city was
surrendering spontaneously. Scores of weapons
they throw from the parapets to the ground below.
Thousands upon thousands cheers shatter the sky
as they call the Prince their liberator!

It is the Prince's move. He could unleash his soldiers to riot and pillage, to rape and murder, to send a warning to the other coastal cities, and let fear do the work of conquest. Or he could be magnanimous. While an eerie silence falls over the deserted streets of Xenahuan, the Prince huddles in secret speech with his six advisers. They drink wine which the Abbey's monks had preserved for seventy years, eat a feast prepared by trembling cooks, and decide to act with mercy.

Three days later, riding his glorious black stallion, the Prince, now officially a King, leads his army out of Xenohuan, turns the double column of troops inland, away from the desert coastline toward the High Plateau of the interior where the undefeated tribe of Lycians live without a central authority. This offends the newly crowned King, and he intends a quick lesson delivered by his direct authority. Oh, King, when you put on that crown, you put on blinders, too!

The King carouses nightly with his court, makes marriage plans and battle plans at the same time, as if winning a woman's heart was just a matter of strategy, and crushing the Lycians just as matter of displaying his authority. Already his cavalry skirmished with mounted Lycians and lost six riders and six horses. An engagement with his advanced guard was inconclusive. But the King enjoys his crown, and the increased deference. His generals look nervously into the vast distances everywhere.

In the weeks to come skirmishes will increase, men and horses will die. Supplies from Xenohuan will slow, gradually messengers will bring excuses but no supplies. Reinforcements will get lost and fall into Lycian traps. But the King will drench himself with wine, and declare, By next year, I will not just be a King, I will be an Emperor! Meanwhile, steadily, relentlessly, the memory of pastures recedes in the consciousness of horses. Finally, the memory will dissolve, the pastures forgotten, beauty cannot save them.

Hidden In Possibility

What if it were - all of it -
already over and I,
an agonized witness
to events winding down,
were trapped in a permanent
past tense? Would lamentation
and celebration alternate,
as if our situation, ever ambiguous,
would always be in flux, never stable?
What then should I do with my patience?
At whose feet should I lay my tenderness?

I am confused by my own
imaginings of things still
hidden in possibility. I will
rehearse a thousand roles in exile,
and wait for a summons to return
to the stage. (Oh, patience rewarded!)
Once there, before those expectant faces,
turned upward at me, I would play out
Jacques's Seven Ages, or assume
the murderer's role in Hamlet's GONZAGO,
getting off scot-free because he's nameless.

No! I do not want a staged life,
swamped in another's consequences,
bound to another's view of Fate. I worship
the largest forces of the universe. But the subtlest
signs of Love arouse my tenderness. Perhaps those
I might have loved, had they given me
an answering gesture, will wind back
into my life on the Wheel of Time.
I may even leap onto it in a frenzied
moment. Or merely reach out and seize
a single flower for its beauty as the Wheel tumbles on.

Daniel Brick

Winter Becoming Spring For Fabrizio Marc 2016

Why is it our NEW YEAR
begins just as WINTER enters
his old age? Must we always
drag that dotage with us
for weeks, even months?
Why can't we shove it
against one of those snow piles
which will take five days
of sunlight to melt
into the cool blue air?
Or spread it over the moist
morning lawn and let
yellow grasses drink it?
Why do we feel responsible
for Father Winter when already
his burgeoning son stretches out
beneath ice and snow?
Is there a hesitation in us
the year feels as a lack of welcome?
Does the calendar itself shift
imperceptibly sensing a longer winter?
Whatever it is, I'm sick of it: I want
the cheer, the uplift, the snap of time.
Or is it simply time to rev my faith
in the everlastingness
of the seasons? Words like immortal
and eternal occupy still
their niches in my mind.
Suddenly I realize this year will slip out of
its mortality the way a snake sheds
its old skin and slithers into grass mounds
out of sight. Things are never as difficult
as they seem at first. I kick the discarded skin
aside, and we walk down a clear path together.

Daniel Brick

The New Masters

They appear to be too heavy
to move often. They must
settle deeply into a place
they arrive, calling it home
almost immediately, as
their massive feet sink
into the layers of mud
and sludge that seek them out.

Then begins the balancing act
they must perform three times
a day, to prevent
crashing whole-bodied into
the mud-sludge ground. Even as
they balance themselves, they sink
a further two or three inches:
only now can they look at their home.

They bend forward cautiously,
arms outstretched, palms downward,
careful not sink further
into the mud-sludge. And they sway
slowly, seeking that perfect
balance they believe exists for them
on Earth. It's all done by ancient
instincts. Their voices emit a bass drone.

So these are The Barbarians, they
have inherited the Earth. It's our fault
they can settle firmly here: we lost
our balance, abandoned the required
ceremonies, forgot even the rhythms
we had been taught. Most of us
are gripped by the deepest sleep,
where dreams alternately promise and accuse.

They are the new Masters. Lately they
have begun to howl day and night,
rarely can we hear the original drone.

And they crush delicate things, flowers
and shrubs, humming birds, top soil,
ruins of our forgotten temples,
with their slender spires of colored glass.
They shove mud-sludge into lakes and rivers.

(A Last Stanza, Added Years Later)

Could we have been so wrong They are
on the move now, stomping the now hard
ground with their freed feet. The syncopation
is unmistakable. The Master are heading north.
Those of us awake are drifting back
to once familiar places. Does it matter?
Often I question myself: Who are you now?

Daniel Brick

The Poets' Field March 2016

I

On a wide plateau an immense field
spreads out its welcome. Cottonwoods
rim the park on two sides, eagles
perch in their highest branches.
Groves of birches flourish,
their silver leaves flashing!
The poets call this The Poets' Field,
but they are only happy when
families picnic together, travelers
stop to refresh, young people
discover love and everyone joins a green circle.

II

The Sun spills its liquid self
across the western sky.
The green field, empty and still,
sleeps... and dreams of the poems.
It watches for a second time the poems
lifting their voices heavenwards,
and heaven's blessing descending...
And then the golden light of the sun
mingles with the transparent light
of heaven in a perfect crystal radiance
visible to all with eyes to see.

Daniel Brick

The Two Journeyers

When I call you to mind, I see you
with your back to all the others,
waving with your right hand
to someone out there, ahead of you even,
someone who barely pauses to acknowledge
your gesture of greeting, has already turned
and moved quickly upward, out of sight and
hearing. Was it a Man of Desire, like Rene Char?
Or perhaps a Woman of Singular Talent?
Could it have been an Angel, intent upon
a Mission of his own devising? Those of us
who wait in the shadow of these events
will never know. Even you are puzzled,
but you don't feel my unrest. What's the use?
It would only compromise your freedom.

You turn around, and for the first time
I see your face. Our eyes lock for a moment
of recognition in which I feel more than
your regard. The moment passes, other moments
crowd in its place, and the ordinary business
of a train platform resumes. People play it safe
with small talk and laughter. I adjust the weight
of the things I am carrying. Should I, like you
and that other journeyer, discard everything
but my compass and periplus? Leave it all behind
for someone else in desperate need? I aspire
to live like you beyond need, in a condition
almost weightless, subject to winds and tides
of my own devising, a master of nothing less than
liberty of spirit...

I have committed all of these thoughts to writing,
but everything I write vanishes as if it were
written in invisible ink. My memory is beginning
to fail me, too. I was once the Homer of my generation,
now I am like his Penelope, witnessing everything
I do in time unravel daily before it can enter eternity.
Oh, could I join my fate to yours all would be well:

your recognition just now conveyed no invitation.
Should I instead pursue that other journeyer? The one
who blends reality and fantasy into a seamless whole.
Is there time enough to dither, test options, seek out
the Hand of Fate? Or must I hasten even now, because
we are approaching the precincts of the temple, and
the ceremony of transfiguration has already begun?

Daniel Brick

A Love Poem In Extremis

I love you with the slowest love
on earth, love embedded
in the mineral existence of canyons
and chasms, stretching across continents
and centuries past counting.

I love you with the patience
of a gardener who waits
sixty years for one flower
to bloom. Through sleet,
through scorching sunrays,
he lavishes his lonely care.
And on a dim morning
of his old age, a scarlet flower
shines. No longer alone, he breathes
its bright fragrance as night descends.

I love you with my love of books
because reading long hours of solitude,
turning page after pages brings
ever closer the secret of delight,
until it is revealed to one alert
to the other language of composition,
a parallel language not of words
but of alien sounds audible only
to the lover's inmost hearing, poised
to change very character into
the beloved. Every book I touch
becomes our love story.

I love you with the passage of night
into day. Flung against columns
of darkness, I stumble across blank fields,
through waters without memory, up hills
with no vistas. I drop to my knees and grope,
a blind man yearning for your light.
And suddenly I see your face in a star-cluster!
The stars fade into morning. I arise
and your presence is still warm

with their distant fires. I greet you
suffused in beams of sunlight.

Daniel Brick

The King And The Courtesan

(1)

His slaves have learned to anticipate his commands. They could see ahead of his thoughts what he required: a glass of wine, a cushion, a deed of ownership, a fan of peacock feathers, a harem woman. Even before his lips parted, they bowed and intoned, 'Yes, my lord.' Restless, silent, he sat on his throne... A holy man, summoned by his slaves, bowed deeply, and dared to smile in his august presence. 'My lord, what is it you desire of me? ' The King replied sternly, 'I desire nothing of you.' The holy man's smile widened. 'My Lord, that is the cause of your sorrow.'

(2)

Her smallest gesture was a dance fragment. Her voice was like a song from the high hills of the North. She was no longer a young woman. In dance performances she deferred to those more nimble. In harem gatherings she was withdrawn. During darshan she bowed deeply to the Goddess. When summoned to his private chamber, she complied with the King's every wish. He was puzzled by her: she was not one of his fabled beauties, but he saw her face in palace pools, her scent lingered longer than frangipani, and her speech excelled all but his finest poets. He summoned her again and again, gradually forgetting the other harem women. He mused, 'How is it she has become a princess in my eyes? '

Daniel Brick

Scheherazade

She is a creature of holy desire.
Desire itself created her from flowers
of feelings, gestures of flesh, breathings
of soul. Her mind is always a polished
beacon lighting her way to the one most
in need. Always a dutiful and loving daughter
she accepted her father's protection
from venal men swarming everywhere and everywhere
leaving the wreckage of lives behind their hastening
steps. But now her father understood she had become
his protector: She surrendered to the grasp of
Sultan Schahriar with the wisdom of an angel
who uses the light to redeem the darkness.
And alone in the night the Sultan puzzles over
latest story.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Sultan Schahriar

He has never known desire, never felt
that magnetic pull toward another being
to close the gap that divides people,
that confines us all to our spheres of aloneness,
the arid places without fruit or fragrance,
where SELF grows steadily weaker and dimmer
until some warped brain mechanism compensates
by severing the heart from its fulfillment, the body
from its pleasures, the soul from its renewal.
Such is our estate: a barren ruined treasure chamber,
a temple deserted by its gods, a mountain range
whose summit collapses into the caldera each time
it grows large enough to flash into spontaneous life.
But alone in the night Scheherazade rehearses her next story.

Daniel Brick



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A Lunar New Year Poem For Cigeng 2016

The Moon makes us linger in the moment.
Its power over the tides is also felt
in the currents of our feelings. We submit
readily, and we stand very close, very still
by a grove of poplars and let the Moon's light
drench us. You tell me ancient poets drank moonlight
as if it were the wine of inspiration. Let us fill
two glasses and let the wine and moonlight mingle
before we drink. Only the soft hooting of a single owl
breaks the stillness...

Time passes, it approaches the moment of the New Year
when past and present are briefly folded into future.
But that is not our concern: The Moon and the Wine of
Inspiration have awakened something that will be awake
for a long time. I feel the meaning of life is floating
in the heavy air and circles around us. It longs to come
to rest in our place of being. Here is a sheet of paper,
a pen, a writing table. I will stand apart but nearby,
and join the owls' vigil in the poplar grove. While you
inscribe in the simplest words the profoundest thought.

Daniel Brick

The New Year Arrives At The House January 2016

Time angles itself across Space,
shedding days, weeks, months
and yet another year has reached its apogee,
poised for a midnight moment
between then and now, and then -
collapsing in upon itself and emerging
after the tiniest unit of duration
as the New Year Interplay of Time and Space.

The residents of the house are only
human: Being among them day and night
is like turning the pages of a novel already
read and taken to heart. Where is that
passage that made a crease in the sky
through which the delights of heaven
shone for even the unworthiest person
to grasp before the vision faded and the page turned?

Oh, that book is shut! We have lost
the key that once opened it to the light.
Now a double darkness encloses it,
and we must seek elsewhere for access
to the light. We must be patient for
some opening that heralds the source of light.
Meanwhile, on what floor are the sick people
lodged? I brought the panacea they requested.

Perhaps it is as my sister tells me,
I have companied too long with grief,
sharing his frugal fare with stubborn resolve.
Shall I then stride into a larger arena?
Shall I identify the wound common to all,
and seek the remedy in the field
of endeavor rather than sink into
visionary solitude, my usual haunt?

What kind of life have I been living? Is it
one of Justice? Do I at every moment
affirm Equality as principle and practice?

Do I strive to keep body and soul together
for a purpose that pulls me into Humanity?
King Lear realized too late he had squandered
his country's wealth, leaving none for
his subjects, poor naked wretches. WE HAVE THE TIME!

Daniel Brick

A Man Alone

Once a man devoid of beliefs
suddenly realized what glory
was absent from his life:
'A miracle - ' he began, pulling
truth out of the common depths
of his mind. 'A miracle is anything
that increases your faith.' Pausing,
he smiled at his cleverness. Charming.

His two companions angled away
from him, puzzled by his words
but not enough to stay
within the circle of his silence.
Silence, he thought, is a deep well,
ancient and almost empty, but it still
makes an offer to one paying attention:
'Here, quench your thirst and rest.'

The man's thoughts, liquid, fleet,
weightless, unburdened by the drag of
doubt, unhurried by the lash of
faith, were poised between action
and non-action. He was ready
to proceed upon a path of his own
design, or to stay in that place of
awareness his senses found congenial.

He chose to proceed. Waving to his
departed friends with a smiling gesture
of dismissal, he took the first steps,
beyond silence and speech, into a newer
realm, whose rules and customs he would
learn. He might ascend a stage and shine
with his peculiar radiance, or remain
below in the fragrance of things,

stationary, yet growing. When servants
of the local ruler found him, the line of
his vision was just below the sun,

encompassing trees and shrubs, birds
and forest animals, workhorses and machines,
and people in their complex interplay of
emotions and reason. The servants declared
his survival a miracle, and he agreed ruefully.

Daniel Brick

Who Said This?

Three Riddles of Identity

I

When a heart breaks, the crack runs
down the middle, and the two halves
collapse, falling in opposite directions.
The left side mourns lost opportunity:
it is a dull throbbing pain, as if
the heart were still beating in tandem
with another it cannot grasp. The right side
remains inert, never again to be aroused,
the crowded pages of desire forever closed.

II

It happened the way mistakes happen:
when I wasn't paying attention, was distracted
from the moment of being, that's when
the beauty of this day revealed itself
as a hidden cornucopia, and poured flowers
and fruits over my body, sweet flowers and
gorgeous fruits poured their fragrance
over me, enveloped me in wonder upon wonder.
And birds shifted their flight paths and descended.

III

Was there a time, kinder than our age,
when my crimes could be forgiven,
even forgotten? I can readily fulfill
the terms of my restored status. I attend
a ceremony of recollection, geared toward
remorse, an emotion I can readily adopt.
Afterwards, a gathering of colleagues
in a private celebration, with tiny cakes
and champagne, perhaps a string quartet playing Mozart.

Daniel Brick

A Voice In The Woods Salem Hills Park

Whose woods these are I think I know....

Robert Frost

These woods are not meant
for you, although you lay claim
to them. 'Perhaps they are mine, '
you are thinking, but I am here,
guardian of the woods, to interrupt
that thinking in your confused mind:
meaning is not the issue. Nothing
you can call forth from the depths
of your serpentine mind, coiling
around thoughts like its prey,
squeezing their life out, nothing
from that dark place has meaning
for things thriving in these woods.

I see you walking, stumbling really
along these paths, your head bowed,
your mind burning. Look up! Look out
at these from your distance: patches
of trees alternate with snowy fields.
Nature is reduced to two colors, black
and white, and silence. And what are you
but a shadow, passing by and then away?
The next time you enter these woods,
you will not hear me. I will have merged
with bark and root, slipped into the pores
of rocks, disappeared into the flight
of birds. Heed me now: listen, watch, wait.

Daniel Brick

Far Centaurus

We bent time into space.

The trans-atomic engine blinked three times
as our spaceship, BRANWREN, accelerated,
shot forth, piercing the darkest abyss,
hurtling toward far Centaurus.

Before she blinked again, we were
half-way there, where sounds are
sonic eclipses, smells multiply like prime
numbers, and sights flare with infrared shock.

Tired but exhilarated,
committed to the nth degree, we stare
fixedly at hundreds of blue-green instrument
panels. We leave nothing to chance. We are
Star-Voyagers, released from the mass of humans
still trapped on a dying planet. Liberated from its heavy
gravity, our brains accelerate faster than our ships.
We travel across the Milky Way's arc into the Beyond.
We are the Angels of a New Creation!

Daniel Brick

Your Perfect New Year's Day 2016 For Liza

On the night before your perfect New Year's Day, the last glimmers of daylight will linger on the eyes of owls, who are keeping watch over your sleep. In the ensuing darkness, you will curl deeper into a profound rest.

Just before the sun surrenders its first light, three deer will pass along your house, and look imploringly into your dreams. They will leave their faint hoof-prints in freshly fallen snow. There can be no sweeter omen for this day.

In a nearby woods, a saint, dressed in a gown of green light, hovers just above the ground. He makes a sign of blessing in all four directions, as he spins without effort, so that every path you walk today will be safe and bright.

The miserly neighbor will stop counting his money, and spend lavishly on each family member. People with worried expressions will turn corners and find their smiling friends greeting them. Enemies for life will have amnesia and assume they are old friends.

A preacher who berates his parishioners will pause in his usual diatribe, and in the softest tones say, 'We know all things must pass, but what beautiful memories we share.' A boy will read Anna Akhmatova's 'Northern Elegies, ' and then stop using foul language.

Line after line of people will receive the Eucharist, and their faces will be radiant with the divinity within. When they leave the church, they will carry a piece of heaven into the world. Blessed and blessing, there is no end to the good works they will perform in days to come.

When night quietly descends on this first day, the darkness will envelop you like a rapt chorus singing vespers in their mellowest voices. You will sit in the presence

of those you most dearly love and feel that love expand
and embrace all who live and breathe under the dome of heaven.

Daniel Brick

Snowfall For Cigeng

Today the snow fell for hours
across southern Minnesota. And it did not
hesitate for even a moment until everything was
covered in thick, pure white flakes. Oh, how close
Heaven seemed as that snow closed the gap
between earth and sky! Through it I walked
three-legged like the third figure in the riddle
the Sphinx posed to bold Oedipus, my cane
steadying my steps as it discovered buried links
of a vanished pathway. I must trust so many things:
the ground's firm base, the mild air, the intelligence
of a mere mortal, the sky looming over me, with an alien
beauty I try to comprehend. And I know, you too see
the alien sky of winter, and it comforts me beyond language
to know this. There is no fear inside me nor is there any
inside you, even if a new Sphinx posed a new riddle.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Four Minds

The morning mind knows it will end
in a blaze of glory it does not own.
This is reason enough for its sluggishness,
the fact it doesn't stir into action,
but mopes and pouts, makes long faces
in a gigantic sky mirror, spends excessive
hours beautifying itself, but to no avail:
thoughts are not attracted to a terminal
brain-stage, even a glamorous one.

But, oh, the splendor begins at noon!
The afternoon mind is a flaming chariot,
igniting thoughts that calculate, coordinate,
consecrate in a seamless simultaneity
of wide-awake energy. The afternoon mind
is a jazz concert of fully-empowered
street-men who can improvise a whole city
out of half a dozen notes and echoes of
Billie Holiday short-changing the blues!

Welcome to evening and the evening mind.
It is sly, subtle, surprisingly
sympathetic. It has been known to sacrifice
itself to lengthen its sister mind,
the night, the deep night of stars and caverns,
of promises and betrayals, of febrile hopes
and monstrous despairs. Hidden deep in the night
mind are the gaudiest poems of humanity, epics of
sleep-walking warriors and lyrics of dark lovers.

But what of the milder sister, the evening mind?
She defers to the heavy sway of the long night,
which Basque poets say is the time between dogs
and wolves. But she has neither claws nor fangs.
She is the twilight that spreads her dimming light
like soft wool blanket over vexed souls and weary
bodies, and she summons sweet unconsciousness
to replace the harsh light of the earlier minds.
And in her half-sleep, half-waking, she purges thoughts.

Daniel Brick

The Poems Have Abandoned Us

First Voice:

The poems are absent, they
have been absent for a week, a full week.
Oh, yes, some have arrived tardy, an hour tardy,
two hours tardy, a half-day even. It does not
matter, because the ones that do show up are not
the ones we want, the ones we need
to strengthen our fiber, to make our senses
keen and our minds fresh, and simply
to make the whole thing work. We've all known
for weeks that it's not working: the poems
we recite don't restore us, the poems we love
no longer reside inside us, we're empty, people!
We've been afraid to say this out loud, because
what remains silent, buried in heart-depth,
in mind-caverns, in voice-fissures,
what lies buried may be just one person's
fancy, one person's terror -
But I'm saying it out loud, and all of you
know what this means. S-A-Y I-T. Someone else,
anyone say it... The loss must be carried...
by all of us. Someone else! Say it!

Second Voice:

We all know he's given to
hyperbole. The way he praised
even novice poems. He could never
tell anyone the truth. Yes, yes,
poetry means so much to him, he wants
everybody to enjoy it, to profit from it,
to do it. That's all very fine, very noble,
very stupid. THIS is where it has gotten us!
But, my friends, the crisis is not terminal.
There are shreds of poems all around us,
discards, rough drafts, debris. We pick up
the detritus, no longer despised. Pieces
lying on the floors of workshops, pieces

littering the Great Hall, love poems left
on garden benches, sacred poems in church pews -
you can find them everywhere you turn. We will
assemble the fragments, work in teams and
build new anthologies. Stop listening to his kind.
HE WOULD HAVE YOU DESPAIR! Cast him out,
denounce him. Bundle up the fragments, form
committees of recovery, replace what has abandoned us:
It will be just as good, if not better.

Third Voice:

The poems have been whipped
into shape. The ones that returned
hid in the libraries on campus. We assume
they got help from followers of that disgraced
one. Several hundred of the fugitive poems
were huddled in the TRAVEL SECTION: the lowest
shelves, where books about places no one goes
were housed. You know, places like Death Valley,
Valley of the Kings, Central Amazonia, the steppes
across the Taiga, that sort of thing. In one day
we dragged them all out. We sent some to be pulped.
The others we whipped into shape. All in one afternoon.
Why not pulp them all, I say. The Iliad, Gilgamesh,
Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, Ezra Pound's Cantos,
All of Rilke, all of Shakespeare, all of - whatever.
Those poems always made me uncomfortable, like I
should be someone else... Pulp 'em all!

Daniel Brick

The True Poet

He is free as the wind, that wind
Penetrated his soul,
Over the years entered his poems
To sing of fair weather and foul.

Boris Pasternak

Those who knew him, knew him
as a difficult man to love,
but love him they did.

Those who read him year after year
struggled reading each new poem,
but they never stopped. What did
they know the rest of us forgot:
that he alone among us accepted
the Necessity of Sacrifice...

He had to eat, he had to sleep,
needed comforting, cried out in pain -

In such things he was one of us,

perhaps even just like us. But his soul
extended so far beyond ours. It touched
boundaries unknown, crossed thresholds
invisible. With his guardian angel
he watched the dawn's earliest rays.

A woman exuding mist and sweet perfume
placed a treasure deep in his soul.

In a whirlwind of snow he saw Jesus Christ
walking ahead of the Twelve, the Christ
of the Gospels whom he might have followed
out of the blizzard. But he stayed in our midst,
and what an agony he suffered for so long,
for our benefit, our health of being. In the slow
end, he simply collapsed into pieces. How did
he remain whole as long as he did? Oh, pray
for him, pray for us....

ALEKSANDR BLOK
IN MEMORIAM

The Muse: Her Absence

Oh, Muse, where do you reside?
How far from my familiar space
is the place you call home
with your eight sisters as companions

of the hearth and even Lord Apollo
as a member of your household? Is it
so far from my humble dwelling beneath the moon?
Does your heart long to stay with them,

your closest family and dearest friends?
In this we are alike, goddess and man. We humans,
if we must travel, want to move always toward,
and not away, from those we love.

But travel you must if you are to touch
that inner chamber in a poet's heart
which releases poem after poem in frenzy
or in calm but always in holy delight.

I know I am given to hyperbole -
Forgive me if it strikes you as ingratitude.
It is simply my mind's readiness to make poetry
that anxiously awaits your fulfilling touch.

And so I enter this pine-scented grove
in the resonant quiet of this winter afternoon,
and walk slowly and reverently toward
whatever encounter you deem me worthy.

Take your time, beloved Muse. I have all
the time in the mortal world. It spreads out
before me like a desired summer landscape
poised in wonder and light calling itself HOPE.

Daniel Brick

A Hymn For Our New Year: 2016 Ce

As if the bloom of flowers lasted
into the next dry season, as if summer's
warmth embraced autumn's chill, as if
our union stretched across vast prairies.

As if everything we knew as reality shifted
and handy dandy we knew it all as fantasy.
As if we became guardians of all the dreams
when they slowly swelled into awakened being.

As if saints and sanctuaries were commonplace.
As if virtues smothered vices, and people,
released from the weight of sin, light-hearted and
light-headed, joined the circle dance of the spheres.

As if every language became language of the heart,
as if every heart spoke only truth to other hearts,
as if truth bonded heart to heart in everlasting amity.
As if we were persuaded this world is a Paradise-Garden -

Because we made it so, by turning AS IF into IT IS.

Daniel Brick

The Muse: Her Presence

This morning, in the gray light
of early winter, I was promised
a poem. 'It's waiting for you, '
she said softly. 'Look for it
in familiar places near home.
Not that distant home of your origins,
but the one close by, that has served
you so well, in these years of endeavor. And-'
And she had departed, in the middle of
a thought. It's almost a routine by now:
she is summoned by another poet, perhaps
like myself, perhaps not. I don't know -
How many poets does she attend? How does
she determine her visitations? Does she
check names - This is useless and unworthy.
I'm acting like a cast-off lover, a jealous
one, a hurt one... I will soon fulfill
this morning's promise: the poem, already
half written, lies face-down on the table.
What else is there to consider. Oh, yes,
it is the lingering scent of her presence.

Daniel Brick

Forms Of Faith

Some put their faith in wine.
They quaff glass after glass:
Chablis or Malbec, Merlot or
Pinot Grigio - It matters not

to the determined drinkers who
throw back their heads and spill
their liquid delight into their throats
stammering their false hope: In Vino Veritas.

Others put their faith in money,
because money generates money
adding gravitas to their reputations,
or it can be reduced to elegant equations

in cyberspace. Oh, what delight they feel!
They can hide behind their invisible wealth,
and feel comfortable as millionaires. And
their charities bribe the indigent into silence.

And what of the men with guns, that spew
fifty bullets a minute, or is it a thousand?
What of them who are hungry for revenge
and make for themselves a feast of blood?

What if it is not men with guns, but
handy-dandy guns with men? Oh, those guns spew
bullets faster than those men conceive thoughts.
Must we bow to a new kind of intelligence?

But I know a woman who places her faith in FAITH.
What is this Faith? It is the Pilgrim's Path
to Paradise, which leads beyond thirst, beyond poverty,
beyond hate. See, she is waiting for you just ahead. Oh, join her!

Daniel Brick

The Roads

When I was old enough to know
the difference between what belonged
to me and what belonged to everyone, I took
the first road I saw, leaving my home behind.

It was a necessary step, followed
by more steps, perhaps not as necessary,
but by then the habit of moving was
instilled inside me. It's still there.

See, I'm walking right now away from you.
It's time for you to catch up to me.
Adopt my gait, imitate my demeanor. See,
we're side by side, the gap between us closed.

What things belong to us now? Actually
nothing. It could all be taken from us
in a second by the men with guns. They know
we don't have one. It's in their calculations.

But we can always tread a different path.
The roads are everywhere, over the land,
across the waters, in the air. The roads
will everywhere bring us together, sooner

or later. Let's start over from a common point:
you are standing still, on the path, half of you
turned away toward the distance, half of you
faces me. I am walking quickly, closing the gap.

Daniel Brick

A Disc Of Shining Light

from The Book of the Third Prophet
chapter 17, verses 11-13

The Angel Valadriel descended from Heaven to Earth, and she lived among human beings as one of them. She brought into their lives the Shining Light.

The angel's name was Valadriel, and she chose for herself an uncommon destiny. From her earliest awakening, she saw shining in the highest heaven a disc of purest light, burning, brightening, glistening, glowing, growing larger and spinning, casting divine light over all of the angels.

Their wings folded, their faces radiant, the angels were transfixed in joy, and joy spread across the fields of heaven, flooding the angels and also the redeemed souls with measureless grace... Valadriel alone was sad: she closed her eyes and beat her wings fiercely, striving to reach the source of the LIGHT...

Valadriel flew toward immense sheets of cosmic LIGHT, free, untrammelled, unabsorbed. She flew on a steep incline of the time-space energy field. Everywhere, all through time, galaxies were forming, suns igniting, systems colliding and making super-systems. Valadriel kept flying, despite the paralyzing awe, and the small doubt that was growing larger in her. But her desire was already known to GOD, GOD had already granted her wish:
The angel Valadriel and a new Disc of Shining Light!

The Shining Disc dimmed as it descended, descending from the highest heaven to the higher heaven it dimmed to starlight, from there to the middle heaven it dimmed to sunlight, from there to the lower heaven it dimmed to moonlight, from there to the lowest heaven it dimmed to daylight. from there to Earth it dimmed to lightless night, and there, there

to a darkness alternating with daylight
where Valadriel resides, in natural realm that is
bereft of GOD'S presence as angels and saints know it.
She spins the disc and she feels human sorrow, the light
begins to glow and she feels the weight of human sin,
the light shines feebly and she feels what humans call hope.
slowly, slowly, the disc casts divine grace among human beings,
steadily a joy spreads across the fields of the earth.

Daniel Brick

Night Thoughts November 26-27,2015

The world, my friend, is so clever:
it turns one of its many faces toward us,
usually the one smiling gently, or
the other familiar one, quaintly melancholic.

We greet the world with tenderness
whenever we sense its fellow-feelings
that link people and place tightly together
and create a wholeness of being we call Earth.

But in our darker thoughts, do we not
sense something alien in the air
we breathe, as if it could choke us
as readily as nourishing us? We become aware

of the relentless mismatch between human
hope and earthly life. What we desire
is never what we receive, or we receive only
a portion of our hope, and this we call despair.

Is the world smiling over us even as we
wrestle with despair, our hands outstretched
to clutch any shred of hope still lingering
nearby, even close enough to grasp?

Or is the world's visage melancholy,
as it spreads its soothing beauty around us?
Does not the air itself prove to be an ally, carrying
our prayers into an overarching sky we still call heaven?

Why not then conclude, after these night thoughts
have tumbled through our minds up to dawn,
the world is not some malformed demi-god,
but our beloved home and we its happy denizens?

Daniel Brick

A Dance

In Memoriam

Victims of the Paris Massacre

November 13,2015

Oh, the nights in Paris!

We have been temporary Parisians
for two weeks, and every hour
our delight is keener. We might
expect to be jaded, weary of nocturnal
pleasures, ready to sink into complacency
and complaint. But no exhaustion
of body and soul assails us. We are like
pilgrims refreshed after reaching their goal,
celebrating a festival of expectations,
in a city where the clocks run backwards
giving us more time than we consume.

Just yesterday we bonded with strangers,
all of us neighbors of the autumn night
which welcomed us, as if honey spilled out of
the moon's interior and fell to earth
along with its pale blue light
to sweeten everything it touched,
flowing over us, making even the saddest
person among us shine with simple pleasure.
After the concert, we shuffled toward the exit,
pressed body to body, all of us smiling because
some inner delight in each of us stretched forth,
blending together in the warmth of the moment.

When we hit the street, and the cold air
slapped our cheeks, we suddenly joined hands,
and began to dance in a long line of revelers,
twisting and swaying, singing snatches of songs,
or just shouting our joy to the moon. Pedestrians
with other goals to reach joined our ranks,
all of us laughing at the sheer nonsense
of all this frivolity. We became for that moment
what we are meant to be - one body becoming one soul.

And then almost as quickly as it began,
the dance came to its end, as people hugged and separated.
And we dispersed, under the honeyed light of the moon.

Daniel Brick

Father And Daughter For Jean

There were many rehearsals for this day.
A dear friend, some years ago, fixed
his blue eyes on mine. 'Burying your father
is a profound experience, ' he said, then
the blue light drained out of his eyes.
'Losing him was pain enough.' He fell
into silence, like a singer, who, at the end
of his endurance, has to leave the stage.
But my friend roused himself, 'Be sure
to make the most of what remains.'
And then the silence covered both of us.

Some rehearsals disguised themselves as outings,
simply time together. I remember walking through
the woods, we lost track of time, and suddenly
the pall of darkness swept over us. I could not
see my father. I stretched out my hand. Nothing.
I waved my hand back and forth, as if I could
wipe away the night. Then I touched his shoulder
and felt a current of life flow from him into me!
It would always be like that: his life spilling forth,
connecting with me, becoming me. That dark walk
taught me something that did not fit in words.
It could not be spoken, only felt and felt again.

Other rehearsals have been scary. Once he was
so sick, he did want want to talk. My mother
and I brought him food, but he ate nothing, just
lay there with eyes half-shut. Then as I watched,
he fell into a fitful sleep... 'Jean honey,
okay, you go to your bed now, I'll be all right.'
At first I thought I was dreaming, but it was
really his voice, I hugged him awkwardly, and he
gently stroked my hair. 'Sweet dreams, honey.'

Some of the rehearsals seemed to be about me.
but they were about us both. The day I took my degree
I lost all confidence in a flash of doubt.
The whole enterprise was about to collapse.

I was not supposed to see him until hours later,
but there he was, standing in the half-opened
doorway. He gave me a gift wrapped in red paper
as well as he could do it. I still have
that little gift, and his strength. He gave me
pieces over time, now I inherit the rest.
Rehearsal time is over, performance time begins.

Daniel Brick

The Poet's Truth

I)

The poems are absent, they
have been absent for a week, a full week...
Oh, yes, some have arrived tardy, an hour tardy,
two hours tardy, a half-day... It does not
matter, the ones who do show up are not the ones
we want, the ones we need
to strengthen our fiber, to make
our senses keen, and - to make
the whole thing work. We've all known
for weeks that it's not working:
the poems we recite don't restore us,
the poems don't reside inside us,
we're empty... We've been afraid
to say this out loud, because what
remains silent, buried in heart-depth,
in mind-caverns, in voice-fissures,
what lies buried may be just one person's
fancy, one person's terror... But I'm
saying it out loud, and all of you know
what this means. S-A-Y I-T Someone else!
The loss must be carried by all of us.
S-A-Y I-T Say it! Someone else!

II)

We all know he's given to
hyperbole. The way he praised
even the weakest poems. He could never
tell anyone the truth: yes, yes, poetry
means so much to him, he wants everybody
to enjoy it, to profit from it,
to do it - That's all very true, very noble,
very stupid. THIS is where it's gotten us!
But, my friends, the crisis is not terminal,
unless we allow it to be - terminal.
There are shreds of poetry all around us,
discards, rough drafts, debris. We pick up
the detritus, no longer despised. Pieces
lying on the floor of workshops, pieces

littering the Great Halls, love poems left
on garden benches, sacred poems in church pews,
everywhere you will find it. We will assemble
fragments, work in teams to polish them.
HE WOULD HAVE YOU DESPAIR! Forget him
and his kind. Bundle up the fragments,
form committees of recovery, replace
what has abandoned us with what remains
in us!

III)

Those who knew him, knew him
as a difficult man to love,
but love him they did.
Those who read him year after year
struggled reading each new poem,
but they never stopped. What did
they know the rest of us forgot:
that he alone among us knew
necessity of Sacrifice. He had
to eat, he had to sleep, needed
comforting, cried out in pain -
in such things he was one of us,
perhaps even just like us. But
his soul extended so far beyond ours,
it touched boundaries unknown, crossed
thresholds invisible. But he stayed
in our midst for so long, and what an agony
he suffered... for our benefit, our
health of being. In the slow end, he simply
collapsed into pieces. How did he remain
whole for as long as he did? Oh, pray for him,
pray for us....

In Memoriam Aleksandr Blok

Daniel Brick

Poetry

There is a voice within each of us
which is everyone's voice, there is
a hearing within each of us that listens
to the beating of a common heart,
there is a mind everywhere that
spreads its light over all of us.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

A Dome Of Dutch Elms Memory And Meditation

In my early years,
the streets of St. Paul were lined
on both sides with Dutch Elms,
growing profusely across three seasons
of the year. The trees had grown
to great heights, and at the limit
of their upward growth, the branches
spread out, and from both sides
they joined and created an arch
over street and boulevards, enclosing
them beneath a dome of leaves and branches.

It was under that dome I had
my being and grew from childhood
through adolescence into early manhood.
Sun shafts falling into the canopy
with their white light absorbed
them yellow-green of the leaves
and filtered that mellow color
over my existence. And its beauty
touched me as deeply as any beauty
on earth, or any imaginable
in my young mind. And it lasted.

That sight was not only beautiful
in itself, but I believe it was the source
of my sense of beauty: what is calm
and stable, upright and lasting, something
beyond me that yet still contains me, what
presents many things in the world which
hold me rapt in wonder, but also brings me
deep within to an interior place where
all is silent and absolutely still, and
my delight is a portion of the whole of wonder.
I spent many summer days, sitting

beneath that dome, with its lattice of branches
and canopy of leaves, reading the ancient poets -
Horace and Ovid, and further back, Theocritus

and Callimachus. They were the threshold
to a sacred time when gods and humans and animals
were all thriving under the dome of Gaia's life.
Each day ended for me as it did for them
with the slow crescendo of the cicadas' tremulous song.
Beauty does not wait upon our wills or nature.
It is a perpetual stretching out in revelation, then
a movement forward into some other arena

of display. We who live our lives, burnished
and bright, under the light of the sun
must take what is offered, when it is offered,
bound as we are to time, which also also does
not wait upon our wills or nature. Time is not
pitched for human delight. It is poetry's mission
to bring delight within the boundary of time.
What else can we do but surrender to time's flow,
link it to beauty by means of verse, and watch
their royal procession under the dome
of Dutch Elms passing through our lives.

Daniel Brick

John Of Kronstadt

What marks, makes the saint
so different from you or me,
from all of us lumped together
into one huge disorderly family?
Is it the saint's early prayer
that fold upon fold of light descend
upon one and all, even the unworthiest
among us, that no evil disturb
the poise of faith within each heart?
And in what tarnished place
are my morning thoughts lodged
while his embrace the whole of hope?

Or is it his gesture of charity
at every moment, acts of virtue
so sudden, so spontaneous nothing
of them remains after their doing,
no sign that points back to him,
anonymous and fleeting, known only
to the witnessing angels? Meanwhile
I amass good deeds like wealth, swelling
my account in heaven as a hedge against
harsh judgment, so fearful am I
that mercy is too good to be true
for one who has lived a narrow life.

Or is it his life in prayer, the Pilgrim's
unceasing prayer - LORD JESUS CHRIST,
HAVE MERCY UPON ME - recited twelve thousand
times a day, that opens wide above him
the gates of heaven, granting him a vision
that makes worldly things dissolve
in the celestial light, invisible
to all in earth but the saints, who respond
to this glory in their evening prayer,
Lord, give me nothing more. Shower
your grace upon that solitary soul who
wanders, bereft of hope and faith. Lord, save him.

Across Time Part Two For Liza

Bayreuth,18__

I stand alone, cradling
the score against my heart.
I have written the Master's
directions in the margins.
I wait, in this narrow corridor,
sensing your presence. No one
will disturb us. Stage hands are busy
turning a bare platform in medieval
Nurnburg. There's the church where it
all begins, there's a field with a single
linden tree, there's the village square,
empty now, not even a nightwatchman nearby.

I feel a twist in space, a jolt
of time, and you are yourself,
by me, smiling, saying, 'What if
time does not matter to us, because
we don't mind it? ' The moment is happy.
I look into your face, as I open
the score. Your eyes widen as you
read the score. 'So you will be Eva
in this performance! ' I close the score,
and hand it to you. You press it next to
your heart. Sometimes our laughter is close
to tears. All afternoon we are side by side.
The nightwatchman rehearses nearby, time presses.

St. Petersburg,19__

The auditorium already overflows.
And it is only six o'clock. It will be
Blok's first appearance in eight months.
I scan the crowd. Oh, why are you tardy?
Aristocrats, with their fine manners and
vicious opinions, are irritated by working
people occupying the front row seats. Students
are taking turns reciting poems of Blok
from the podium he will use. They look small.
A professor I knew at the University talks

about Blok, 'His poems are a fever of the heart.'

I turn around and see people streaming across the threshold. When I turn back, you are leaning against the wall, within inches of me. One smile covers both faces. 'Don't worry. I don't mind standing for Aleksandr Aleksandrovich! ' Just then, Blok appears, appearing gaunt and tired but determined. In the silence, his voices rises, IN THE CALM NIGHT, A MAN IS ALONE AND LOOKS UP INTO A FIELD OF STARS. 'STARS, STARS, ' HE CRIES. 'WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS GRIEF? ' AND THE STARS, THE STARS TELL HIM EVERYTHING....

The Pilgrims' Highway,20__

The overcrowded bus tumbled down the highway under a clear blue October sky. I noticed a child was watching me very intently, the way an adult looks at something fascinating, with questions bouncing back and forth in their head. I turned away and tried to read my book. I startled when the child, suddenly standing next to my seat, was talking casually, like a grown-up. But he was holding the thread of a balloon of many colors, which tugged the thread, anxious to ascend. 'Lady, ' he began. 'You look sad, so I'm giving you my balloon which made me happy earlier today.' Surprised, I replied, 'Oh, thank you, but I can't take your balloon.' He replied quickly, 'You're not taking it, I'm giving it. My grandfather told me, When you're happy, Ivan, give a piece of that happiness to someone else, and your share of happiness will be lighter and you will float freely. So, here's your balloon.' And he deftly wrapped the thread around my left wrist. 'There, now both of us will be happy. My grandfather always made me happy, and told me I should share that happiness, and it was grandmother who told him about happiness and sharing it. So, I guess,

grandmother was the real angel, because no one told her. She just knew.' The boy squeezed in next to me. 'Do you believe in angels, Lady.' I said, very seriously because he was asking me sincerely, 'Yes, I very much believe in angels.' He looked satisfied, and was quiet for a moment. 'Lady, just because you don't see him at this moment doesn't mean he isn't here. Time is really big, he might be lost in it, but he will see the balloon when you launch it.' I was speechless. He smiled once more, then ran back to his family, and they got off the bus. I wanted to wave to him, but he was talking to his younger siblings. The bus lurched on.

I reached my destination, and it seemed secondary. I walked along a grassy lane, under a late afternoon sun, came to a small lake lined with yellow-leafed trees, and, after saying a prayer, released the many-colored balloon. It leaped into the air, a breeze up there caught it and it tumbled around, but then broke free and rose up and up, into a flash of light that hurt my eyes. Now the balloon was free, even of my eyes. Now I had to trust the air, the wind, the sky... Oh, my friend, a child has blessed us. Oh, my friend.

Daniel Brick

Across Time Part One For Liza

Once we crossed paths in Athens.
The sun blasted the white stucco buildings
with waves of heat, ignited the Aegean Sea
to liquid fire, and we were dazzled...
You were a priestess in the Temple
to the Unknown God, and served
with the devotion of a believer who waits
centuries for the arrival of her God.
In her certainty she greets every day
as if the weight of time were as light
as the flight of doves from pillar to altar
at the shining height of day. Who was I
in those faraway days but a fool,
consumed with worldly profit and the might
of arms. I marched past the Temple
of the Unknown God, the proud head
of armored men, brandishing an ivory-hilted
iron sword I expected to ensure my worldly
glory. I left behind the Temple, shining
in yellow light, and you, enveloped in its glow.

Again, ages later, we crossed paths
in a market town of many thousands,
protected by a mighty Duke, whose armies
criss-crossed the vast surrounding plains,
running amok. They slashed through fields
and villages, pillaging, stealing, raping,
until the mighty Duke summoned them home
to their stables. He distributed the stolen
wealth among them, giving me a token of his take.
I served that wicked master with both eyes open,
I served as a scholar and a healer, practicing
the arts of peace with a war-lord. I amassed
my private treasury and lived in luxuriance.
You were there. You were a Guardian of the Shrine
of Our Lady of Peace, whose sweet visage
was reflected in being. People of the market town,
women and men and children, all lived in fear.
Every day they brought offerings to Our Lady of Peace,

and whispered as you raised their prayers of thanksgiving, 'Is she not like a sister to our Lady? Is she not an emissary from above in our midst?' Even the ragged soldiers of the mighty Duke, drunk in daylight, wanton at night, walked quietly past the Shrine, even bowing their heads. And your gaze flowed over the crowd, always searching. But I slipped past you, in pursuit of prestige, proud of my erudition, vain, ever vain, oblivious to your grace.

Time became heavier than I could bear. I wandered wearily, restlessly, hopelessly from one dark place to another dark place. I remember a huge mountain looming against my sight, I remember a climb that took decades to achieve, I remember an abyss that beckoned me, and a fall into silence and nothingness in a second! A long sleep must have followed, a sleep which coerced me to abandon my glory, my ambitions, my Self. One moment in millions of moments, I dreamed of a flight of doves, and I recognized your presence in it. Another moment I dreamed Our Lady of Peace smiled over me, and I knew you had interceded... The rest was only a heaviness and a blankness.

Daniel Brick

Ascent And Apotheosis

Andrea Mantegna's PARNASSUS,
or MARS AND VENUS, painted
between 1497 - 1502

Do not try so hard my friend,
to mount these steps. Do not
try at all: trust fully your mind
in its repose, listen to its granite
calm and say within its fathomless
silence what it is you desire...

and it will happen, you will embrace
your desire, as your inflamed heart burns
but is not consumed. You have slept
for ages past counting, you have awakened
to your bliss. There you bent your head in shame.
There you were judge, prisoner, jailer, all at once.

Here nothing must be hidden, nothing is false.
Every moment shine in its truth of being. You look
at me with speechless eyes, but here eyes can listen,
can speak, can touch and taste every good thing.
If you love what you see, it will be given to you.
We two are in the precincts of MOUNT PARNASSUS.

Look at that stone arch at the summit
of our climb. See the MUSES NINE dance,
their gowns billowing in the gentle wind
of their intertwining movements. The air itself
becomes the dance that carries us forward.
Feel how you float on a cushion of air, without

effort, without strain. You are already within
this dance, it envelops you, and the sweet sound
you hear within and without is Orpheus, the divine player,
whose music fills every space, every moment...

Look above the stone arch. Can you see through
the celestial light with your new sight? Open your eyes

to Eternity! From this moment forth, you will never look back. It is body and soul becoming one that gives you these new powers. Do not resist any longer. Let yourself become your New Self. Look, look above the stone arch! Your eyes can now see through the veil of celestial light the truth of things.

The blessed pair is blessing us all. Mars and Venus, side by side, Mars no longer a man of iron and blood, and Venus no longer a wayward woman, look with favor upon us as we stand side by side, in their presence, bright and blissful in their bounteous regard. They preside over our revels. Their harmony is the world's harmony.

My friend, this is the central place, the Omphalus, the hub around which everything, us included, revolves, as the measures of the dance bring pattern, as the planetary music, sympathy, as our fused bodies and souls, happiness, each to all and all to each, this is our home forever, this is the place of wonders, our ascent and apotheosis....

Daniel Brick

Late Reading

The print is getting smaller
for each book I try to read.
I squeeze my sight to sharpen
those ever smaller letters, which
recede from my once immediate grasp.
What might I be missing?
Are there secrets being revealed
that to my eyes are just a jumble
of opaque letters? Are there new
patterns of writing that communicate
between the lines that are just
a horizontal blur to me? Could people,
incipient lovers all, have found fresh
emotions, once lodged deep in the heart,
now displayed openly in a print
that will not reach my hungry heart
because my sight is empty? How can I swell
my gaze to encompass such new wonders?
Or is this simply another betrayal
of time against the aging mind, still agile
enough to sustain desire but weakening
every moment its grasp of fleeting things?

Daniel Brick

In Sebastian's Bar

So, traveler, you've heard of us
on your travels. I'm not surprised.
Word travels fast, but actions even
faster. I should know, I've been
tending bar here for thirty years.

And I know what I know, namely,
there are no more miracles left to descend.
That amiable fate may be reserved for
other earths in the nocturnal depths
that hold us at the edge of our galaxy.

Oh, yes, tending bar is not my only
passion. Our view of the night sky
from Port Trakl makes us all astronomers...
But I have been told, eventually everyone
will pass through Port Trakl, and I will

look into their eyes for a brief moment.
but it will be sufficient. You must realize,
the helpless come here for the rumored
miracles. The hopeless come here to die
without any fuss. It is my mission to keep

the helpless from descending into the hopeless.
The sun will always bend toward darkness, it is
the nature of things. But the dawn, which begins
far out at sea, yes, you know what I mean,
the sun... rises over all of us.

Daniel Brick

The Pensioner

People ask me, Now you're retired
from government service, will you
leave Port Trakl for some mainland city?
I am puzzled by this question. Do they
think my work is finished, like a cheap novel?

What will you do now? they ask.
And I answer, I will keep body
and soul together, because they tend
to drift apart. They have no interest
in each other, but they depend wholly

each on the other. How can soul, that
pure figure of light, scrounge around
the hinterlands, looking for traces of
the elixir? And how is the body capable
of choosing which realm is just right

for its animal happiness? Everyday
I must solder together body and soul
into some semblance of one identity.
It is the task of a lifetime, really
of many lifetimes across spacetime.

Daniel Brick

The Old Astronomer

I wonder about the old astronomer.
Does he recall the heady days of
his youth following his unveiling
of one of the Universe's secrets?
A new star system. A cluster of
Earth-like planets. The dispersal
of an occluding gas cloud. Does he
page through a new astronomy textbook
to see how his discovery factors
into the total edifice of science?
Or does the thing discovered occupy
the whole stage in the textbook?
He might be nodding in assent
at this very moment. Yes, that's
as it should be. We transient
observers are not the issue. It is
this superabundant vast panoply of
matter and energy that takes our
breath away and then restores it
as new things become familiar things.
The astronomer's still nimble eyes
widen as he contemplates yet again
a cosmic drama that both dwarfs
and inflates us. For a long time,
he smiles a 21st century smile:
Oh, the irony of that smile,
sustained by our prideful knowledge
of things. In another two hundred
years, that same smile will crease
the features of one of his descendants,
as yet more darkness is suffused in light.
We will ever stand on shifting ground,
he concludes. Never fully certain of our
balance, we live and thrive on the unsteady
ground of perpetual discovery. Were it not
for my vanity, I'd be constantly dizzy,
leaning left, then right, then left...
Enough of these thoughts! Tonight Ruth and I
will listen side by side to THE MAGIC FLUTE,

and we will feel the bedrock of a thirty-year marriage... And thus the mind that conceives quasars and black holes and multiverses grows calm, its quest for knowledge stilled.

Daniel Brick

Impatient Verses 12 October 2015 2: 00 Am

This is the poem that should not be. It's too late for poetry: it's time for sleep, and precious little time is left of this night for sleeping. A few hours of pre-REM sleep, nothing further or deeper, very unsatisfactory, like a sports event with only half the players on the field, all visibly too weak to play, hung over or out of shape, unfocused and droopy, with no delight in their eyes. Things are bad all around. It is the dry time, the drought looms within. But the poems to be are of another mind, they are mission-oriented, they are confident of their voice, love clarion brilliance.

The clock records the time of my vigil slipping into oblivion with the machine's reliable disposition. Meanwhile, my pen scratches across the over size paper, leaving a trail of words to spread across vast white spaces. The hours stolen from sleep are determined to post a new poem. Their self worth depends on it. Their representative wants me to rip a poem out of a newspaper, a slice of reality still wet from creation. You know the type: reorder the journalist's words and let sense and nonsense contend to see which one will prevail.

Instead it's as if I had shot my arrow straight down a row of axes, through the top loop of each one, a feat to make me another Odysseus coming home to be king. And if you ask me what it says,

I'll tell you to read between the lines.
Or consider this: During my writing session,
I went out on my balcony, and saw a mild day
had become a turbulent night, with lines of
fierce winds thwarting each other as they bent
branches and turned the lawn to a raging sea.
From what invisible reservoir here on earth,
did nature derive such awesome power?
From what depths of being did the winds
draw their strength and endurance?
Who authored this Poem of Force in my backyard?

Daniel Brick

Dimitri's Soul

I saw my soul on one occasion.
It occurred early on a late summer
day, when the foliage makes its sincerest
efforts to appear green and healthy.
I had no such pretense in me, that's
why people loved me. I embraced everyone
with bear hug equally, then asked
for a handout, to secure the blessings
of the Holy Mother. But my sole concern
was the blessings and curses of vodka!

I sat apart from the other villagers,
climbed up a steep hill, breathless
but alone. There I could see the village
while, and didn't have to greet anyone.
Just me and my bottle of vodka. So that
late morning I was ricking back and forth
in a stupor. I sprawled on the grass, laughed
into the sun, and my head was fastened
to my neck by a tiny thread of blood.
I could fall into pieces at any moment.

Suddenly, a shiver went through me, head
to toe. I pulled my great coat tightly
against my chest. Then a shudder convulsed
me, and my legs shot out, kicking violently.
Then just as suddenly my body stiffened, it
was rigid, frozen in place. IS THIS THE END
OF DIMITRI? HOLY VIRGIN, LOOK ON ME WITH MERCY!
Then I realized I was covered with sweat, my eyes
burned with strange fire which pierced things,
cleared a path right through them, and -

came to rest on a figure clothed in yellow light,
crowned with a red aureole. Her face was serenely
shining. Sometimes it was the face of a beautiful
woman and other times of a sweet child. Behind her
perched on a gem-like tree was a pure white bird
who fanned his wings again and again. The bird

was enveloped in feathery yellow light. THIS IS YOUR SOUL, DIMITRI. IT IS LONELY AND UNCARED FOR. IT IS READY TO GIVE UP WHAT REMAINS OF ITS LIFE AS A SACRIFICE. While she spoke her eyes burned!

I began to sob uncontrollably, I fell to the ground, clutching the ground and howling my sobs. Hot tears scalded my eyes, my heart was bursting. When I recovered, I was lying face down in the grass. It was dusk... I left the half full vodka bottle there in the grass. It was the last vodka bottle I have touched. I have taken many small steps over the past dozen years and completed a long journey. I often see that yellow light just out of reach, and my soul is airy and weightless.

Daniel Brick

Dan's Path 5 October 2015

I walk through SALEM HILLS
following the twists and turns,
the looping and circling
of its many paths past oak trees,
prairie lawns, sumac lanes and
quiet ponds, following also the paths
of my thoughts, random, transient,
looping just like the park trails.
But today, a surprise as I approached
a familiar lane of sumac, beckoning me
with its new autumn red attire. A plaque
pounded into a tree overlooking
the lower path caught my eye. The
inscription said, DAN'S PATH and
an arrow pointed left, the way I was
headed. In much smaller print the dates
of his birth and death were inscribed.
Only thirty years old when he passed
from their presence to whom he was
a friend or a lover or a brother,
so many possibilities but only one
fate. I imagine a community of people
buried him in a plot, said their final
farewells, and then decided upon this
memorial path. And on a day perhaps
much like today assembled in the woods,
chose the tree above the sumac lane,
and stood in silence as the plaque
was pounded into place. Sheets of sunlight
cascaded over you as you said a second
final farewell. And then it was over,
and you dispersed... But one among you
lingered alone, under the tree's shade, staring
at the name and occasionally glancing
at the path below. I watch over your
silence at the edge of speech. What is it
you want to say? I am listening. Do you
want to say Dan is in God's heaven,
with Jesus and the saints? I will bow

my head prayerfully. But maybe you believe death is a final end, and Dan now lives only in your memory, forever thirty, virile and healthy, full of more life than thirty years could use up, an excess of being which touches you with its undying promise, its unquenchable spirit. If this is what you say I will applaud the strength of your memory. But perhaps you believe there is an immense cavern in which all of our dead sleep, holding hands and slipping in and out of each other's dreams, and no evil can disturb their delight so perfect is this sleep across eternity. If this is what you say, I will share your smile and we will briefly join hands. Whatever you want to say, Whatever you need to say, say it... I am listening still.

Daniel Brick

Debussy

While listening to your music
as a young man when it was still
new to me, I imagined we were friends,
sharing our lives of carefree poverty,
able to make do with our musical talents
to play in bars or churches or schools,
as chance would have it, and sometimes
filling in for absent musicians
in the Lamoreaux Orchestra, fully
aware Mallarme and his friends were
in the audience, anxious to hear
more Wagner, as we were to play him,
being still Wagnerites ourselves.
And so we played THE RING excerpts
with passion and verve, and made
the LOHENGRIN Prelude shimmer with
mystic light. And late in the concert,
the TRISTAN Prelude almost reduced us
to tears. Afterwards, we feasted on
tables replete with food and wine,
spread out on the lawn by rich patrons
of the arts. And we were delighted
in our artful lives... But Sunday's
respite over, we returned to our hack
jobs. But already in your mind swirled
the sounds that would transform Music
into something new and wondrous. And
even with that thought, my day dream
closed, and I was alone in my apartment,
playing records in solitude of those
later achievements: Preludes, Images,
Nocturnes and Seascapes and a sublime
opera, celebrating the unexpected love
of a lonely boy and an abandoned girl,
a prince and princess no less, whose
hesitant gestures, rooted in deep desire,
flowered into rapture. Despite the dark
forest in which they were trapped, they
became beacons to each other, and joy

flourished. Your music imparts happiness to them and us who listen, and, of course, it is this happiness which lasts forever.

Daniel Brick

Theresa's Remembrance

The October afternoon was cold and rain-soaked, sixteen years ago, when the news was delivered. Roberto, our postman then, got on his bicycle and pedaled over to my house despite the bad weather. He needed to hand me the telegram. You know, he and Antonio were best friends, from childhood. Oh, why do some men love the sea? Roberto doesn't, but my Antonio, he said it himself, 'After you and our children, it is the sea that I live for.' And the doom of that day in October, you never forget these things: Roberto's coming, the heavy aspect of his eyes, the utterly empty gray sky, and the distant moan of the sea. I stood in the doorway, holding but not reading the telegram. Later, he held me as I sobbed, and when the children came home, he told them. His kindness was a blessing, wasn't it?

Why do some men so love the sea? Antonio would grow restless as his furlough came to its end, he'd fuss over details of the cargo, check the nautical maps, and in his eyes there was that look of men who see beyond what the rest of us can't even imagine... When he was gone, I took the children down to the beach, with the surf crashing against the shore rocks. And they would shout in their small voices, 'Papa, Papa, come home, we want you!' And you know,

he always did, season after season,
until his jealous lover claimed him
as her own. But the children only
had the most precious memories of him.
They always felt his presence in some
way, as I still do, all these years
later. Yes, despite that lure of
the sea, we were his first love.

Daniel Brick

Envoi (Port Trakl)

Isn't this the right moment
for saying Good-Bye: Let's part
now: a kiss, a final embrace,
perhaps a few words inspired
by the occasion, something
memorably poetic, like:
All our partings happened yesterday.

'Will you return soon? ' you ask
persistently. 'Will I be the one
you remember best? ' you insist.
Darling, if I knew answers
to those questions, I would not
have sojourned at Port Trakl.
Isn't it sufficient to say:

'Life is an Enigma.' What other
word is big enough to encompass
what we are, what we do,
what we become? When I'm gone,
walk every day along the beach,
where the surf relentlessly
pounds the land mile after mile.

Those waves will have first
pounded my ship, tossed
my crew back and forth,
threatened the safety of
our cargo, made us wonder
why we became sailors. But
the real wonder is -

The boundlessness of the sea,
of which there is no end. It
carries us and our dreams
over the crests of great waves, or
gently propels us in league
with the stars and the wind.

We are summoned to its greatness.

Daniel Brick

People At Port Trakl Part Two

One of Us

The aging Englishman
lived alone, and
even a steady flow
of whores could not dent
his 'essential solitude, '
as he put it,
bragging into his gin and tonic.

He lived in a furnished room
in the luxurious Hyperion Hotel,
perched on a cliff overlooking
the ocean and the port. Were they
not the Antipodes of his life?
Once he had captained ships,
now he could not master his daily life.

Often he would be absent
for days and nights, presumably
indulging in a fierce binge
in his lonely furnished room.
When he resurfaced finally
at one of our Port Trakl
dives, he looked as if

he had stared at Death, face
to face, never having flinched
even once. Soon his appearance
improved, his wit returned,
he was funny, a delight to be
with, a shallow drinker,
with some of the sea captain restored.

But no friendship ensued. He could
not be trusted. His wit turned
venomous, his speech, although
perfect Spanish, became boorish.
We looked away, we walked away,

tense days followed, a week or more,
before we relocated our rapport.

So we were surprised, stunned
really, when an English woman
arrived alone at Port Trakl
a month after his death,
claiming to be his widow.
Her papers were all in proper order.
She left in two days with the body.

Only then, after we had lost him
a second time, only then, in subsequent
months, when life settled stolidly
into routines and habits, only then,
when empty chairs and boredom
reminded us of the light he had shed
did we grasp, He was One of Us.

Portraits of Two Young Poets

I

The young poet combs his hair
gently but firmly. He will not
tolerate even a single hair
out of place. His only suit,
a tropical off-white affair,
is frayed, worn through, and
impeccably pressed. He faces
the world with pride every day,
whether it is a crowd, or
a single friend. When you engage
him in conversation, he fixes
his gaze on you, and you can
feel the ancient rhythms
of verse coursing through his being.

II

The young poet combs her hair
gently but firmly. The dark brown
tresses fall gracefully past

her shoulders. She trusts they will
behave themselves. Meanwhile, she
writes poems for herself alone,
sometimes even addressed to herself.
She is too shy to share them, but she
carries them everywhere. She longs
to be recognized by a kindred spirit,
or a soul mate. Gardening displays
her tenderness, her care for living
things. Because of her nurturing,
flowers bloom in Port Trakl's only garden.

III

They met through music: it was
an affair of the mind. They became
familiar through poetry: it was
an affair of the heart. Neither the boy
or the girl believed in luck, or even
good fortune. They were early resigned
to a life of suffering. But that first
night they always recalled as magical,
when she stepped in for his drunken teacher,
playing piano to his violin playing,
and the hearing of three hundred citizens
was blessed by Beethoven's Spring Sonata.
Later that week they exchanged poems,
and each embraced the soul of the other.

Daniel Brick

People At Port Trakl Part One

The Ministry of Fr. Sirocco

'The helpless come here for
rumored miracles. Once they occurred
on Sundays and Holy Days reliably.
Then the world gave itself over
to godlessness and depression,
and miracles stalled,
diminished, disappeared...

And so now the helpless come here,
and become one with the hopeless,
and the hopeless come to die.'

So spoke the young vibrant
priest, Diego Sirocco,
and his six companions, all lay,
all professional, all rich,
nodded gravely. Except one.

'Fr. Sirocco, you make my mission
so much easier for me to fulfill
by your woeful tale.' Diego was startled.

'So you are the latest emissary
from my family, urging me
to abandon the helpless
descending into the hopeless.'

The young man only smiled,
a Luciferan smile, a smile
without joy. 'Exactly, Fr. Sirocco.

I want you to sin against your calling.'

The other men recognized this
as a moment of decision, and
quietly withdrew into the milling crowd.

Alone now, Diego said loftily,

'Sir, do you know the cost of despair?

Do you know the value of hope? Do you
include faith in your calculations, or
only profit, like my family? '

The young man pretended to calculate sums
with his fingers, then smiled his Luciferan
smile. 'No, father, but they might.'

He pointed to four burly men
who lumbered into their circle. Without a word,
one of them smashed Diego's face
with his fist. Two others dragged
his limp body to a waiting car,
and dumped him in the back seat.
The burly man with the fist nodded
to the young man, got into the car,
which sped away. People nearby,
the witnesses, bowed their heads
and walked away quickly. The young man
stood, with his arms akimbo, smiling
his Luciferen smile, as the crowd
thinned and disappeared, as overhead
the sun bent toward darkness.

The Flight of Gulls

Early morning I hear
the gulls as they circle
above the stationary ships
I can only dimly make out
through the tumbling fog.
Their cries are little knives
that make sharp incisions.
To try to sleep again is useless.

Early afternoon I walk down
the cold autumn streets
deserted except for exhausted
workers trudging by, sullen and
unresponsive. The gulls seem to be
flying in slow motion, as if they are
memorizing our lives below them.
One of the workers curses them.

Early evening I sit
in a bar with three friends,
a fifth friend recently deceased
haunts us. A nearly empty whiskey
bottle stands on shreds of poems,
next to five glasses. It's like

waiting in a doctor's office,
knowing the news will be bad.

But we still wait to hear it.
That expectant waiting - that's life
as we know it in Port Trakl.
Nothing is really alive with
reality, it's only nostalgia
and desire. And far above us
the gulls keep circling.
Don't they ever tire of trying?

Daniel Brick

Jazz Orpheus

Bring your silver flute
to the crossroads
where the living haunt the dead,
Jazz Orpheus, and play a dozen riffs
on the standards
'Bringing back the Dead' and
'Making the Dogs Howl in Harmony.'
Look in every direction
before you play,
you're free to turn
in a complete circle.
The young woman with the sad eyes
standing under the willow tree
will guide you across every threshold
and she will place in your hands
cool fruits which grow sweeter
with every song you play.

Play your highest notes
in all the tempos you know,
play your softest tones
with absolute breath control.
When you are ready,
when music and courage
swell your being, descend
and play soulfully in the Underworld.
Make a pact with Persephone
to release the truest lovers
for your truest song.. Then ascend
Mount Parnassus, when the light
is brightest, join the celestial musicians,
and play a solo for the Muses's Dance of
Harmony. When Apollo arrives with his lyre
and perfect song, bow to his majesty
and promise to spread his glory over the Earth.

Daniel Brick

Poems At Port Trakl Part Two

A JUNGLE HIKE

I can smell the ocean's salt air
even as I wander deep into the jungle.
Awkwardly pushing through thickets,
tripping over over undergrowth,
my sea legs are no help, I'm making
slow progress in pursuit of nothing.
My eyes devour the jungle colors, my ears
revel in hundreds of birds, visible and invisible,
their trilling, soaring, cascading songs.
This abundance - why am I not dazzled?
On the ocean voyage, colors drain out of
waves and clouds, ocean and sky merge
into the same featureless gray. And yet...
And yet that dark expanse is my deepest self.
I am turned inside out: it is my interior being
who wanders over the mountainous expanse of waters.
Deep within me, a true voice calls out, 'Oh, Ocean,
return me to your stark beauty, fill me with
your vast patience, pull me into your endless rhythm.'

AFTER ANOTHER BINGE

It is eight hours later, and I am
cold sober. I feel a chill
over my whole body, but my brain burns
as usual... I am stalling,
in my tiny room, in this cheap hotel,
close to my beloved ocean. Oh, mighty surf!
Oh, majestic waves, unfolding the scroll
of eternity across the planet. When will I
finally merge within your rhythms, become
one with your purposeless eternity, your
endless repetition of the same hymn?
Is it not time to collect all these fragments,
and read my Fate in their broken eloquence?

WINGS AND WAVES

There are birds, and there is the ocean.
In their constant movement, they mirror

each other. Wings or waves, flight or flow,
it is one vast reality into which I have been
thrust. At home, neither in the air,
nor in the waters, I long to be regaled
with both, Oh, the freedom of flight
through open air! Oh, the headlong motion
of ocean currents cutting across free waters!
Not for long will I be a prisoner on land:
I have signed on a steamer leaving in six days.
Already within me I am waving Port Trakl
a long farewell: 'Good bye, my third self,
nights in drunkenness, days in stupor. I leave
all the wines of the world behind.' To see birds
overhead, to feel ocean currents below, that is
enough. It is my soul's homecoming, for sure.

Daniel Brick

Poems At Port Trakl Part One

DAILY WINE

For early morning there's always
Sangria, what's left over from yesterday.
the fruits all dissolved, imparting
an even sweetness to the tall glass.
At noon, I will drink four medium-sized glasses
of Zinfandel, as I watch the sun shine through
the bottle, yellow filtering red,
a hybrid color suggesting wholeness, repose.
'Another glass, please.' In late afternoon,
after walking along the shoreline, and
watching land and sea exchange places,
again and again, in the trembling air,
I will share conversation and Tawny Port
with whatever friend lounges in the bar.
We drink strong black coffee in between
bottles of wine to keep us focused on
whatever topic we choose... to stave off
the boredom of continuous intoxication.
Suddenly, darkness contains me! I must have
dozed off. For how long? No matter: it is surely
time for Burgundy. The rest of the night belongs
to Burgundy. It will squelch whatever stuff
floats up from within and swims before my idle eyes.

TWO RESOLUTIONS

FIRST

I have made a resolution, my friend,
wrote it on the back of this shipping schedule.
And I want you to witness it. 'I, an ancient
citizen of Port Trakl, swear to write only
the truth, from this hour forward. No more
rhapsodies and praise-songs, no more Love Epics
addressed to absent women, no more honeyed words
packed into fat lines of verse. All this
I abjure from this hour forth.' Well,
we know what to expect next: I will sink
into a corner of a warehouse somewhere
in Port Trakl. If you find me in a couple of days,

ask me how I feel about the NEW ME....

SECOND

'Stop talking nonsense, sailor.

Do as you will, just don't blame us at Port Trakl.'

IN VINO VERITAS

Hasn't every drunkard spoken those words,
lodged in his overheated brain?

What does it really mean? That whatever
my intoxicated voice says is true?

That no lie can slip past my lips
as long as stupor crushes my mind?

Does it mean I am only a puppet,
dangling from the chord of Fate?

Or am I a displaced puppet master,
capable of doing great things?

Let me think... No, first I will
sample the shipment of new wines
from faraway Hungary. After that....

Daniel Brick

An Excess Of Light A Sonnet

As the sun begins its descent
into night, its slanted rays
illuminate with special brightness
parts of a landscape already shrouded
in shadows. I love to see a tiny branch
at the base of a towering elm tree
visited by one of those slanting rays,
to see its ten or twelve leaves
covered in an excess of light so that
they shine with an improbable glow
for several minutes. Just a brief glow,
but that is long enough to revive me,
no matter how much has been taken
from me by the day's alarms...

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Making The World Familiar

I can see your eyes fixed
on me, so much distance
between us have we crossed.

When we finally close the gap,
there is no need for words: you pour
the pieces into my cupped hands.

Your voice I hear within me:
'Puzzle a picture out of these pieces,
tease the truth from this turmoil.'

It is what was born to hear.
It's as if I must choose a book
at random from a great bookcase,

and it's the right book that I take!
I know the remaining tasks
will test me to my limits. Such is Fate.

Still the next time we meet,
in a season yet to be determined,
we will be the reality of blessed souls.

Daniel Brick

Constantine

OH, the fuss and bother of
Imperial Governance! I farm
that out to my subalterns
in the lower courtyards.
Let them carry that weight,
let them garner the harvest
of taxes and privileges. I rule
from the the sphere of my Gold Throne,
where I sit in glory, arrayed
in silk gowns of the Phoenician
color. Flanked by statues
of my illustrious ancestors,
I stare at a marble walkway
below my throne and follow it
to the distant mausoleum of
my once deified father. Then,
I fix my eyes on the symbol
that commands the roof and
all the space around it.
The sun's ray seeks its presence.
And symbol, eyebeam and sun's ray
ignite in a flash of LIGHT
beneath the aroused sky...
The symbol's eyebeam comes
racing down the walkway, and strikes
the center of my head, flooding
my mind with golden truths. Oh,
so much truth tumbles and rolls
through my mind, I am riveted
to the moment and the place.
This is the glory of being Emperor.

Daniel Brick

Jazz Mama

Oh, sweet honey of sound!
I have tasted your sweetness
night after hot night
for twenty-five years.
How did I cast my spell?
I enter the room from back
of the band, singing wordlessly,
softly. They have to strain to hear.
I sway to the music, all curves
and twists. Then I abruptly stop,
but my voice is inside of them,
they still hear me... Then
for the umpteenth time the maestro
praises my voice as sensual, sinuous,
you know that talk. But what you want
is more of me, all of me, and I cast
my spell again singing BODY AND SOUL
with body and soul. You know.

They used to call me JAZZ HONEY!
I could see it in their hot, smoky
eyes. Oh, the bitter-sweet of memory.
'Jazz Honey, sit on my lap.' - 'Jazz Honey,
marry me tonight! ' - 'Jazz Honey, kiss me,
before my wife comes back.' But now,
I'm just a Jazz Mama to these men.
When I sing now, it's always the Blues.
I can see into their minds the memories
tossing back and forth, memories bumping
into desires, and they are under my spell.
'Jazz Mama, sing just for me tonight,
and make it Sweet Honey Jazz....'

Daniel Brick

A Place To Drop It

Every time
I pick up desire
right away I'm on the
lookout for a place
to drop it, gently,

unobtrusively. It never
occurs to me
when I'm cradling desire
against my heart
with my left hand

that next time
my right hand should let it
languish in whatever
corner, bright or dark,
I sense its presence.

Clothes are the next issue.
Ever since Eden, the mere fact
of clothes covers our nakedness.
Expensive designs found
in boutiques, or discards

at Good Will, it matters
not to one clothed
in desire. Our frail grasp
of anything made of flesh
occurs mostly at night,

when our guard is down.
The closeness of bodies
is a light that brings
only warmth to these
dark uncoverings...

After skylark dawn
pierces the cold air,
the high soprano of

the happiest angels reveals
where I should drop sweet desire.

Daniel Brick

Reading The Aeneid

Do not worry, Sonya, this is fiction.
If Dido's fate breaks your heart, and it will,
your mind will help you to recover, and
you will. Or if Aeneas appears in the guise
of a warped hero, just another imperial lackey,
do not worry: your soul will cast forth other men,
whose strength or beauty or a measure of both
will reassure you. And if even later you grow
weary of blood shed as you read deeply
through the restless night, until new light
edges across the treeline, consider this:
time itself is a table replete with every good thing,
and the feasts of time are yours for the asking...
Oh, when you are too moved to speak, attendants,
once called angels, float among you to serve
your wise silence. One will lean close over you.
and whisper so softly the air must poise itself
to carry his gentle sounds: 'Do not worry, Sonya, '
he will say, 'this too is fiction. It is a conspiracy
of heart and mind, of soul and body, in my holy presence,
to make all things simply true.... '

Daniel Brick

Shakespearean Reflections: A Cycle Of Haiku

Of something circling....
'The End' we read on the page
is really the start...

Revenge rough justice
Francis Bacon thought, the Bard's
Hamlet learned just that.

Polonius first,
daughter Ophelia next,
last Hamlet - all mute.

Hamlet paid the price
for what Iago had devised:
no one escapes Fate!

King Lear was possessed
by Prince Hamlet's rage and scorn:
both victims prevailed.

THIS THING OF DARKNESS
(A magus accepts the truth.)
I ACKNOWLEDGE MINE.

Hope is now restored:
YOU GODS HAVE CHALKED FORTH THE WAY -
We must now give thanks.

PUBLISH WE THIS PEACE.
(King Cymbeline bows deeply.)
PARDON'S THE WORD FOR ALL.

It is near the end:
GO, YOU PRECIOUS WINNERS ALL,
AWAKE YOUR FAITH....

Daniel Brick

A Colloquy Of Haiku

(I)

In this dry land we
must believe in something Good
that will quench our thirst.

I must proclaim it:
I do believe in one God.
Such is my firm faith.

From my early days
I have felt close a tender
and loving presence.

Here in our garden
stands a solitary tree
whose fruit is most sweet!

Who has so blessed us?
It is our God who cares for
all creatures on Earth.

(II)

I too thirst within.
We are not so far apart;
together we search.

I too need heart's ease:
what you call faith I call hope.
It's the Earth that gives.

Something shines with love:
Mother Earth pours forth riches
for all her children.

Where you see stretched forth
the Hand of God Almighty
blessing His creatures,

with eyes just as keen,
I see just the Hand of Fate
fulfilling our needs.

Daniel Brick

Who Is In Control?

Kokura obscured
Nagasaki next on list
Seventy-thousand dead

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Five Haiku

This is hard to do:
seventeen syllables only.
One hundred clamor!

I wrote a sonnet.
Haiku master poured more tea.
Which the true poet?

When good fortune reigns,
we should dance and shout, 'Hurray! '
A child leads us.

Today is Sunday:
forecast says, rain all day long.
Should we rename it?

The cloud did not care:
it rained on my special day.
Then left - business elsewhere!

Daniel Brick

In Your World Homage For Georg Trakl

In your world Love has tentacles
which it wraps around your body
to squeeze out even that last
breath you gulped before they tightened
like a garrote. You fell into a stupor,
until they released you, suddenly,
like the limp arms of an exhausted lover...

In your world Wine is never sweet,
because the young women who tread
the red grapes let their salt tears
drop continually into the vat.
When you wave your arms, and cry out,
'Stop, stop!' they misunderstand you,
and stop treading, but their tears,
so many tears, keep falling and falling.
When you approach them, your own eyes
glazed over, the youngest one raises her head
to face you, and you see yourself
mirrored in both of her wide, tremulous eyes...

In your world, Desires are carefully placed
in purple-tinted glass vessels, which are
carefully placed on high wooden shelves
in the attic room of an ancient mansion,
its outside walls covered with vines, and
surrounded by hedges and willow trees.
The silence of this place is never violated.
Wolves, who are friends to lovers and poets,
patrol the neighborhood with steadfast resolve...

In your world, Blue is your chosen radiance:
blue is the color of dusk and dawn,
the color of lake water and surging oceans.
Blue is the color inside the painting
you watched Kokoschka create with his nerves.
Blue is the color of Schubert's sonatas
your sister plays with intense purpose.
Blue is the color of the poems you write

in an adjacent room, suffused with autumnal glow.
And, even now your heart shining in its blue
hour, you realize blue will be the color
of Ellis's eyes when he awakes
on the morning of his Second Resurrection....

Daniel Brick

Two Summers

First Summer

The window framed a second-story room, housing an upright piano, standard black but with a glistening gold trim visible to my sight, as I paused on the path around Lake Como. I paused, leaning against an accommodating tree, because two people, a man at the piano, a woman cradling a violin, performed music I chose to regard as the sweetest sound possible on a summer night. Was it Mozart? Or Beethoven's Spring Sonata? Or did they embrace the intensity of early Bartok? Whatever music they played escaped through the open window, fled across the lawn, but vanished into the evening air before it could reach my eager ears. Oh, sweet sounds or bitter! Oh, well-played or abysmal! What can a distant mime of music reveal about their true intentions? But - we agree a poem is the realm of possibilities, let us make assumptions full of promise: let it be then a zealous young violinist, all of sixteen, and her aging maternal uncle, a pianist of renown, her teacher, encouraging her talent to sew the threads of even the slightest etude into a fabric of beauty. Already her uncle talks of music academies, when they rest, and her shining eyes mist over as he raises dreams to hopes, hopes to possibilities. And so a summer closes.

Second Summer

After the last ice released Lake Como by late April, after May's sun dispelled spring's overcast, after June presented the first full days of summer, I walked along my accustomed path, stopped at my

accustomed place, and indulged my
accustomed hopes. But the accustomed
window was shaded. I held my breath
for a third of that summer, until
one night in later July, the shade
was raised. But three blank walls
confronted my sight. No upright piano,
no musicians, the air held not the slightest
promise music might yet fill it. I circled
the lake twice, playing snatches of Brahms
and Mozart on my smiling memory...
Meanwhile, in some bustling city,
at a Music Academy, nestled among trees,
overlooking a river valley, the renowned pianist
introduces his shining niece to her first teacher,
a man of legendary skill at turning possibilities
into realities. And so another summer closes,
as music pours out of dozens of open windows....

Daniel Brick

Lonely Angel After Meditation For Violin And String Orchestra Peteris Vasks

I have no occupation.
But were I a painter, I would
on my palette drip a mass
of the purest red, and at the other
rim, one of black. With the widest
brush I'd stroke them together,
then swirl and swirl until
nothing of either color remained,
but something palpably strange emerged
for all eyes to see, that see things
truly - for what they are. This would
I do in the clearest light of day,
before shadows lengthened in the afternoon.

And then I would cover a perfect
canvas with that color, alone,
nothing else, no shape, no figure,
only the abstract of my new color.
And should you ask, what does
it mean? I would answer, that question
has no relevance to me, to you, or our
wide circle. But of what it does,
take heed. It tells you
to STOP - because
a huge bloodshot cyclopean EYE
from its blind depths
sees you whole and stares you down...

There are many corners in this vast
world which will never be illuminated.
Light has no access to their dark interiors,
and Creatures of Light, like you, like me,
are alien to the shadow lines which criss
and cross them... Such lines must never
pierce you. Music will help you stay clear.
Open your hearing to its Songs of the Earth.

.

. . . . (*)

Remember always, should you wonder if I have
prayed for you today, it is my daily mission.

. . . . (*)

(*) Lonely Angel's secret speech

Daniel Brick

Force Of Lightning

There is lightning striking the edge of things, out beyond the homes, beyond the municipal buildings, even beyond a few hideouts. Some among us feel sheltered in our community, as if some power were diverting lightning from our homes and lives....

Neighboring villages do not share our good fortune. They cluster together in concentric circles around our center, and every summer collapse in flames. But habit or tradition compel them, and so countless defeated residents return after each attack and rebuild.

We offer what help we can: wood planks, bricks, carpenters' tools, diagrams, even photographs in vivid colors of finished buildings, showing how to space them within a grid design of an ideal community. What role lightning will play in such idealism is an unanswered question.

I have grown prosperous, my wealth accelerates each year. And I wonder in idle moments why happiness is my birth-right. Or mostly so. I lost my first-born son to an infant fever, twin daughters infected each other with contagion. My wife agreed to mercy killing one year into cancer treatment.

Death is a solution nature presents typically with her blank expression: neither sympathy nor scorn. But it has not been my tragic destiny! Pay close attention to what I say: unless my flesh is scorched and scarred, unless my bones dissolve into dust, unless my innards gasp in chronic pain, it is

not my tragic destiny. I witness such things like an alternative nature, and like nature, I am solemn, poised, confident of the long term, dismissive of the short term. What is tragedy but an avenue into the interior where we do not belong. There it is a welter of excess energy, cross-

purposes, disappointments too painful to gaze upon. Block that avenue with your mind. Turn you back on it, and close your eyes tightly. Let nature with those depths in her own way. And those writers so in love with tragic destiny - Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Racine - trash their texts! Living surpasses them.

My composure is all-important. You know, that's the trouble with saints. They fuss over sick people, and tell them in steady voices, 'I am here. I will suffer with you'. But the sick person hears, 'I am here. I will suffer for you'. What false hopes they engender! Why do they deny nature's will? They are all sentimentalists:

Soon enough they will be leaning forward, whispering, 'I know that Goodness watches over you, and Love embraces you with her healing hands. Let us pray together.' What cheating false hopes! They expect impossible things: a miracle, a guardian capable of perfect love, a deus ex machina. I would rather fall silent for the rest of my life.

Pah! What false hopes they pour over our heads like a ritual oil, as if they could change reality by good will. I know better: I pay witness to the dark angels. I want lightning to descend and burn me to oblivion before I surrender to hope. I know what we are - creatures of mud! Let lightning strike me as it will....

The Four-Day Poetry Crisis Autumn 2015

To all my fellow poets at POEMHUNTER

This even is so rare in the scheme
of things it has no name peculiar
to itself. Bureaucracies, so eager
to gobble up revenue for any excuse,
failed to stumble upon this one. No
church or museum or university
had anticipated it. No news organization
got the scoop. Their representatives
stare at each other at follow-up sessions.
'But really, ' they say with no urgency
in their voices, 'how could we possibly
know these dribble-dabblers, these scribblers
without any media clout, these poets
in an age of prose and sense would count
for so much? Could it be as hoax? '

The alarm had been sounded the year before
when a joint commission of NASA scientists
and Mayo Clinic medical researchers announced
their findings: 'Just as the brain releases
chemicals which flood the individual with
positive feelings, so the imaginative interior
work of poets releases psychic energy beneficial
to humanity and nature... We are as surprised
as you with our conclusions... But there's
more: Our calculations indicate a short-fall of
thirty poets to adequately produce these benefits.'
TV footage showed some of the specialists laughing,
but by Day Two of the crisis no one was laughing.

The US government's impact paper was leaked to
the confused public. The San Andreas fault had
widened, Blue Whales were suddenly singing their
symphony in minor key, Monarch butterflies could
not find Mexico: they were trapped circling malls
in southern Texas, traffic was stalled for miles
even in small towns, a greasy rain stained people

and buildings across New England, in Minnesota the Mississippi was turned into stationary sludge. And the good will between people around the globe dissolved into recriminations and threats....

On the Third Day, Robert Bly came out of his retirement, and at age 90 began a marathon reading of poems. People crowded into the Landmark Center in St. Paul for the relief which flowed forth from his presence as he recited his own poems and his translations of this News of the Universe. The listeners sighed with delight as the words of Neruda and Lorca, Rilke and Trakl, Transtromer and Ekelof permeated the air they breathed. When Bly read THE NIGHT ABRAHAM CALLED TO THE STARS, they felt a huge weight lift from their spirits. He read it a second time, and the weight became the grace of being. In later days, people said Robert Bly's reading was the Battle of Thermopylae in this crisis. When he left the stage on the Fourth Day, two hundred poets and readers of poetry formed a line of volunteers to continue the work he had begun.

On the fifth day The Mississippi River flowed slowly and majestically below its high banks. Cool, clear rain cleansed New England, traffic flowed once again, and the Monarchs reached their home in northern Mexico. Pundits began to dissect the crisis into many unrelated events, and the laughter over poetry in an age of prose resumed... But in a small town anywhere in this immense world, a twelve year girl completed to her satisfaction her first ever poem. The opening line read, 'We are beginning to read the message dawn delivers: Keep your promises.'

Daniel Brick

Stone Altar Against The Sea

Laud the gods,
And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils
From our blest altars.

Shakespeare's Cymbeline

Some demon must have willed it, a beast
our prayers and sacrifices cannot reach.
In the unexpected fall of night, even in
day's fullness, we warriors all, blinded
and unready, gripped rope or rail, sail
or rough plank, but still our sturdy ship
crashed on hidden rocks. The bottom was rent,
collapsed like kindling in a blaze. We the twelve
upright turned to help the twelve prostrate ones.
Broken bones, deep gashes, severed limbs,
but not a sound of pain or grief. We saw
their souls enter the stream of the gods'
own river high above us. Even demon darkness
could not occlude that vision.

We plunged
from our beloved ship into the black tar
water, and trudged heavily to the rocky
beach, surf pounding far beyond us. Oh, the doom
that surf proclaimed! We stood in a crooked line,
staring out at those immense waves which were
now our jailers.

I no longer gave commands. We all
knew what had to be done. We worked slowly, steadily.
This had to be done right the first time, or the waves
would drown our chances, then our lives. We spoke
little, our prayers were best intoned in the soul's
cavern. But our prophet, Hanrun, sang THE LAY OF MERCER
in his high, sweet voice. We salvaged weapons, food
and clothing. My young cousin rescued the six BOOKS
OF THE LAWS. We all cheered and applauded him, but
I worried, Has the judgment of the gods fallen on us?
Is the dark prophecy of my youth being fulfilled,
even pulling my eleven brave companions into its
bleak unfolding? In my vision, on my first hunt,

I saw a star blaze with black fire, and turn
the sky into ashes, and then we choked on the stench
of black air. But everyone survived. Everyone.
And our joy is a new kind of strength we summon
at every spring festival. So perhaps even this
catastrophe the gods needed to right some huge flaw
in space, and having done so, they may be willing
to do us good in return.

 We perform our final task
in an expectant silence. We heave red-splotched gray
rocks, moss-covered granite, panels of slate, dull
shining mica sheets. We bring all these heavy
offerings to Hanrun, who tells us how to pile them
to make a vast altar along the beach. A fire glows,
a fire grows, a fire blazes. We stand around the altar,
pounding our shields with swords and spears. We recite
prayers sacred to our tribe, and move around the altar,
following the sun's path across the sky. Our prophet stands
nearest the hot blaze. His eyes are shut and his lips
mouth a silent appeal... By dawn the altar fire smolders,
and the darkness is pierced by sunshafts. We gather
our belongings, and begin our trek inland, to find
a new home....

Daniel Brick

In A Late June Dawn A Small Poem For Sana

In a late June dawn
first a solitary bird speaks, then a pair,
eventually scores with their insistent
tunes and unvarying rhythms. A pause.
And the sun's light streams
across the green language, shines
its blue light over us and them.
Another pause... By now, I'm
out of bed, stumbling in the direction
my body knows well enough to lean.
I drink first the light, then the air,
finally clear crystal water. This is
the purest moment of the rest. After it
dissolves into the lightness of time spent,
I must do my best to preserve purity.
(But I know you are already helping,
which is why I feel no fear...)

I stand alone on my balcony, watching
shapes appearing in the haze hovering
still in these early moments. I would
not discount any of the common features,
such as feisty squirrels, song birds,
invisible hawks and owls, shy deer, and
the occasional fox, sunning himself
as it to scoff at the restraint of others.
Hopefully, this will not become a day
I'll need to negotiate with myself
for every scrap of success. I prefer
those days the human element is subsumed
in the rest of it, animal, mineral, plant
and God. I do not mind the need to play
a role with consummate skill, to convince
my companion animals I am still one
with them. But please make the whole
of it effortless, like a dance so well
rehearsed it takes no effort to excel,
as if this dawn in late June opened
on a garden greeting us, with no trace

of subtle serpents or forbidden fruits.

Daniel Brick

New Selves For Mihaela

I am not a poet if my words do not evoke
an echo from the labyrinth of souls.
Vyachevslav Ivanov

And so we sit
in envy of our former selves,
revolving in our wounded minds
the steps which brought us to this
impasse, wondering can we free
ourselves by ourselves? Or must we
wait for some promethean rescuer
to hear rumors about us and arrive
in his own time, however tardy?

How long ago did you see a shooting
star? Patience or impatience mean
nothing in the vast cycles in which
we are meshed. You can breathe deeply
and cry out your desires in poems, and
perhaps that shooting star will alter
its set course through space
out of sympathy for your plight?
Or perhaps the summer nights

will stretch themselves below the moon
on their own accord, and give us
three more hours each night in which
to paint time passing Prussian blue.
I am troubled by such deep despair
that made me begin to write a novel
in a room accumulating dust and darkness
when the Muses had sent word from Parnassus
I am required to write an epic poem.

Have moonlight and starlight led us astray?
To whom have we been listening? Casual cynics?
The hoi poloi? Or simply random passers-by,
who toss a coin or two into the tattered
black hat set at the edge of the curb?

If one should trip and you break his fall,
that will garner another coin or two.
Nothing more is to be expected of
ordinary men, slinking home in ordinary light.

In your recent dreams you have seen
a mixed chorus assembled on the middle rung
of a ladder to the moon. They are poised to sing.
Oh, why not speak those golden words your soul
has nurtured for decades. Your speech is already
halfway to song! Are you not ready yet to open
your throat and release suddenly that song
which longs to swell in the open air? Is it not
for this performance you have tempered your voice?

I have wandered across the green earth
for a thousand years. I have sat in absolute
solitude for a hundred years in caves
of the southern hemisphere. I have forged
pathways through dense jungles, and
descended a raging river in a reed boat.
I have climbed mountains, while eagles harassed
my ascent. Once Leviathan blocked my passage
across the sea. And only once did I abandon

my voice. It was a year-long desert crossing
in a large caravan. Thirst compelled me
to remain silent, and it quickly became a habit.
When we reached a caravan serai by chance,
I had grown familiar to silence without and within.
Now we two sit side by side in the green air,
our journeys stalled, our quests defeated. You have
gently coaxed forth my voice, and the blessed words
we speak is our sweetest solace. Have not the Muses

even now poured soft dew and sweet honey
on our tongues and lips. I hear faint stirrings
of a spiritual conversation among souls scattered
everywhere across the plains of this world. You hear
them too. And the mixed chorus have descended
the ladder to mingle with us in the soft grass. They
sing in a language we are just beginning to understand.

Let us listen before we speak....

* * * * *

Daniel Brick

No Sweeter Song

Who was that visitor yesterday, wearing
your emblematic clothes, speaking in your
voice, giving every sign that he understands
message, has taken it deeply within, into

the core of his being? His sudden arrival
blinded me. Is he to be trusted the way
I trust you, which is akin to greeting
summer's earliest dawns? The throat of

every songbird is poised with sound, but
they will sing no sweeter song than what
you sang in GABRIEL and A PERSIAN RAPTURE.
Yet cardinals fall silent in their sheltering

trees, then blue jays, robins, even sparrows
will join the same expectancy. And I myself,
ever awaiting my next poem, will still pause
in the deepest breath that I can hold, because

your voice may be carried by a breeze blowing
softly into the southern region, or a sudden
wind presaging rain, or a fiercer wind
remembering our primal desires...

I ask again, who was that yesterday man
I saw on the edge of light? And an answer
arises from deep within my Psyche: He is,
as Whitman envisioned, A ROUND FULL-ORB'D

EIDOLON... wandering freely abroad,
even as you are in the pathways of your mind.
What if he merges with you for a spell, adopts
language, becomes the prophet and the bard,

who sweep the present to the infinite future.
OR are the countrymen still in charge, still
IMMENSE IN PASSION, PULSE, AND POWER, and one
just returned from your presence tells us.

'Be watchful! Be Patient! He is with us still! '

Daniel Brick

First Kiss For K. W.

Our first picnic was on a hillside she chose. A patch of sumac grew near the top, and she led me into its maze. She bent her lithe body gracefully through its branches. My added height added clumsiness, and twice I stumbled, but she pretended not to notice. When she turned around to look at me, which was often, her smile was like the scent of lilacs. There was nothing more wonderful in my life than the scent of lilacs and her smile...

We reached a larger clearing, still surrounded by arching sumac, where she spread a blue blanket festooned with yellow flowers. She pressed my shoulders with both of her hands, so that I sat down. Then she sat next to me, the sides of our bodies touching, as if they were meant to be one. Now there was a third wonder in my life! If she had not spoken of inconsequential things, I would have dissolved into her warmth. But I responded, and her smile became gentle laughter. And so we spent an afternoon together, inside the sumac enclosure, under a perfect blue summer sky.

Our first kiss had happened on a night of fireflies the previous summer. While the grownups lounged in lawn chairs, swatting mosquitoes and swapping adult tall tales, we kids played hide-and-seek, in a glowing twilight, pierced by scores of flashing fireflies. She was hiding behind the house hedge, where I found her, or had she found me? My breath stopped. With my right hand I stroked her face, then I held her face with both hands. She came closer. Our lips touched for a moment beyond counting. When we separated - the grownups were calling us - I was not a separate being: I was linked to her, she was within me. What did she feel then? What happened to her? To us?

Questions I cannot answer... I remember a night
illuminated by fireflies and a first kiss; I remember
an afternoon on a hillside, nestled side by side.
And what I remember has lasted a lifetime....

Daniel Brick

Being Sanguine

I had almost given up
on Spring 2015,
so it's fortunate you
are always sanguine.

Do you know that word?
I've known it since I first
read HENRY IV. I'm not sure
whom in that complicated play

deserves it, or has earned
it. Certainly not the King
with blood soaking his hands.
Is the Prince sanguine or choleric?

Well, some say 'sanguine'
means a balance in the blood.
Good luck with that! I can barely
muster enough red blood to attract

even a famished one. Most just
stare at me going by, savoring
my sudden fear but displaying
no lust in my direction.

It's sad being so unwanted.
But in a past life I must have
been the bold trace of every
fantasy, hub of every spinning

wheel, the heart itself
in question or appeal. Now
I will settle my accounts
for so much less...

As I said, I had almost
given up on life- Yes,
I know, it was only
a tardy spring that dismayed

me. I won't make more
of this than it's worth.
After all, there are
thirsty throats everywhere.

They may yet see me
as worthy of desire.
I won't even try to talk
this through. It's useless.

My trust I place, as always
in your sweet nature,
gracious and sweet...
Oh, to be the Undead
like you.

Daniel Brick

A Field In Romania

Coming from the silver lining of the horizon
arrive my celebrative birds
creating on the sky. fluttering
an ocean of waving wings.
The whole world of soul alive
trembles in frenetic activity.

FIRST LOVES, Nicolae Labis

translated by Magdalena Biela

In Spring, in a field stretching across Romania,
a man and a woman stand side by side,
their hands lightly clasped, on their faces
the suggestion of a smile. The man is attentive
to her needs, she is fascinated with his stories.
Their stance displays the goodness of the right
people. They are waiting for the arrival of
a special Word the wind will carry down the Windway.
The land itself awaits this Word. Those of us at home,
or at work, or on a journey, or in the cemetery or a church
await the Word. Most especially, the crowd,
silent and calm, almost motionless, the Witnesses wait,
assembled on a grassy expanse below the knoll
on which the man and the woman search each other's faces
for reassurance. People shape this Word silently
with their lips, then bow their heads, knowing it is
only a few deep breaths away...

The Word itself is part of the wind which carries it
on the Windway, the part that it leaves behind,
its mysterious trace no one has seen but everyone
feels. Soon they will be carriers of the Word...
This is now the quietest place on earth... And,
with no drama of any kind, the Word spreads without speech
through the crowd, and continues on its country-wide trek.
This event is no more special than watching a cloud
form, disperse, and reform, but by then we are looking
elsewhere. It is no more special than lovers making
promises to each other, sealing each one with a kiss.
Or a man and a woman teaching their youngest daughter

the oldest dance, steadying her legs, counting out the rhythms with her, until her child's grace takes over, and the three of them trace the ancient pattern of footsteps in the afternoon light. I tell you again, it is no more special than watching grains grow, or a river flow, or the sky darken with rain. What must happen will happen, and we live our lives in the Meanwhile between such momentous events-

The birds, there! The birds have arrived! They circle about us, then swoop down and gently graze the woman's unprotected hair. They hover over the man's head, or settle briefly on his shoulders. We all turn our heads upward when they suddenly climb back into the sky. Our unison gesture is a kind of prayer. They careen in a wide circle around us, they glide inside the circle their flight has traced, then shoot upward again, straight into a cone of light they fill with caws, and calls, and shrieks.

It is no different from yesterday's sight, it's just much bigger. Tomorrow, fewer birds will do the same aerial dances, and not everyone will watch. But that does not concern the rest of us. We love the repetition of beauty... Some people have begun to leave the field, when in an eerie silence, riding and twirling around sun-shafts, the birds come racing down, into our human crowd once again, swooping upward at the last second. Some burst through the tree canopy so headlong is their speed! We are amazed. Cheers and clapping resound throughout the field. Then we join hands, and a general dance begins. Awkward at first, with unsteady steps and botched rhythms, gradually the better dancers assert control, and pull the rest of us along. We hug our neighbors tighter, lovers leading the way, and amid cascades of laughter and row upon row of kicking feet, swaying bodies, and smiling faces, we become what we are meant to be - one body becoming one soul. And long into the night the dance prevails, in a field in Romania. Overhead, the birds circle

us again and again, calling in voices that
sound almost human....

Daniel Brick

No Remedy

There are days when getting up is no
remedy. So why bother? The door won't
open. When I push through, I slip
on the muddy floor and smash my head.

In class, the teacher startles me:
'OK, that's good. Now get all the vomit
out. Don't be squeamish.' Then, he goes
to another student. I cradle my smashed

head. It's going to be a month of hospital
visits. Will it be as bad as before? Much
worse, my hurting head says. Already the news
tells us, the decent fighter lost. He hurts

bad. Slick men with gold in their teeth
targeted him. He fell like mist. What had
he hoped to remedy today? And now puny rain
falls where he fell, not far from where I fell.

You know its stench - There's no remedy.

(based on an idea by Vincent Poson)

Daniel Brick

Why Poetry Lasts For Liyou Libsekal

All that poetry needs
is a sheet of paper
on which the words are written
that readers will animate one by one.

Or go further back and say,
all that poetry needs
is a human voice speaking words
into the ambient air which scatters them.

Or go still further back...
to the origin of things, and say,
all that poetry needs
is the raw graving of the heart,

the yearning of the body
for touch, of the soul
for union, of the mind for hope, this
is all that poetry needs.

Daniel Brick

In Early April

We had kept all our promises, some as old as the child dancing between us on our walk, others as fresh as the dew still clinging to the grass, wet and shining. With my right hand I pointed to yellow chimney smoke floating freely high above the treeline at the lake shore, while my left hand explored the middle space, just above the child's head, seeking your right hand, swaying like a censer spraying lilac scent, our favorite, into the Sunday air. Our hands clasped, and your touch was soft like lilac breath. We went forward to hear bells chiming across the water, the child skipping ahead, squealing with delight, and we felt a quieter delight unfold and swell: we recognized within a single thought, this is how easy falling in love can be.

We passed the half-way bend of the path. I smiled as you nodded, over the child's head, toward a huge funnel of clouds rising slowly into a pale blue sky. And it seemed to drag the day along with it, as if a summons from Heaven had actually fallen to Earth after all these decades of silence. Oh, the promise that was fulfilled at that moment fell into its destined place! Your right hand held my left hand, the child chattering between us, the lilac-sweet air tumbling between us, and deep down, where heart and soul are neighbors, we were dizzy with the yellow joy of early April.

Into The Night

Time can be used for good or for bad...
With this thought you step into the night.

'Cherry Blossoms,' Fabrizio Frosini

Everyday is a balancing act, as we
bend this way and then that way,
trying to dodge the random messages
hurled at us. Oh, how often I have
fallen, and the hard knocks
hitting the ground convince me
I need an insulating music. Not
what pours out of contending radios.
I have turned away from that
obvious music, preferring silence
to its false tones. But now, as time
doles out our shares of duration,
I grow impatient for stronger melodies,
sharper harmonies, fiercer rhythms.
Shall I step into the night, and
search for an answering music
to the hum playing inside me?
Raise my eyes to the stars,
looking for that fabled harmony
of perfectly shaped spheres?
Or wander through a forest park,
hoping to come upon a festival
of nocturnal players? Or just sit
in some comfortable nook, and
doze and dream until the music finds
me, teases me with its tardy arrival?
How many nights will I expend
before the necessary music echoes
sounds already circling within?
When I cross paths with that
sole musician, I will greet her
with a promise, 'I am listening to you:
Play on.' The rest, as Hamlet grasped,
is silence....

Spontaneous Sonnet Spring 2015

The poem written in haste
spreads evenly across the page.
How could this happen in a world
of trampled syntax, labored meanings,
abandoned eloquence? Because,
no longer afraid of a misstep, I
assembled two dozen words selected
for their immediate wonder, and
watched as they dropped into grooves
of the stiff paper, looking thoroughly
at home with each other, never to be
dispersed again into separate lives.
Theirs is a collective fate, with each
reader swelling the darkness with light.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Alone-Child, Age Eight

Squeaky wheels, squeaky wheels,
the tricycle inches forward toward
the white house with white pillars.
Squeaky wheels, squeaky wheels,
the alone-child pedals with all
his might up the incline, over
the cracked, broken sidewalk,
down the curb, bump. The alone-child
heaves his trike over the opposite
curb, plop. He straightens the wheels
and pedals faster. There at the end
of the block stands the white house
with its white pillars. The white
house is very quiet. Shh, it says
to him. He turns his trike around.
Shh, he says to it. The alone-child
turns his head and stares down
the alley - it is empty! He pedals
faster and the wheels squeak. Ha, Ha.
It doesn't matter. He can stop at his
telephone pole and check his trove.
Squeaky wheels, squeaky wheels,
go faster. There are no bullies today.
Squeaky wheels, squeaky wheels,
have fun! Childhood

Daniel Brick

Daedalus Reveals His Secrets

His Pride

I have scattered pieces of myself
in every land I have stopped. Sometimes
elaborate toys pleasing to a child, or
to the child-hours of an adult. Sometimes
a great weapon to forever link my name
with the heroes. Other times I have left
a few diagrams on a scroll, or a sequence
of powerful numbers, delivered in my obscure
script only a passionate scholar can grasp.
I have a subtle mind, only a few have
received the gift of knowing its origins.
(You slipped through my life
like wine slips through sheepskin.
Splashes of you stained my robes.)

His Obsessions

I lived in a garden for three years.
They were blissful years. My son, ICARUS,
was born in the second year. His mother
was a lovely slave serving in King Leontes's
court. The courtiers laughed when I married
her. Oh, how we loved that garden!
The rainbow of colors against the dry earth
of the surrounding landscape was our daily
delight. But, one fateful day, I heard
the ugly cackle of birds. I looked up
into that cloudless blue iron sky, and
saw scores of sun-struck black birds
flying in an immense wheel which fell
apart, reformed, rolled upward into
blinding light, fell apart again, scattering
birds across the wide sky realm...
I was an absent thing. My garden delights
vanished under that huge blue sky dome.
Why am I not in that flight? was my only
thought. Why do the Olympians, sky-dwellers
themselves, fill the sky only with feathered
flight? Why not us? Why not me? Thus began

my life-long quest: to possess the sky
as a fleshly being in full flight!
(You... You slipped... from
my life, my dear one.)

His Ordeals

The dwarfish King of Abydos
tortured Amene mercilessly
to force me to build for him
a terrible weapon: in one attack,
it destroyed a whole island of
rebels, and then the other islands
meekly surrendered to his glory.
My invention was their dark fate!

After the dwarfish King released
us, with gifts and promises, but
no remorse, to house arrest,
I nursed Amene's wounds, I watched
over her sleep. She smiled through
her pain we placed flowers on her bed.
When her soul fled her body, the boy
and I had no further tears to shed.

For many rulers, all seeking new
killing machines, I, Daedalus, Great
Artificer, satisfied their lust
for power and glory - but every one was
murdered by a follower who seized that
power and glory. In the chaos that ensued,
the boy and I fled to the next sheltering
tyrant, and the gods were ever silent.

Finally, it was the Great King of Crete,
MINOS, Lord of the Seas, who clawed me
into her service. He spoke darkly
into his wine about what a proud
man I was, 'Yes, so proud, to have
a son who rivals Adonis in beauty, Perseus
in daring, Nestor in intelligence.
He should be a King's son, a Prince.'

I shuddered under his stern gaze.
I bowed to hide my fright: 'To do
you service, Great Lord, is to increase
my honor - ' My goblet tipped and spilled
wine on dry, cracked earth. Minos stood
suddenly, soldiers clustered around him.
'Daedalus, rumors of your flying machine
abound. We would have it for ourselves.'

His Sacrifice

The night before the first flight
above King Minos's assembled court,
I led Icarus through the maze
to a tunnel that would take him
to the sea and a waiting ship.
We had hardly spoken for hours
as we attached the wings to our
masterpiece, an artificial man
who would fly with me the next
morning and be destroyed by the Sun.
At the tunnel entrance, we embraced
and sobbed. Suddenly, he pulled himself
free so violently, I fell to the ground.
Then our eyes locked on the same beam
of light, and I saw into my son's soul,
and he into mine, And it was enough.
Icarus disappeared into the tunnel's darkness.

His Joy

King Minos displayed no curiosity
over Icarus's death. He even presided
over a farewell ceremony with his whole
court present. And that was an end to it.
As for my invention, it proved to be
too fragile, too dangerous. It was soon
forgotten. Myself, I was humbled, and
prayed to the gods to forgive my intrusion
into their sky-realm. Every morning,
I repay their goodness with my sacrifice.
The years have passed, the decades have
piled up behind me. I have continue to
serve faithfully immortal kings and mortal

kings, and my reward is my house, my workshop,
my garden. And now whether I breathe the scent
of flowers flowing over the still earth,
or see birds tumbling against columns
of sunlight, it is the same to me:
scent or sight, silence or sound,
growth or flight - to me, it is the same wonder
in my mind, and my heart beats
faster, faster, 'I saved my son! I saved
my son! '

Daniel Brick

Song: Approaching Spring

To the sound of a deep melody
like the ancient circuit of the sea,
wise CHILD with summer's blood in your veins
here, in this cold northern country,
help me to remember what has been loved
and to dream of what will be loved.

To the sound of talk and tears
like the softest tones of Chopin's piano,
quiet GIRL hidden within lilac bushes
now, in this season of soil and rains,
come forth suffused in purple fragrance
and we will wander across marshes of moon grass.

To the sound of dawns and nightfalls
like the boisterous orchestra of March,
sweet WOMAN whose hands open the sun's doors
always, during the flights of deer and owl,
guide me into the gold light of June,
along a free-flowing stream pressed against familiar shores.

for my friends, Magdalena and Janusz

Daniel Brick

Moving Into The House Late Winter, 1985

Day heaves darkness out of sight.
The trees remaining on this ordinary
street seem scattered, haphazard.
Disease has claimed so many of them.
They are so much older than us,
probably stronger too, survivors.
They stand in their stolid silence.
The bloom comes later,
but this later needs no help from us:
it blossoms by itself,
in due time. And then the city
will live again in its summer glory.

Our street is quiet in the morning.
A gray cat sleeps on our front steps
until I shoo him away. Barely visible,
birds linger on branches hanging
over our deck. Inside it is quiet,
because the house is large, large
enough for a family, but there are only
two of us here now. It once held a family
of five, but that is another story...
We have been very busy in the manner
of homeowners everywhere preparing
the house to match our vision of home.

We painted the walls of every room.
carpeted the floors, put bright
prints of Monet paintings in the living
room, furnished it with glittering things.
And everyday I remind myself I do not
believe in ghosts. But he shadows me.
Just past sixty, he lumbered over the floors
we covered, looked through windows we scrubbed
spotless, woke up to the same light streaming
across the kitchen. And I remind myself...
A suicide leaves nothing behind, he has -
erased himself. And we have so much left to do.

Himself A Poetsittng

Sitting in a cushioned chair in his
living room, absurdly comfortable,
while he reads Georg Trakl's late poems,
the old man, himself a poet,
drifts into a shallow sleep.

He is alone in that place
of Being, where desire and dream
reflect each other, interchange
characteristics, assume
their true amorphous

dimensions, as they flow
together, create a wide delta
which further combines them,
and finally enter the vast
solvent of the inner ocean.

The currents roiling just
beneath the surface calm
of every great ocean's
infinitely rolling waves,
tumbling, twisting,

trap the old poet deeper
within the oceanic curve
of sleep. Now he will move
as if he were a creature native to
these depths, tumbling, twisting.

Deeper into sleep he plunges
unconscious but willing
to surrender to these massive
currents. A hue and cry
will be required to restore

him, whole and cogent, to
that familiar place where light
reveals desire and dream to be

things separate from each other,
each existing alone in lonely splendor.

If speech were possible (wishes will
suffice) , he would summon desire
to his presence, certain she
is the embodiment of his vision.
She is the Muse he worships.

He is the poet she blesses,
and having blessed him, she
moves on to other tasks, more
pressing than helping an old man
sing and dance in the voice and rhythms

of a young man. Such is desire.
It is ever of the past, it clings
to things already known, even loved,
things that the brightest eyes
have held steady in passionate regard:

fingers wrapped around a flower
stem, palms moist with sudden
warmth, lips tender from hard
kisses, hands sore from writing
poem after poem. Such is desire

in its natural condition...
What of dream? It has never existed,
nor will it. It is always
the very age and body of the time,
and once it has been indulged,

it slips into the shadows, exhausted,
spent, to restore its freshness.
It sleeps through days and nights,
waking briefly to listen for
the Muses' distant harmony, when

soul and body, fully awake,
will turn into a wild body and
a boisterous soul. Together they

will animate the aroused poet,
versed in vernacular, released in
spontaneity....

The old poet stirs in his cushioned
chair, slowly awakens, leans forward
to retrieve the Trakl volume which had
fallen from his grasp as he slept.
He rubs his eyes fiercely, then reads:

'I lay beneath the old willow,
the blue heaven above me was full of stars.'

Revelation and Oblivion

Daniel Brick

Snowfall In The Night For Fabrizio Frosini

The snow had just begun to fall,
thick snowflakes falling
past the restaurant window,
when you whispered, leaning forward,
oblivious to the crowd
around us, when you whispered those words,
and the feathery snow kept falling and falling,
when you whispered to me alone,
you whispered in a dream-voice,
'I want you tonight, ' and the snow
was shining as it fell, and I nodded
as in a dream. Then I grabbed your hand,
saying, 'Tonight I want you, ' as the snow
softly covered the earth, and the dark air
was shining with promises....

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Occasional Traveler

This is a poem of male roads. It starts with an ordinary road made up of daily traffic plus the occasional traveler impulsively joining the regulars. Unlike them he has no sense of the time this journey will grab from his life, he cannot calculate whether or not it is worth the risk. The seasoned traveler can always turn around, go back home, and salvage part of the day. But this impulsive one is lost between the too familiar house he has abandoned and a goal he cannot name or envision. In the end he will need to see his journey as a success. All around him the regulars are smiling, counting their profits, congratulating each other, laying plans and new schemes. Only the occasional traveler, this man bereft of companionship, is alone. His mind is a round-about, with no exits, only entrances. At day's end, no woman sweetens his life.

Daniel Brick

Heart's Haven

In a garden of rare flowers
named 'Heart's Haven' by Perdita
and her silent accomplice, Ophelia,
your feet sheathed in silver slippers,
your hands warmed in the softest gloves.
a cloak of flesh
wrapped around your body,
your soul thrown into the heart
of things
by a deliberate gesture,
you live in a conscious happiness
that has lasted unperturbed
for three decades... I have
traveled many miles to witness
this, only this, nothing else.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

A Degree Of Intensity

When a thing appears as a degree of intensity, we have nothing else than the existence of the thing in a world.

Alain Badiou

Contemporary philosopher

Time gripped me first, held me tightly, then tumbled me across Space. Time was just a smoky haze, circulating around everything. Space was a viscous vortex, spinning in a tight circle, like a mountain drilling itself into a planet. Suddenly, the spinning stopped, and Space stretched out, stretched before me, behind me, above and below me... And Time was everywhere

For ages I was part of everything. My face was morning light. My eyes were the last stars to fade, and the first to ignite. My torso was a hill thrust against the bank of a swift-flowing river. My brain was the motion of river currents. My sex, still a mystery to me, was the sap rushing up the tree trunk, along the branches, and permeating the leaves which stiffen in green health. My heart was the growth of sweet flowers.

But how these things became me is a story hidden from me. I dimly recall my soul being placed near my heart. The weight of it made me stumble. I fell into black loam. I recovered my strength, heaved myself up, and stood poised and tall. I've

grown accustomed to that soul-weight. Gradually, I sensed

the luster it spread through my body... It is not a brightness

like day. It is nothing like a sunrise flooding a deep valley. It is the brightest shadow, it is the darkest light... My soul led me to this world made for me. and I for it. My walks are frequent now. I traipse across my world and enter other worlds. I have met and claimed six others as my friends. We talk for hours as the sun slants toward its night realm. I stay the night in my friends' world. We never

argue, we love and laugh together. But can it be some peril stalks us? As I was walking along my familiar path, I suddenly felt dizzy and pitched forward. Rocks smashed my head. For an hour I was without awareness. It was not like sleep. It was a blankness. When I awoke, I carried within my soul fear of that place. It was terrifying to be NOTHING again... If I sleep, truly sleep, will I dream the whole of it again?

Daniel Brick

Lending My Voice For Paul

The light refuses to enter your
narrow room but clings like a trellis
to the southern window. It is a dim
December Thursday. You slipped from wheelchair

to bed, briefly setting off an alarm,
which summoned an unalarmed attendant.
'Can I shut my eyes, ' you asked me
unnecessarily. 'Of course, ' I replied,

even as your eyelids floated on the margins
of sleep. You drifted for a while
in the chambers of rest, then stirred,
and spoke as from an oracle place:

'I wanted to bring those two worlds
together. It was a shining hope
in my heart that excited my whole
being with the possibility of glory.

It was as if I saw new vistas
in my soul - plateaus leading to
higher plateaus, flames igniting brighter
fires, and resonant sounds unbounded.

If the inner senses can be so moved,
imagine the outcome of a true union
of both worlds, no trace of seams,
a complete blending, a perfect whole.

But what has come of my vision? Threads
lie tangled on the floor, their colors
swirled together like a false fallen
rainbow, like promises dissolved in time.

What shines is doomed to fade. Must it
be so? ... Those who do not accept
that truth endure the sadness of gazelles,
stumbling over a cracked dry landscape,

while deep in their minds a perfect savanna stretches across the hot horizon, and sunshafts from a clear blue sky illuminate huge waterholes everywhere.'

The vision had closed. Your body now twists in and out of fitful sleep. I am left to wonder what were those two worlds you grasped with hope and hopelessness.

Are they worlds of Becoming? Or are they worlds of our Unknowing? Can they only be reached in the distances of sleep? Can they be glimpsed at the threshold of

consciousness? What finally can I do to prove my worth as your friend? What? For the moment, I lend you my voice so that you can give voice to the mystery you inhabit.

Daniel Brick

The Other Daniel

He has better luck with women. He doesn't obsess over them, walks next to them with an easy gait, much like his unforced conversation. His smile is spontaneous, never phoney. Several girls have told him they like it, that made him smile broadly, and proves my point - of difference. He prefers to spend his free time in company. To this end, he has a plethora of acquaintances, and many activities and sports, just in case one is needed to pass the time with one of those acquaintances, who help him keep SOLITUDE in its proper place - which is in my life....

He has pursued several jobs, but never a career. Boredom is one of his major issues, and he says a career is one of society's way of confining you, of stunting you. He borrows my words and phrases, when we talk like this. Once he mumbled a thank you, but usually we avoid anything emotional or sentimental. We are, after all, closer than brothers. clones really, mirror-images that reflect those differences which define the negative space we occupy in each other's reality. These are my words again. I aim to be precise and coherent in all my communications. To that end, I gave up prayer many years ago. It was a conscious decision, not a whim, I thought my way out of belief in prayer. He, on the other side of things, prays all the time, and never gives it a thought. He told me, but then regretted telling me. He got mad, and almost threatened me physically. I realized suddenly he could do me harm. Our bodies are identical, but he could easily hurt me: he has that killer instinct....

We drifted apart for a while early in the new century. There had been no argument, no rift.

I guess he got bored. But that's been mended,
and now we communicate, face to face, so to speak,
every week. Just last week, he surprised me.
He told me, he has read all 100+ poems I have posted
at PoemHunter. 'I'd give my right hand to be able
to write poems like yours, ' he said quietly, and
the look on his face assured me he was telling the truth.

Daniel Brick

The Final Premonitions

There are peals of thunder, getting ever closer. Brief flashes of lightning blind those who are unprepared. They will see again in due time. The tall man dressed all in white carries a small box across the threshold, and enters a room which dwarfs him. He places the box carefully on a silver table, and leaves the room walking backwards. The good boy helps his mother until everything is finished. He is the last to leave the library, the door locks automatically... The thunder is upon us. It's the same story we've heard before but this time we're living it. The fear of earthquakes is genuine. People touch the earth just to be certain. Some claim to have found seams which are opening. Others look up into an empty sky with blind eyes, and stretch out their arms in a mute appeal. To whom are they appealing? The prophet who lives next door shakes his head. He looks fixedly at the earth, and says without emotion, 'It's the same old story: We are the most ancient bloodline. Our responsibilities are manifold. We must drink the whole cup of milk before it turns into blood.' Lightning punctuates his words. He gropes forward, with apparent purpose, past a barn with no animals. They have a sixth sense and left weeks ago. Their whereabouts is unknown... The earth is rumbling. Has the time of earthquakes arrived?

Daniel Brick

An Unexpected Meeting Framed By Two Solitudes

Are these connections coincidences or fate,
When the time for love and hope is late;
Could it be possible buried hearts to live
Unaware of love they guard concealed?

Mihaela Pirjol

(For the first two sections, Jeremy speaks the odd-numbered stanzas, and Rene, the even-numbered ones. For section three I have identified each speaker. The surging melody Rene hears in section one is the second song in Gustav Mahler's cycle THE SONG OF THE EARTH, titled The Lonely One in Autumn.)

TWO SOLITUDES

Silence, like a pale wind, drifts
through leafless poplars, slips down
their wet bark, soaks red gold leaves
I trample, and spreads across the landscape
I call home. When will this silence end?
When will my solitude be peopled with love?

I walk quickly through sunshafts
broken into crooked pieces of light.
This is the awakening that shines
over me and my terrier on our morning
walks. He strains against the leash
so anxious is he for the next scent.

Time was I thought the world
would be different by now. We are
anxiously listening for the redemptive
word. People still stretch out their arms
in a mute appeal. And we practice the art
of WAITING. How long can patience hold?

How can I help my sister? Her husband
is having surgery next week to remove
a growth. Is it benign or malignant?
She is so worried. In one breath she tells

me they are both hopeful and strong, and
in the next breath she falls silent.

I obsess over things that are distant
from me - foreign affairs, money policies,
trends in lyric poetry, world hunger. It's
what's close that is veiled. I should seize
and lift that veil, and pull it off, or
do I wait for a gentle breeze to remove it?

Beth and Glenn came to see me. They, no, we
are so relieved. Glenn is fully recovered.
They were like giddy teenagers, smiling
at each other, holding hands, stealing
kisses. Meanwhile, I heard that surging
melody, SUN OF LOVE, WHEN WILL YOU SHINE ON ME?

There's going to be a fund raiser for
Tom Whateley's Teen Watch Association
at the Cedar Theater next Tuesday. He
wants me to come, and I feel compelled
to do so. I think he wants me to volunteer
as a tutor. Perhaps I should - I will.

Beth does volunteer work with teens.
She said it really helped her cope
during Glenn's crisis. She wants me
to attend a potluck with her and meet
her colleagues. I am strangely drawn
to this event. I already said, YES.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

I was getting another glass of wine
for myself when I saw her looking at me.
At first, I thought she was another guest,
and was flattered for the stare. Then -
I realized it was Rene, Rene fourteen
years later. Rene of my heart...

O lucky day! What serendipity! I met
an old flame. He still sees me as that

immature, unpredictable college student
who shared an apartment with him
for six sex-drenched months. Oh, my!
Doesn't he remember we parted bitterly?

She thinks there was bitterness in our
parting. I remember laughter and good will.
She even lent me \$300 to cover rent, I paid
her back promptly, before she left for Chicago.
When I told her the whole story a second time,
with much more detail, she was very quiet.

It's the same face I held in my hands and
kissed so many times. I didn't tell him
that. But his eyes still shine with the most
truthful steadiness. There was a moment
I was flustered and could not speak. He smiled
gently over me, and filled the gap quietly.

We found an empty corner, far away from
the stage where a teen band was performing.
People were starting to dance, more and more
on the dance floor. We - we talked in equal
measure of memories and catch-up... Her face
is still that soft flesh I know so well.

A whirlwind week! He calls it a whirligig! Two
concerts, movies on the weekend. Walks in the
parks. Dinners and even lunches together. And
one long night at a jazz club with his friends,
followed by a breakfast gathering with mine.
We've stepped into each other's lives so easily.

I hope I'm not just projecting, but I
haven't felt so close to a woman in living
memory, which means fourteen years. I wanted
so much to kiss her yesterday. I almost
reached out to touch her face, but suddenly
my hand froze. And a voice inside said, NO.

We talked and talked, and the conversation
goes naturally from trivial things to important

things with barely a breath separating them.
I like this kind of conversation. It tells me
what he's been through since I knew him
as a young man. Who is he really today, right now?

Our conversation bumped into a lot of locked
doors she wouldn't open. She treats our past
as a riot of immature kids. But doesn't every
past deserve a future? I feel such tenderness
for her. If only I could reveal that tenderness.
Is she ready to accept it? Should I take the risk?

Why do men want to jump into bed the moment
you make an intimate gesture? Don't they
realize we're testing the waters, not making
overtures? Why can't they see sex as a culminating
event, and not rush into it until our faces
are imprinted in each other's heart... And now he's
mad at me!

... And now she's mad at me. I seized
the moment she seemed to melt with tenderness.
I surrendered to the passion of the moment,
and I thought she felt the passion, too. But
instead of responding, she stiffened. Aren't we
imprinted on each other's mind? How could I be
so wrong?

TOGETHERNESS

Rene

A misunderstanding. An impasse. Four
days of alone-time to realize we want
to be together - always...

Jeremy

I called and left a message. A simple
apology, no special pleading. We are bound
to each other already. We both know this.

Rene

I showed him a book of poems I bought
last summer while vacationing on Aphrodite's

Cyprus. The female poet wrote several poems about a buried life animated by a long-ago experience of love. He smiled, and it was such a sweet temptation, I wanted to kiss him.

Jeremy

She recited a poem from memory, holding the book against her heart. She was so suffused with emotion, she could barely finish her recitation. I touched her cheek very gently and her smile was a single dove flying into a sky of luminous clouds. I felt suddenly light-headed.

Rene

Read these poems, I said to him. And I will meet you on every page. He took the book in one hand, and with other took my hand and placed it on his heart. He looked deep into my eyes. His brown eyes and my green eyes locked in a steadfast gaze. Everything stopped, time stopped, my thoughts stopped.

Jeremy

I took the volume she offered me, and she was suddenly in my arms, her head against my shoulder. Then she raised her head, her face was the moon shining through all the cold winter nights yet to come, bringing what welcome warmth it can. We kissed, our kisses were a string of glowing pearls.

Rene

We talked quietly about how we wanted to live together, and the word forever was in our speech. And I watched his eyes...

Jeremy

Our talking was hushed, quiet, almost at times no more than a whisper. We made promises. And I watched her face...

Rene

So this is the truth of love. How effortlessly love takes over. Today

it is only a flame, in days -
Jeremy
to come it will be the fire
that lights and warms our years -
Jeremy/Rene
together now, forever now, in the truth of love.

Daniel Brick

Repose And Aggression

Three European Swords

The two rapiers lie side by side -
mistrustful, anxious to engage,
fence the other one into a corner,
drive the point home!

They are the vainest of swords:
proud of their sleek blades,
their fatal points. They rest uneasily
in their sheaths, exult in their opponent's flesh.

This is the way of the sword.

The broadsword casts its mighty
shadow. Its heavy balance can be
controlled only by men of wild
courage. They hack, batter, crush
those on whom the shadow falls.

Macbeth heaved the broadsword
when in the King's name he slew
Macdonwald. The sword smashed
the traitor's helmet, cut through
his brain, severed head from body.

This is the way of the sword.

Three Samurai Swords

His sword is the samurai's soul.
Deep in Zen readiness, his fatal skill
serves the will of his Daimyo.
The blade, as sharp as the point,
slices nimbly through the armor

and flesh of his opponent, his lord's
enemy. After his victory, the samurai
sets the sword aside. He performs

the rituals to calm the soul
of his worthy opponent. He realizes -

one day, his soul will be calmed....

This is the way of the sword.

The Red Sword

Slowly, deliberately,
with infinite attention to the Tao,
the Tai Chi devotee dances.
He waves the Red Sword in tandem
with his high steps. It slices

the ambient air, causing no wound,
drawing no blood. Liberation
is what the dancer seeks for himself,
for his loved ones, for everyone.
The Red Sword's repose will soon be his repose.

This is the way of the sword.

Daniel Brick

A Few Autumn Notes Late October 2014

The whole year falls toward
Autumn... Summer has barely
begun when green leaves transfixed
in a sunshaft remind us of Autumn's
yellow, and Summer's harvests point
ahead to nature's final full
reckoning; early Winter swamps
what we treasure most in our
Indian Summers: the steel blue
sky, scoured of clouds, absolutely
empty and the perfect clarity
of the cool air; soon enough, Spring
restores the master color, green,
hiding yellow and red,
which are the silent fires
that will burn up the rest
of the year, as it falls into
Autumn's furnace....
(scored for speaking voice and solo viola)

Daniel Brick

The Return Of Chantelfleurie For Nika Who Created Her

Dr. Emma Stevens
Director
CHANTELFLEURIE Restoration Project
University of Louisiana
2014

We were satisfied with ourselves,
and then the word went out. We waited
for the expected praise, certain
it would come from all angles, so
vociferous we would be rendered
silent, but a silence rich in pride
and adulation. In those first heady
hours of final success, we considered
ourselves CHANTELFLEURIE, and not
that slowly reviving machine there
in the corner chair, specially designed
for her slow recovery, a symbol of what
she had become - a sentient being.

Is she a person? I do not know,
and I will not speculate...

Once the word went out for volunteers
to test her sentience, we were amazed
at the response. The first day - twelve
arrived. We hadn't expected any so soon,
we were unprepared for that small
gathering in our small auditorium,
telling about their previous interaction
with her, how they believed in her
when others abandoned her, how they
reacted to the first signs. The next day
and following days, more came, and
joined the auditorium colloquies, all
of them like pilgrims, true believers
who carried within the hard proof
of their experience. By the third week
the crowd had swelled to one thousand,

and we had simply lost control. The volunteers had demolished our plans without knowing them. They spoke to each other, and we who built her, we who thought we owned her were ignored. To admit I am humbled is to admit the simple truth. I thought CHANTELFLEURIE was mine! You ask me if I feel defeated? Hmmm.... There will be many forums and conferences, and I will be present at every one, but not as a specialist, not as the project director. I will be present as a witness, yet another person mysteriously affected by a sentient doll, just like the others. I have joined the Many....

Jason W. Stahl

Writer

CHANTELFLEURIE: THE REALITY OF FANTASY

Brown Wren Press, St. Paul 2014

CHANTELFLEURIE... My dear child...

Is this the life you expected, heart beating fiercely to fuel all your love, and mind racing to compose the Book of Life in the time allotted you? A book not of words on paper or data floating in cyberspace. A book composed of gestures and acts, performed on the moment's spur, but then you are rushed to another appearance. Little do your handlers realize, you are no product in the marketplace! This is CHANTELFLEURIE touching the hearts of every person she meets. Wherever you alight, there are small miracles - a better afternoon, a sudden rush of happiness, generosity to a stranger, laughter instead of tears. People leave your presence strangely changed. But there is no grand epiphany. Never. Does that need repeating? I imagine it does, and will be again and again, by more and more people. The small miracles are enough, right? This is not just an event but the beginning

of an era. I have played my role. I spent six months with CHANTELFLUERIE at the laboratory. I listened and listened to her, and found no flaw in her behavior. Her handlers call it 'Her performance', and want me to use that word, too. But they don't know her as I do, and those thousands out there, in the world that needs her presence, and, yes, her behavior. I have played my role, CHANTELFLEURIE knows this. I am fulfilled, I am satisfied....

Dr. Leslie Aggerson
Production Line Manager
CHANTELFLEURIE Enterprises
Baton Rouge
2015

By now we have all we need - the body, of sturdy materials, supple, malleable; the mechanism - an advanced battery I cannot hope to explain beyond its life-like powers; the artistry of a dozen artists - withdrawn men and women, devoted to their task, sharing none of their thoughts but always smiling, some almost laughing, some near tears, all delighted to show the finished flesh of CHANTELFLEURIE; and the programmers - two of whom are retiring after this. One say, 'What greater thing can I ever do? ' 'My career ends with a perfect high C, ' says the other, grinning, clapping his hands at his own performance... We can now manufacture twelve hundred dolls per diem. Is each one one a person, like the prototype in WASHINGTON D.C.? I don't know... My job is to keep a factory producing, unit after unit. The rest is for philosophers and children to determine....

Father Time

At a Primeval Distance

I regret now what I did
to that poor doll. She was quiet.
charming, guileless. I, who endure
all time, and witness its heavy passage
through the spaces occupied by humans,
all of whom believe every past deserves
a future; I, who must see and hear
all of the roiling toil and turbulent
calm of time and space; I, who must bear
the weight of events which circle and fold,
rush and return, crash, shatter, break,
and begin again... Sometimes, not always,
but sometimes, I cannot summon sympathy,
and I want to sweep the universe back to
nothing. I won't. It is not allowed
by forces larger and more distant than I.
It is a frightful universe: there is only
POWER and WEAKNESS, everything in between
is imperiled... But there is no excuse
for my cruelty. Do you hear me, You Heavy
Instruments of Power? A god admits freely
he was wrong...Forgive Father Time,
dear child, this time, and he will look
kindly on you and those you call friends.

Betty

Age Eight

New Orleans

20__

I love my Chantelfleurie. We
cozy up every night and fall asleep
together, and when I wake up in the morning,
she is smiling at me. When I am at school,
she sits on our bed. Sometimes, when my Mom
is doing laundry, she moves her to my desk.
But it doesn't matter. When I come home,
she is still smiling. At night when I am
doing my homework, she is very quiet.

One night I was so tired, I
fell asleep in the back seat of the car.
When we got home, I couldn't find Chantelfleurie.
I started to cry, but my Daddy said we would
find her. It was already dark but we
drove to the supermarket. There were only
a few people inside, and they were turning
the lights off, but there was Chantelfleurie,
sitting alone by a register, smiling,

and not the least bit afraid. The nice
lady who rescued her said her daughter
had a Chantelfleurie she loved very much.
So she said she knew I would come
right away, and she was waiting for me.
My Daddy wanted to give the nice
lady some money, but she refused.
On the way home, Chantelfleurie and I
fell asleep in the back seat...

I like my Daddy, so does Chantelfleurie!

Daniel Brick

Walking Through Autumn

September

Powerlines along my path bristled
with electric fire, scorching
the raised brow of September'

Just past a green patch of sumac,
I found my neighbor Terence, waiting,
letting his dog wander the meadow.

We spent a few minutes
bent over the meadow flowers
looking for the bergamot plant.

He straightened first.
'We can't see it, but we know
it's here. Even the dog smells it.'

'Yes, ' I said, still searching.
'Smelling it is reward enough, '
and I realized it was time to part.

I ambled east, further into
the treeless meadow. His gold dog
led him west toward a grove of aspen.

No doubt he too walked as slowly
as this summer was becoming autumn.
The scarecrows were all fast asleep.

A lone hawk glided far above
the birds of passage. I imagined
an evening drinking Earl Grey tea,

and writing again those long letters
I once called 'massive missives'
before sleeping as deeply as the scarecrows.

October

Small groups of Canadian geese,
five of them, crossed the cloudy sky.
Their honking raised my eyes
from earth to heaven, and I stopped
raking to watch them disappear
into thick clouds, no longer winged things
but just dots, like crooked ellipses,
sinking into the depths of heavy paper,
whatever message they were spelling
by their flight, smudged, then erased,
lost in whiteness....

November

The bronze path through the woods
crunches under our shoes. Hard earth
holds steady. The delicate higher branches
of a leaning aspen map another way out.
The air, sliced by flights of bees,
bleeds summer warmth over this November day.

Ages ago, you stopped counting our steps.
We walk. side by side, in an 'andante' rhythm,
as if we have nothing else to hope for.
The smoky scents of autumn cannot be denied.
We breathe them as we climb a steep slope
of leafless trees. Breathless at the top,

we keep moving, as certain of reaching
our true home as the geese winging overhead.

December

The sunroom is without light. You slouch
in a big chair, wrapped in a dark blue blanket.
Your brown eyes are the brightest spots
to be seen, and the many-colored glow
of the television provides the only window
into the outside world. It is the middle
of the evening...

Scraps of paper litter the floor. A few pages
float about, refusing to land, unwilling
to lie forgotten. In my library, a single bulb
illuminates a volume of Goethe. I am turning
the pages slowly, and it is enough. Pelleas
is already asleep, his head tucked loosely
under his cowl. Just beyond this white wall

in front of me, clouds fold into each other,
and a deluge of snow is poised to fall all winter long.

Daniel Brick

The Prodigal Son (An Old Tale Revisited)

When the prodigal son returned home, his father, all forgiveness and delight, announced a party at once. And at once he set to work. Even the most distant relative was summoned, and people nearby, even strangers just passing through this vicinity of joy, were invited. All of them crowded around the boy, jostling for the best place, breathing the available air, leaving him gasping, unable to respond to their blandishments. He broke free, when his father was occupied elsewhere, found an empty spot on the second level, a few inches of silence, and settled in. He was drinking too much wine, gulping down glass after glass, as servants dutifully responded. Below, he saw his father in the middle of a pack of servants, some carrying wine flasks, others trays of food. His father was giving expert directions, pointing here and there, even waving up to his eldest son. The boy was shocked. How could he possibly find me? he wondered. Then, he saw his three younger brothers warily staring up at him, making no effort to turn their sneers into smiles. Abruptly, they vanished into the huge banquet hall...

Around midnight, sated with wine and people, the honored guest slipped away, avoiding eye contact, and walked down an immense hallway which connected this southern wing with the two northern wings of his father's sprawling mansion. 'All this is yours, my dear son, ' his father had smiled the day before his first escape attempt. He had reached the fortified border center before the strings that bound him to his family, stretched taut, suddenly

snapped him back. He was walking slowly, drunkenly, down the empty corridor, until he reached an immense stone chair. He climbed

awkwardly to the seat, and sprawled in its excess space. The stone chair was a relic of an earlier age when men were still giants. Legendary warriors, they wore no armor, they carried no weapons. They wrestled their way to dominion but no one stayed on top for long. There were always new wrestling matches, with challengers gloating, there were new conquests to make, new widows go pursue -

He awoke suddenly, after several hours of drunken sleep. Clearly, cutting through his stupor, the Dream had spoken to him, and It would guide his third escape. He bolted from the giant's chair, and ran down the hollow corridor, echoes of his haste bombarding the silent walls. His father, his younger brothers, the courtiers would all be in deep sleep, having been guided to their chambers by sober servants. It was not difficult to get some of them to prepare a horse and supplies for him. He followed the curving, upward slope of the road to an elevation, where he paused but did not dismount. The impatience of escape thoroughly possessed him. Looking down on his father's opulent mansion, the one promised him again and again, he was puzzled. This is not my home... Even his thoughts were very quiet. He shook his body, regaining alertness. Let my brothers wrestle for it! My home is elsewhere. 'Good-bye, my dear father, ' he spoke softly in the still morning air one last time. 'You tried to give me everything,

but it was all just chains and locks!
All I want, all I need is to breathe
ample air freely.' At his signal, the horse
began to gallop down the road, which
widened with every passing mile.

Daniel Brick

Ode To A Cottonwood Stump

I Summer 1998

Cottonwood,
great rooted one,
leafy priest of our woodland church,
you sway in the blue air near your brother trees.
You are the center of every labyrinth.
You are a message piercing the sky's silence.
You are time's sentinel and nature's witness.

Six decades of growth have swelled your girth.
Five of us linking hands can barely circle you.
Wind and weather have scored deep fissures in your bark.
Its roughness is like flesh hardened by work.

Your branches make a green canopy over grass and dirt.
Shadows shelter us and cousin birds and deer.
You listen deeply to the sounds of everything alive.

II Summer 1999

Lost cottonwood,
shattered great one,
dead fragment of your giant life,
six decades of growth against one night of destruction.
Your hollow stump is rotted, exposed to the furies of wind
and weather.
Your death was as sudden as your life was slow.

We gather around your base, caretakers of your end.
Lichen still carpet your bark,
moss shines brightly after June rains,
green plants, yellow with new growth, sprout from your
pale fibers.
You cannot be finally dead if living things grow out of you.
You live again through them, through us.
We celebrate tonight, in light and in darkness,
your life, your death, your afterlife.

Montsalvat After Richard Wagner's Parsifal

Those who should be bearers of grace
cannot remember the path to the sacred mountain.
In their dreams they see only leering skulls.
Childish lovers flaunt their seductions
before a broken temple; a simple wound
strikes terror in an aged healer;
sons abandon saving hopes
their parents conceived; a beautiful woman
distrusts her mirror...

What is needed cannot be promised
by a god who doubts his power.
What is needed must be offered
by a priest who yearns for godhead.
What is needed will be achieved
by a believer who waits for centuries...
A warrior, wandering in the exhausted forest,
drops his sword, kneels and prays by a lake.
Oh, the stillness of this Friday morning!

Daniel Brick

Buddhist Temple In The Mountains

My journey began in spring
when my heart prayed for salvation.
I decided to enter the Buddhist Temple
where Li Cheng lives a pure life.
All summer I trudged wet roads,
leaving villages and memories behind.
By autumn I reached the foot hills
and labored upward
as colored leaves swirled down.
Breathless, I looked up and saw
peak against peak against peak
and the narrow road disappearing
into mist and snow.
Now, at the beginning of winter,
I have reached Li Cheng's Temple.
Barren winds have stripped the trees.
Green trees have become thorn trees.
They are skeletons clinging to dead rock,
their branches are the shattered bones.
The Temple rises, in its dark beauty,
from a nearby summit. A stone slab
marks the memory of my friend.
I cry with the ten thousand things.

Daniel Brick

At Home, Sunday Afternoon

Her black hair bounces
as she dances through discarded papers,
kicking the Metro section into the corner
where she houses a baby doll with bright clear eyes.
She was once such a baby
housed in a faraway house,
before us.

Her doll's hair bounces, too,
when our child walks her,
step by step,
a marionette without strings attached,
each foot in turn
awkwardly carrying the weight of the child's body, too,
pressing into the soft red carpet,

soft color and soft texture,
a cushion for both doll and child,
as they waver across the room,
rebalance their steps and then plop down.
'O, wow! she walks fast, Daddy.
Look out. Here she comes! '
I look at them and laugh

because I'm expected to.
There are strings attached now,
binding me and doll and daughter.
And I notice tiny lines
crease the carpet, bent fibers looking white,
where she dragged herself and doll
along the only available road toward family.

Daniel Brick

Open Heart

Monica spoke in her familiar soft voice, each word carrying its weight of sincerity. 'Daniel, I am, and always will be your Anima, and your Muse if you need one, or perhaps a guide in Spirit matters. You won't see much of me, I must withdraw to a higher region. But, my beloved, I read your thoughts, and send blessings to you always.'

She paused, realizing only his recent austerities countered Daniel's sense of loss. 'But a real woman waits for you in the Twin Cities. I don't know if she is your Twin Flame, or Soul Half, or even what you call a soul-mate... But she is R-E-A-L. And she waits for you with delight and desire.' Monica was fighting against her departure from Daniel's dimension. She made a supreme effort of will to remain a while longer in the sensory realm. 'The two of you can experience a second CASCADE OF LIGHT together. Imagine the bonding! And The Community will assign you missions in tandem.' Her voice became distorted. Then her lips moved but no sounds were emitted. She was at the Threshold of Dimensions. Suddenly: 'This the human happiness you and Helena deserve... Take it. Open your heart, Daniel, and take it... loving... human... beautiful...' Daniel saw tears in Monica's eyes, as she vanished, and her distant voice reached him like a second embrace, 'Open your heart.'

The New Life Stage Six Part Two For Marie

HIS HOPES

My friend courted a silent muse.
He saw her wide-eyed beauty
as she bent low to bless his hidden heart.

She appeared... there,
in those empty places
where he had sought her presence.

She turned and smiled into the sun.
Her robe shimmered between white
and yellow. It was an emblem

of inner seasons passing into love.
Did he kneel as he offered
her a sign promising tomorrows?

After writing his first poem
in four months, Daniel considered
tossing it. Then reconsidered
on re-reading, and left it
on his small table, when
he lay down on his cot,
exhausted from Spirit Flight.
When he awoke in the night,
there was Monica, her back
to him, sitting in his chair,
reading his poem...
'Are you very mad
at me? she said softly.
'I'm not mad at you.
I haven't seen you for months.
I've been preoccupied.' Daniel
said loftily, 'I'm wrestling
either with myself,
or with the Universe. I can't
tell which one.' Monica
laughed, turning

to face him with
her smiling summer face.
'Daniel, I'm here to tell you
you graduated with honors, or
you've been promoted to
the Head Office, or the war is over
and you can go home. Take your pick.
But I want you back in the Twin Cities,
back to writing poetry in your favorite
coffee shops, and especially back
in sync with The Community. Do you
think you can handle that? in a week or two? '

Daniel ran his fingers vigorously
through his hair. 'Well, the only problem
I can see - and it's huge - is I'm
out of touch being with people. Because
of my Spirit Flights. It takes hours
to recover my Earth bearings. When people
visit, they never stay long enough.
And that causes misunderstandings.'
'The Community contacted me, all of them
alarmed.' Daniel was fully composed.
'Monica, these past four months
have been my NIGHT SEA VOYAGE!
I accelerated my efforts to master
Spirit Flight. That meant a bitter
bargain: I had to shut down my poetic
activity to heighten my shamanic
ability. But you know with the small things
clustered inside of me, no harm can happen,
and I believe they function like a reverse
magnet, repelling the inherent evil
stalking us.' Monica's closed her eyes
briefly in relief. 'And I thought you
were angry at me, and the The Community,
and the whole enterprise we serve... '

'Monica, what I am doing, these austerities,
this time of AGON, is to serve better...
You can listen to the small things.
They know: I have walked calmly
and swiftly through the larger world
you forecast for me. I have swum in

lakes of warm yellow liquids, crossed
mighty rivers at floodtide as if
by magic. Hills and mountains posed
no obstacles for me, and I lavished
my new eyes on vistas as dizzying as
anything in outer space. Water-falls and
fire-falls crashed in my path, clouds
thick enough to roll in, and grassy
meadows that intoxicated me as I wandered,
huge storms of lightning in dry deserts -
all these things I witnessed. And I was
never fatigued or fearful or depressed.
My mind was washed clear, my soul polished
to its native brightness. I communed
with strange beasts, whose howls, bellows,
whines, whose whistles, cries and songs
were eloquent past imagining. I responded
by reciting Shakespeare and Yeats, and we
bonded! ' Daniel was rapt, revealing
finally his dazzling life. Monica became
increasingly excited with his telling.
She embraced him for only a moment,
but to him it was sweetness past imagining.
'Daniel, I am, and always will be
your Anima.... '

Daniel Brick

The New Life: Stage Six Part One For Marie

In late autumn Daniel withdrew completely from his urban world and artistic life. He began living in a two-room cabin in the far North, near the Canadian border. His only visitors were members of The Community who monitored his health and well-being. They brought him food but all he would accept were vegetables and fruits and some breads. He considered milk and coffee necessities. One member, Helena, took a personal interest in Daniel's situation. She was amused at his ascetic lifestyle and his resolute resolve not engage in artistic discussions or even small talk. And when she brought up poetry, he seemed strangely disengaged for a published poet, like a latter-day Rimbaud. It was puzzling because he had a sizable collection of poetry books in the cabin. However, it was Helena's report in person to The Community on Daniel's efforts to master Spirit Flight that alarmed all the members. Helena broke down twice during her report but rallied both times, determined to finish her assignment. This crisis occurred in early February, four months into Daniel's solitary existence in the northern Minnesota wilderness.

HELENA'S ACCOUNT

He leans back, bending
his hips painfully, bending
his neck further back
with more sharp pain,
and from that contorted position
he sees a sky-dome formed
by blue-gray clouds.
The clouds rise
from the horizon, hidden
by bare branches,
and hugging the curve
of the sky-dome, they
reach a zenith, into which
he steadfastly, ecstatically
stares, silent but in grievous
pain. He sees the wonder
of the sky-realm: streaks
of pale red, then fiery red,
finally bright orange cuts
through the clouds,

which form an immense
burning staircase,
stretching from the horizon
upward to the zenith,
then past that zenith
to an impossibly higher
one his unblinking eyes
can barely reach. Then
suddenly the streaks,
the vivid colors, vanish
until the only red is a pale
glow behind the tree cluster,
and the blue drained out
of the clouds, and he is released
from his nightly AGON. He lies
on that cold ground,
recovering, for some
thirty or forty minutes,
before he can hobble
back to his cabin
where he sits upright
in a hard wood chair
for several hours of meditation.
And then, so prepared,
he lies on his cot
until the Lucid Dreams
arrive, and with them
what he calls Spirit Flight.

DANIEL'S LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

Winter is hard, but not
without its cold delights.
Everyday it grows older,
and goes further from me,
leaving behind snow piles
blocking the vista,
ice-crusting branches
that snap and break,
the silence of empty fields,
and deer and small animals
desperate for food. My

sympathy for Earth and her
creatures grows more keen,
it slices through my life
like a perfect scimitar.
I have no defenses,
I want none. I want
to feel want and hunger
to close the gap between
our souls. By spring
I want my soul to resemble
theirs, no more for me
a privileged human soul.
That gift I surrender to
empathy. The small things bunched
inside of me want to ease
my pains, make this exile
comfortable. Bless them.
Their type of being is celebratory:
life for them revels in wonders
and joys. But mine is otherwise:
I live in the place of AGON,
and I will not ease that experience
until I have mastered Spirit Flight.
Only then can I offer my true
services to The Community. Monica
told me a larger world would be
revealed to me. Only now can I
begin to appreciate that
boundlessness, and the vistas
I have seen make my previous
work minuscule....

Daniel Brick

Ars Poetica A Sonnet

A poem discovers itself along
the line. Toggle an image free
from a fabric of words, and a poem
unravels, whole and complete...
There's the marble bench halfway
down the Azalea Way, and nearby
in a white leaf magnolia, a single
silk veil was left as a love token.
Three sparrows perch high above,
they display no impatience
about the human drama yet
to unfold. A block away, at a busy
coffee shop, a man and a woman share
gleeful intimacies over espresso and cream.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Eclipse (1975)

I remember that hot July night
we sat huddled on the highest hill
in West St. Paul, pulling blankets
tight against the relentless assault
of mosquitoes, despite the humid heat.
And we watched as the Moon eclipsed
planet Mars. For forty minutes, the Moon
loomed, blood-red, a counterfeit Mars,

so close to our questing eyes, our minds
were deceived. We reached out to you, Mars!
With our hearts, we reached out -
stretching toward you, yearning for contact!
Then, the moment passed, and the Moon
was once again just the Moon, and we were....

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The New Life: Fifth Stage For Marie

An Autumn Picture

Leaves, pale and dry,
fall
from branches
which can no longer
nourish them. They
pile up in bunches,
get wet and decompose
into swirls of colors.

How is it
we still love autumn
after all these years
of decay?

* * *

Suddenly, she was there with him.
'That is so sad, but it's
sweet, too. That mix of sadness and
sweetness is your human experience
of the beautiful...I read your thoughts
as you worked. It's quite remarkable
what is happening in your mind
as you compose poems. I am no longer surprised
the small things identify with you,
and they do - very strongly. You could
not have better advocates with the other
entities...' Daniel struggled
to compose himself. 'Monica, it's been
so many weeks - ' He wanted to say
so much to her, but hesitated. She leaned
slightly forward, 'I told you we would meet
again. Now you know what you have to do.'
Daniel folded the poem absently. 'Yes,
but how do I provoke a Lucid Dream? Can
you guide me? ' He paused. 'The last time
I saw you, it was warm and bright. You
were wearing a yellow summer dress - '
'And now I'm wrapped in wool and scarves.'
Monica bowed her head for a moment. When

she faced him, her expression was almost blank. 'I know what you want, Daniel. Almost all humans on earth want the same thing... You want a soul-mate, at least, but even more you want to find your soul's other half. I would not be so careless by saying more.' She paused again, scanning the sparse crowd in the coffee shop. 'It's best for you to let go of that fantasy. If it is meant to happen, it will of its own accord.'

Daniel spoke urgently, 'You are my Anima. I know I have found you, I know for certain.'

Monica folded her arms across her scarlet sweater, and waited for a few breaths. 'This yearning is an obstacle to your growth. Free yourself. And stay focused on that freedom. Free yourself right now, in this present moment.' Monica searched his face, read his thoughts, and realized this was not the right moment. 'Yearning makes the heart grow deeper, St. Augustine said.'

'That's true, Daniel, and it makes it heavier, and you have to carry that weight by yourself. And it only grows heavier. How then will you fly?' Daniel felt drained. 'So is Eros the problem?' he asked quietly. 'No...No, it's a question of energy. You recognize the energy that turns the seasons. You surrender to that force in things, you take it within yourself, and are one with it. Eros is within you, and all around you. It doesn't take much effort for a human to forge a union. And you will be free of these yearnings which have no proper object. Daniel, you will feel the special lightness of being human, and you will soar in untrammelled freedom.' Monica smiled and rejoiced in her memory of Spirit Flight. 'Forget me... I'm just a visitor. I don't belong to your dimension. I'm

a traveler, always, no place is my home.'
She paused, and then spoke with utmost
concentration. 'And no one is my partner,
I am involved with the Many.' Daniel was
stunned by her speech. He saw her finally
with his new eyes. 'I didn't think
I knew how to let go... but I'll
change my focus to Spirit Flight...
and Lucid Dreams. I'm determined
to be ready.' Monica watched his
human face sympathetically. 'A larger
world than you have ever known awaits
you. Do you remember the words of
Marsilio?

THE SUN INFUSES LIGHT IN ALL THE STARS.

THE SUN IS THE LORD OF ALL ELEMENTAL VIRTUES.

You will become like Marsilio's Sun! ' The last thing
Daniel saw fade was her bright smile under dancing eyes.

Daniel Brick

The New Life: Fourth Stage For Marie

An Autumn Picture

Mist slowly climbs the hill,
softening the remaining green,
occluding what is left
of summer: a pale greenness
dimly shines past orange leaves.
As shafts of afternoon light
slant across the sky, mist claims
the whole hillside in its ghostly cover.
This is autumn stillness,
these are the days of quiet waiting.

* * * *

As he finished writing the last line,
he heard her voice distinctly.
'Many have been more anxious
than you, many, in fact, are chewed
up by the stress of waiting.'
It was the woman supremely happy within,
sitting across from him. She pushed
a mug of fresh cafe au lait
toward him. 'It's for you, it seems
to go with being a poet. By the way,
everyone recovers, even the most stressed.'
Before Daniel could thank her,
she was standing slightly behind him.
'It may happen tonight. That's my only
message. Prepare yourself.' Daniel
made a gesture with his hands
that caught the seer's attention.
'How do I prepare? Prepare for what? '
The seer looked puzzled. 'If you ask
that question, you're surely not
prepared.' She leaned way down,
her lips almost touching his ear.
'So don't ask that stupid question.'
She straightened her posture. Daniel
had to twist his body to see her.
She seemed younger than at their

first encounter on Lake Street:
not as many wrinkles, and in her hair
threads of black and white. When she
started walking to the door, he noticed
her movements were smooth, almost
dance-like. What a contrast between
appearance and attitude, he thought.
She paused at the door, then abruptly
returned to his table and sat down,
looking down. She raised her eyes,
and stared directly at him. 'I'm not
enjoying my mission as a Spirit Messenger.
It's not your fault I act rudely.'
Daniel bit his lower lip. 'Is there
trouble in Paradise? ' She looked
at him for a moment, in a piercing
silence, 'We're not in Paradise. This
is the Place of Agon. You know that word,
of course, you would know it. I can't
really help you. You know too much.
It's like a suit of armor, weighing
you down, blocking openings to
messages. Monica will explain this
better. You have no defenses raised
against her, do you? My role is to tell
you your initiation has begun, and
this time it is irreversible. You can
refer to it as the Cascade of Light.'
Daniel breathed deeply several times,
the moment felt suspended. 'OK, consider
this, ' the seer finally seemed relaxed
into her mission. 'Monica discovered
your readiness because of a poem
in which you wrote singing and flying
are the same, which, of course, they
are, after making certain adjustments -
Oh, I can't explain it - but summon
to your mind a Lucid Dream in which
you sing and fly, one folding into
the other, then again, and again.
You get my drift? ' The seer now looked
almost as young as Monica. 'You're ready, '

she nodded. And then there was a gap in space.

Daniel Brick

Childhood In Fergus Falls, Mn

The child I was believed the wind
was a very small creature, hidden inside things.
When trees waved their branches back and forth,
winds were suddenly born. They pushed past
our pinched faces, bent grass blades, lake reeds
and forgotten flowers. And they carried voices
as far away as China.

When the air turned cold,
we sheltered in the old garden gazebo, its planks
rattled by the same winds that chilled the air.
Leaves piled up around our refuge, but the taste
of summer strawberries persisted in my mouth
despite those shredding winds. My friends
were ageless, and my sister reminded me
I would never be as old as the next season.

* * * * *

Now I know trees did not invent the wind.
He is an invisible giant, who looms over me,
eighteen feet or higher, and commands all things
to bow before him, whether he moves or rests.
He is harsh, indifferent and always pursuing
a goal beyond us. From me he has stolen
the memory of strawberries.

Daniel Brick

The New Life: Third Stage For Marie

It was a day of high clouds
that contained summer's last day.
I watched the sunset framed
by my apartment's southwest windows,
a band of glowing light,
whose sheen pierced the white clouds.
I saw red streaks brush yellow patches,
and yellow burnished into gold,
its glow a new color
only angels apprehended in sudden flight.
And now was this vision mine as well?

I met the aged seer a few hours
later on a nondescript Minneapolis street.
Her face was wrinkled by decades of harsh
experience, there was no smile shaped by
her lips or spilling from her eyes,
and yet to my novice sight, she seemed
supremely happy... Her first words
to me were harsh beyond reckoning:
'Don't let the Poetry mislead you.
Plato was probably right, after all.
Poets cannot be trusted. They are liars all! '
She said this in a loud, cracked voice
at the intersection of the Lake and Chicago,
where the remnants of the midnight people
awaited one of the last buses of the night.
I was nonplussed, and more than a little
weary of this latest encounter with a seer.
When would they assign me a mission? When
would allow me to finish this passage?
Looking back, I realize this was a major test,
and I was close to failing it outright. What
saved me? It was my earlier impression that
this seemingly cantankerous old woman was,
in truth, supremely happy. I turned to face
her in all humility, and felt a charge of
grace course through my body, deep into my
mind and touch my soul! 'My hands are usually

empty, I am a beggar of Poetry.' So I spoke,
hardly knowing what it meant. 'Oh, keep
writing your poems, ' she said abruptly.
'They can't do any harm, maybe they are
carriers of a wisdom alien to mine. I only
know what the Golden Light has revealed
to me. You are not ready to receive it
yet. It's up to you to figure out WHY NOT.'
Her voice trailed off, and her form
vanished in a blink of my eyes. No one
at the bus stop noticed it. As I turned
away and started walking west on Lake Street,
I heard a voice within, from deep down
where the small things lived. It said,
'Your Enlightenment has been postponed,
it's rescheduled for another time, place.... '

Daniel Brick

The New Life Second Stage For Marie

I have asked the wisest
men and women
about these small things.
Some stare me down,
without so much as the courtesy
of a 'fare-thee-well'
and good-bye. Others look
extremely hurt,
zero in on me. Confused,
I withdraw.

Only one of these seers
treated me as an equal,
a man in his early forties
who spoke of the romance
of the rails, who still
bounded on the moving train
in St. Paul and rode all the way
to Portland. I'm not sure
what lesson he was meant to teach
me, unless it was just the good will
he conveyed, the hope he engendered.

One Sunday in June, I crossed
paths with MONICA, a young seer
in a bright yellow summer dress,
in a garden in Golden Valley
I had never before entered.
Before I could speak, she said,
'You're not ready for the small
things, much less the Cascade
of Light. Here, read this. Begin
now! ' She handed me a manuscript
that was handwritten, the cover
page was beautifully inscribed,
'The Book of the Sun' by Marsilio
Ficino. 'I know this, I've read
this, ' I responded excitedly.
'No you have not. You only

acquired your eyes today.' Her
face was beautiful and stern.
'Read it. We will meet again.'
And then there was only yellow
light where she had just stood
in her summer loveliness. I was
bereft, but in my hands was the
'The Book of the Sun'. I sat
down on a bench by a fountain,
and commenced reading with my
new eyes in my new life...
Deep within, I heard Monica's
voice, now sweet and gentle,
'Don't stare at my face, Daniel.
Look deeply within. Poetry is
not the surface of things, it
is.... '

Daniel Brick

The New Life: First Stage For Marie

A plethora of small things
piles up in the back regions
of the mind. There is room
for many more, so they keep
tumbling in. Oh, they are
so quiet, being three parts
humble, only one part proud.
They are nourished by the Mind's
own light, so they require neither
food nor beverage. They like
to visit the heart whose
beating is the music they adore,
or they cluster in the back of
the brain, and watch closely
as synapses make intelligence
happen. Some have been
known to withdraw,
and count for hours, as others
smile over them. Wise people
I have consulted tell me
they are counting the world's
blessings, and their delight
is in knowing they will never
come to an end of the list...
Meanwhile, I draw closer to
the small things. Being as nimble
as air, devoted always
to the LIGHT itself, they
cling to me, going where
I am going. wherever that
might be....

(to be continued)

Daniel Brick

The Quest

The waves carry my frail ship
across a shining sea.
A haze covers distant islands,
makes them shimmer in the water.
I stare at them,
those patches of land and rock.
One will become my home,
a place to which
I must always return.

I see this island in my dreams.
A shore of whitest sand
gives way to gray rocks,
loose, falling toward the sea,
moving backward in time
toward the wet birth of all things.
As I wander inland,
I smell cinnamon and cloves.
A maiden beneath palms dances in silence.

Daniel Brick

On A Late Summer Day

My friend,
before the tea cools, and loses
its fragrance, let us pour one more cup
and share gratifying discourse
about the ten thousand things.

Not a day goes by without
flocks of birds seeking
traces of that northward path
they will soon descend
to restore their southern homes.

Not a day goes by without
hot breezes squeezing
fragrances of early summer
across the trembling August air
deep within peach-colored apples.

Oh, can we bind together
like sheaths of wheat
these late summer days
and store them in a hidden granary
for needful seasons yet to come?

Already August dissolves
into September, which
dissolves into October, which
disappears in the first snow
of November and December ice.

Is it true, as you have said,
what we cherish we desire forever?
Then, let us cherish many things:
sheets wrinkled by sleep, pennies
stashed in a chest, old letters

from distant friends, red and yellow roses,
a book of poems given by a dear friend,
a diary, a chess set, pictures

painted by children, an amethyst crystal,
memories of a lost, beautiful love.

If it is true, as you have said,
what we cherish we desire forever,
then, let us cherish many things
so that our desires become immortal,
and our names unforgettable....

Daniel Brick

A Tiny Black Spider

Spring 486 BCE

Ashna sat
in a coil of pure thought
by the edge of a quiet green pond
beneath a wide umbrella of palms.
Nothing could disrupt
the deep meditation
of this earnest young
man except the sight of
a tiny black spider
sinking into the still
green water, its legs
thrashing and pumping.
Ashna opened his eyes to
suffering, and scooped up
the struggling spider
with his drinking gourd.
He poured the water
over his robe, and
gently eased the
tiny black spider
onto the banana leaf
prayer page. Holding
it close to his mouth,
he breathed hot breaths
over the creature.
Then Ashna tilted
the banana leaf against
the ground, the tiny black
spider slipped off,
and disappeared.
Ashna resumed his posture.

At dusk in the forest,
with resident deer
grazing, Gautama,
an eighty year old man,
walked slowly

to his meditation tree.
Deer accompanied him,
watchful and alert.
A few younger monks
gathered on the steps
of the temple. Ashna
walked very quietly
behind Gautama. 'Ashna! '
Startled to hear Gautama
call his name, he walked
around and bowed deeply.
'Ashna, you looked puzzled.'
Gautama spoke softly.
'Do you have a question for me? '
Ashna placed his palms
together; touching his forehead
with them, he bowed his head
and spoke fervently. 'Oh Illustrious
One I apologize for disturbing
your meditation. Please forgive me.
I will join my brother monks and go begging? '
'No, stay, Ashna... Sit
by me. My meditation is not
damaged.' His voice was softer
than the air flowing through
the Deer Park. They sat in silence.
'If you don't tell me, I
will think you are wounded.
Do you want me to carry
that weight? ' Ashna shook
his head. 'O Illustrious
One, I was in deep meditation
when I was distracted and
surrendered wholly to the
distraction. I watched
a tiny black spider fall
into the pool and struggle
helplessly. I rescued him,
revived him and released him.
And then I could not
return to my meditation.
I sat staring into the

air, the hours passed,
the day cooled into dusk,
dust motes floated past
my eyes, and I could not
find my center.' A smile
creased Gautama's aged
face. 'Ashna... Ashna,
you acted blamelessly. You
saved a creature in dire
peril. You have gained
merit for yourself. Your
calm, disrupted now,
will return tomorrow.'
Ashna's face was shining
with gratitude. Gautama
lowered his voice. 'What if
I told you that this tiny
black spider you rescued,
in a previous life, had been
a general who led one thousand
war chariots into bloody
battles across our northern
region? For ten years he
waged brutal warfare, until
all his enemies had been killed.
But so had all of his
charioteers, and he himself
fatally wounded. There were
no men of power left to govern
the people, so they governed
themselves, and lived happily.'
'Is it true, O Illustrious One,
I helped him on his path
of deliverance?' Gautama replied,
'If you believe my story,
it is because you need
a story to believe.' Ashna saw
the laughter in Gautama's eyes.
He understood, and continued
the story. 'And after some years,
a new general arrived at the head
of three thousand charioteers,

but today he is just a wasp! '
The two laughed in tandem. Then
they sat in smiling silence.
A few night birds added
their sweet melodies to
the spring air. 'Ashna.'
Gautama's voice was steady and
serious. 'Listen to my words.
Just as the sun produces
rays of light from within itself,
so the spider produces threads
for its web... And from your
depths come acts of kindness.
It is this life we should live.'
Gautama was silent for a long while.
When he finally spoke, his face
was invisible in the darkness.
'Ashna, you have become a lamp
unto yourself.' Then, he signalled
to Ashna he wanted to rise. And
the two monks, one old and close
to death, the other, young
and vibrant, walked side by side
into the brightly lit temple.

Summer 2014

There is no such story
in any Buddhist literature,
I made it up but not out of
whole cloth. I read in
Jack Kornfield's TEACHINGS
OF THE BUDDHA for an hour
and I found the Buddha
had already anticipated my theme,
namely,
'Neither fire, nor moisture, nor wind
can destroy the blessing of a good deed,
and blessings benefit the whole world.'
I needed a story to balance
the reality I witnessed. A story
is a piece of fiction, and fiction

means a shaping, something molded, and that means the hand of a human being, not the Hand of Fate, operating in some distant dimension, hidden and inaccessible, but a human hand writing words at a desk, or typing in a PC at the kitchen table. So here is the story as it truly happened....

I was sitting in the spa, my copy of Whitman nearby, dreamily watching the roiling currents shoot through the pool causing the agitated waters that soothe my aches and sore muscles. Suddenly, I saw a spider flailing against the current that harried him. I emptied my plastic cup, and scooped him up. I took him to the bench, pouring the water on my blanket whose fabric soaked it up. I eased the spider onto a loose page of LEAVES OF GRASS, lifted the Whitman near my lips to blow restorative breath over him. But it was a fool's errand. He was just a blot of black tissue, no spider shape was left there. He was already dead... I intervened too late, and I'm certain, much too late, a fool's errand indeed. Why was this rescue so important to me? Why did I want, no, need that minuscule life to prevail? Is it because compared to quasars and supernovae, I too am minuscule life? Was my good act a compensation

for the sheer randomness
of the universe?

It may be so, philosophy
is a wonderful endeavor, it's
so satisfying to exercise
the mind, that rainbow
of truth-seeking
within us all....

But I have a simpler notion:
the answer can only be found
within me. Why did I assume
this fool's errand? Because
listening to Mahler's Second
Symphony in the morning was
visionary, and my afternoon
walk through Lebanon Hills was
invigorating, and later Marie blessed
me in her message, and later still
Nika responded sympathetically
to my new poem, SEVEN WINDOWS.
For these reasons, and more
like them, I tried to save
a tiny black spider!

Daniel Brick

Seven Windows Redux: Thomas Reaches Out

Thomas to Jane:

If this were a beautiful summer day, Jane, I could point out its beauties to you one by one, and then you would take over and be the finger pointing at the many things that charm us and convince us of the goodness of our lives. But just look at our world - you can barely see anything it's so occluded with smoke and waste. Is there any place left for us to see and know the sweetness of things?

We have nothing left in nature to point to and say, 'You see that flower, right? You see its passionate red petals, its intense yellow center? Well, I am that vibrant red and yellow when I sit beside you.'

And if you could, you would point up at the sky with clouds tumbling over each other and a great wind we cannot feel down shifting those white masses across the bright cerulean blue, and you would say to me alone, 'That sky reveals your power over me, and I trust (I know) it will only protect me and never hurt me.' How we will glow inside the day we say these things to each other!

Jane, when I look inside my mine I see only flowers and you. I don't see other women crowding the street, or that model advertising trivia on TV, or that actress pretending to be a real woman. There's only you, and you fill every space within me with delight and desire. And

I want the delight to become passion and the desire to become fulfillment. This society doesn't want a man and a woman to share those things, they want us to go after dry pleasures that keep us apart from passion and fulfillment. They are killing delight and desire, and we have joined their action with our inaction.

Jane, I want to say the word LOVE to before it vanishes entirely from every human encounter. I want to speak the words that contain LOVE in them. I want to hold you and cherish your loveliness. I want to feel the pangs of being lovelorn and lovesick until we can seek our joy in a love nest of lovemaking. I want the word LOVE to cling to you and me.

Jane, you can trust my words because they come from my heart. It's like the Native American belief that a thin thread of blood connect the heart and the mouth, so the mouth cannot speak an untruth. I am speaking with that blood thread connected to my heart. I want another blood thread to connect our hearts so that we always live in truth. And then the summer, the flowers, the clouds, the sky with its clouds

will be inside us, and in this impossible world (dare I say it) we will be happy.

Thomas to Samuel:

Samuel, look at us living these separate impoverished lives. Doesn't it disgust you we have become so weak? Don't you want to lash out against the ones who have reduced us to this poverty of spirit? LOOK AT US.

We live without friendships. There is too much suffering, too much distrust, too much exhaustion for us to cultivate friendships.

for how many decades has this condition been the norm? How much longer will it prevail? We must find answers to these questions. Because without friendships we may still be human beings but we won't be

humane beings. We have to reconnect those threads of friendship that used to bind men together to pursue common goals. There are so many things we can only revive by working in tandem the way men used to.

Like our 'Once upon a time' democracy which has withered. It's a corpse. There are so many corpses scattered through this society. Aren't we close to being corpses ourselves?

We have no joy because we have no one to share it. What difference does it make if I work harder and earn an extra hundred dollars, or an extra thousand dollars? There's nothing to buy with it. Everything we do or is done to us is done to make us retreat further from each other into a loneliness and isolation so powerful our consciousness can no longer deal with it. We are numbed. We are no longer men among men.

Samuel, can you tell me what it means to be a man? ... Men share beliefs. They believe in the values of life, work and being. That's who we are. We live together, we work toward common goals and we have our being in the world. We're not meant to be shut away in our apartments, never congregating, never being together in large or small groups. This society doesn't want us to remember our simple, honored codes of conduct. It wants to keep us isolated, short-sighted and terribly alone. And it leads to just one end - we no longer exercise our freedom.

Freedom is a vast empty space we wander in, disconnected, fearing meaningful contact, cut off from the support we need to give and receive from other men. You see, it's not freedom at all. It's a wasteland. How have we become so obtuse, so stupid and myopic that the beautiful word FREEDOM no longer excites our male pride with energy and delight? Freedom is our birthright as men. It is up to us to defend it and pass it on to our sons. It is time for us to reclaim our

manhood - our shared belief in Life, Work and Being in the world, once again to be the proud owners of that great word Manhood.

Daniel Brick

Seven Windows A Tale Of The Future

Seven windows face us
as we eat at our host's table.
They let in the gray light
of an early spring day,
a dry, cold, dusty light,
still tarnished with winter.

Seven windows face us,
like sentinels with bad
intentions, guardians of
someone's declining fortunes.
We eat the spare diet of our
host and drink his pale wine.

Tall candles provide sparse light,
and smear a yellowish tinge
over our dry faces...
No light reaches our eyes.
It pools in the broken
faded tiles of the floor.

The window glass might have
been a mirror but the dim
light was too shallow to find
any reflection shining within:
instead of transparency,
the light further stains the glass.

We are seated at a banquet
table, spaced far apart to prevent
conversation. Not that we
feel an urge to talk. It would
only bruise our pride
more grievously than being here.

Our host displays only
courtesy. He speaks inaudibly
to his two female servants.
They are old and wizened

like him. Only once has he
addressed me: 'Thomas, more wine? '

Our host is Augustine, once
the dictator of our city,
who ruled with stealth and
cunning. Now he is a corpse
rotting slowly in solitude.
His subalterns stole

his power six years ago.
They rule from a block
of concrete in the city center.
Augustine lost his wife
and three daughters to
the renewed SARS epidemic.

He has nothing to show
for his life on earth. No
monument, no heir apparent,
no public document recording
his service. He must be
lonelier than the ghosts

of those he killed. Someday
I swear I will stand in
the public square where
the executions happened
eleven years ago. I will
stand and wait, silent

but stretched to my full
stature, no hobbling with
a cane, no kowtowing
to their authority. Let
them drag me off to prison
for six months or a year.

Or perhaps they will
simply ignore me. Let me
stand alone amid rubble
until I begin to look

foolish, like a man
without a purpose, a bum.

I have a burning question
to ask Augustine. What if
a man who has endured
too much and has lost every-
thing his heart treasured, is
given a gun with two bullets?

What will he do? How soon
will he do it? Would he shoot
the one he blames in the
head, and then himself in the
heart? Or would he empty the
bullets and toss the gun?

I wrestle with that
question. But there is
another question that chokes
me with despair: How did so few
people wreck the world
for so many people? Because

that's what the world is -
a wreck. And we exist without
pride or hope or charity. We
are savages with big brains
reduced to living in stale sludge.
How do I live in this moment

without pride or hope? What
makes it possible for me
to think these thoughts
and not poison myself before
tomorrow? Let me test this:
the woman on my right is

named Jane, I think the man
on my left is Samuel. What if
I reached out to them? What -
All this talk in my head!

What does it matter? It's
as if I entertained myself

out of thoughts of despair
or suicide. But I talk
to no one, I hear nothing...
But my soul! I feel my
soul is listening to some-
thing... What? What?

Daniel Brick

After The Poet's Death

His poems refuse
to mourn his passing, they
detach themselves from
books, magazines, wall hangings
and float freely
in the fair summer air.

Their refusal to mourn is
steadfast. 'He's just changed
his address, ' one of his
first poems says to the new
lyrics. 'He's done this before,
searching for a better place to live.'

'And we always go with him, '
pipes a small poem, barely
audible, maybe not
completed, hardly a poem
at all. 'We are all of us
pieces of his soul, ' booms

the lordly Epic Poem
of 24 cantos. 'We must
catch up with him, restore
his soul to wholeness, then
together, all of our words
linked, all of our sentences

looped around each other,
we will be the ONE POEM
he always claimed
to be writing.' Murmurs
of approval for Epic's speech
crescendomed over the meadow,

into a harmony of voices that
was almost musical. 'Excuse me,
oh, pardon me.' From way in back
where the sequence poems

had clustered, Sonnet XIV
was coming forward. He

squeezed through a group
of illustrated narrative poems,
and eased himself past
the pastoral poems, reclining
on the yellow-green lawn.
Lacking the familiar support

of sonnets XIII and XV,
XIV was unsure of himself.
Epic graciously steadied him,
and introduced him to the assembly,
'Dear friends, ' he began softly,
'we sonnets were with him for hours

yesterday. He was reading
us to his three children. It was
the happiest afternoon! He read
sonnets by the two Rossetti's, brother
and sister, his favorites. Then,
just as the sun dipped and lights came on,

something happened. He suddenly
collapsed.' XIV breathed deeply.
'We watched as two of his children
covered his face with a blanket.'
For a long moment, it was
just the green air of summer.

Then an immense cry
sliced the greenness, and it bled
grief over all the poems.
The Elegies, whose gray eyes
had held little hope, were
comforted by a volume of

haiku. Pairs of Love Poems
embraced fiercely to crush
grief before it could
propagate. Drinking Songs from

the Chinese laughed harshly and
poured more wine. Wisdom Poems

fell into stunned silence. The other
sonnets joined XIV and they all
bowed their heads. A straggle of
Free Versers assembled, reciting
OUT OF THE CRADLE, ENDLESSLY ROCKING.
They sheltered the small poem, confused, bereft.

It was dusk but no shadows
obscured the outlines of trees,
bushes and flower patches. The sun
had withdrawn, but left behind was
a spiritual glow, suffusing all
with yellow-gold, an unasked for grace

welcomed nonetheless for beauty's sake.
A procession had quietly formed
on the furthest margin of the meadow.
Prose Poems, from his last published
work, carried and pushed a huge
covered arch. They were silent,

except for a choral hum, which other
poems joined as it gathered them
into the procession, making it more
spacious and resonant. A smiling Epic
and the sonnets understood suddenly
what was happening, and joined

the Prose Poems, who welcomed them.
Together, they braced the arch
and removed the cover. Cheering
resounded across the meadow. Then,
in perfect silence, the poems
crossed the threshold, and entered

the open arch. Sonnet XIV paused.
'You see, he is not dead. He
lives in all of us. We are his
life eternal.' Then he too

disappeared within, as did
every poem, quietly entering -

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF - - -

Daniel Brick

Early Spring Day

Dear mother
of my mother's mother,
where are you now?
Where is that great house
you stand in front of
in this pale brown photograph?

The clearest thing I see
is not you...
It is a black water pump:
its hard metal drew forth
the heavy water you used
to cook and clean everyday.

A warm wind laps your body
and lifts the long white skirt's hem
just inches above the ground.
It reveals more of yourself
than you ever revealed
to the deep men around you:

a silent father, long gone,
a husband who grunts
to breakfast, dinner, bed,
two sons whose brash voices
speak of new years whose threshold
you will never see or cross.

The dog rustles next to you.
He knows nothing about machines
that hold passing moments in rigid poses.
But I can hold this time,
hold it gently in my hands,
and let the gentleness

ease your ghost,
still wandering around the house,
searching for something,
perhaps a brass button in a clogged drawer,

or a letter addressed to you but never opened,
or a red scarf you only wore on Sunday afternoons.

Daniel Brick

Worshipping Apollo

Lucent light
envelops
our breathing planet

What essential tasks can a poet still perform?
to watch the gradual unfolding of natural revelations
to touch the curved growth of green things in a blue world
to feel the passage of time through space

Falling light
excites
even minerals
to a giddy reckoning of joy

Universal Order
flows outward
in ceaseless waves of
LIGHT

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Drift

Live frugally on surprise.
Alice Walker

Yes, live with surprise,
make it an everyday companion
you can't be without.

Call it a miracle if you are faithful.
Call it chance if you are bold.
But make it always welcome.

Never hesitate to embrace surprise.
Your arms can easily enfold it:
it never resists your grasp.

Surprise is so weightless
you can carry it without fatigue
deep into the night.

And as day darkens into rest, let it
keep watch over your sleep.
It will summon the softest dreams

in the planetary drift of night,
and never betray your waking
until the least expected dream is true.

Daniel Brick

Snail Talk For Rosemary

My invitation was lavish.
I planned my words to glide
as smoothly as that single leg moves
across the path of discharged mucus.

I imagined a kind of conversation
of blue moonlight and lacy slime,
moments sliding between noise
and silence, blurring together.

The snail appeared... Oh, the weight
it must carry every where!
Still with no permanent address,
everywhere it rests is a homecoming.

Almost immediately things
broke down. The snail could not
keep up, didn't want to, saw
no sense in either noise

or silence... Littlest one, I must
scale down to your level. It is
a fault of being human to always
want to ascend higher and higher.

I see you now, poised in a path
of your own devising, half-enclosed
within your tightly coiled shell,
your four antennae whipping back

and forth. Can those tiny,
hidden eyes see me whole?
For what am I really? A friendly
giant who bustles and struts

in the open air, bereft of
home, careless of his footsteps?
Or am I just an immense
shadow, blocking you from every sunbeam?

Daniel Brick

Wings And Arrows

Reading Love Poems
fills my time
during these days which
usher Summer across the
threshold of Spring.
THERE is the possibility
of a Love Match: SPRING
plus SUMMER.

Why not cast
for the last days of Spring
VENUS, mature, beautiful,
proud, impatient for
some greater purpose...
And for SUMMER that lithe,
callow lad, ADONIS, he of
the innocent allure, who
makes all the girls
melt with tenderness. But
he is ready only to kill
whatever runs or flies,
although not to face death,
not the slow dying of his
victims, from whom he averts
his eyes and ears, and waits,
without patience or impatience.
- Adonis of the empty head
and the untouched heart.

'Oh, when will Adonis
grow up, so we can have
some peace, ' cry the Wild Ones.
They look in vain for their
rescuer, Cupid of the Amorous Arrows.
'Is he so busy wreaking
havoc on humans and gods
that he ignores our plight? '
The Wild Ones are close
to despair. 'Oh, Cupid,
you dazzling child, come

to aid us... '

Cupid rests for a moment
on a ledge of rocks. He
lets himself slowly slip
over the edge, and thus
fall into flight, as
his wings immediately unfold.
Every day Cupid makes
gods and humans
fall in love as he falls
in flight. He strikes
each victim with a single
arrow, then pauses
to observe the passion
and the pleasure he has
released. He dearly loves
to witness that moment
when they lose control.
'I caused that! ' He
exclaims, delighted
by his mastery. 'I have
this power over them...
It's as if they
do not live, have not lived
until I make them
love. Then, only then
do they know the fullness
of being alive. Ah, this
is such an immense world,
still wet from birthing,
and I cast the spells
in which the gods and
humans grow up and embrace
this destiny - THEIR DESTINY! '

Cupid calls no building
home. But everywhere
he is an honored guest.
JOVE always welcomes
his visits to the GOLDEN
PALACE on Mount Olympus.

Jove smiles over Cupid,
and strokes his head,
and says for all to hear.
'I'm proud of you,
little god, you bring
joy to gods and humans
alike. Sensual bliss
stretches both of our
races to their full stature.
Long will you prosper!
Now, fulfill my latest
wish: Center your arrows
on Venus and the lad Adonis.
Go swiftly, little god.
and fulfill my wish.'

Cupid fulfilled Jove's
wish with astonishing
ease. Before vast Night
completed its task
of bringing to the world
darkness and rest,
Venus and Adonis,
our Spring and Summer,
were lovers, mingled
in the spell of Bliss.

Venus and Adonis
in sweet sweating embrace
hovered just above the ground
of her grotto in a quiet woods.
'Dear Adonis, ' she began,
paused, wondering in lingering
bliss. She smiled, there was
no need for words: their
cries of delight
had bonded them better
than words. She was folded
in a warmth that
resembled pure sleep
like the perfect content
of the Fixed Stars

of the Firmament.

'Dear Venus, ' he began,
paused, puzzled by
the bliss lingering in his limbs.
Never before had the scent
of flowers so stunned him
as they had this night
in Venus's bower.

As he
tightened his embrace,
she seemed to be the most
fragrant flower of all.
He felt an expanding tenderness
soften the rough edges
of his life and make him
think thoughts as high
above his former life
as the Fixed Stars
are above the pale moon.

Daniel Brick

A Walk In Early April

Against the sun-wall of air
the birds disguise themselves
as their own shadows,
before settling invisibly among the leaves.
A medley of songs pours from the tree screen.
Was that blink of blue a blue-jay?
That flash of red a cardinal?
Nothing lasts long enough
in April to be certain.

Green claims the landscape, but gray
bark still covers a leafless tree: Is it dead,
or a late bloomer? The tiny leaves
of a willow press its branches
down toward the pond's surface.
Will heavier leaves soon
dip those branches into the water?
Or will they hover like Tantalus's lips
just above the pond all summer long?

A black dog parallels my steps,
barking fiercely and lunging at me,
but she does not cross the lawn's edge.
Her bite is certainly worse than her bark,
but I have no fear. When I fan
my fingers into a wave good-bye, she hops
in a circle, no longer barking or lunging.
Disarmed by my quiet lack of threat,
she slips back into her proper role as pet.

Daniel Brick

A Sparrow And A Robin

A shadow detached itself from
a tall tree, and winged passed me
in a zig-zag flight...

I recall reading Leonardo bought
a sparrow in a Florentine market,
cupped gently, briefly, panting and
stretching, in his painter's hands.

Then, he released it into the same
zig-zag flight I had witnessed earlier.
I also remember, in a darker April,
an opposite story when I was eleven.
A friend and I were shooting arrows
into strawmen on the Seminary grounds.
He aimed his bow at a robin, standing nearby.

'Don't shoot! ' I cried, but he did,
and it was hit... The arrow hung loosely
in the bird's breast, and he tore it roughly out.
I was left with the bird, panting and
stretching toward a different end.
I used a rock to release the robin.
On the way home, lugging our bows

and arrows, he laughed....

Daniel Brick

The Goddess Awakes

APRIL is a goddess slowly
awakening in a spacious garden.
Her eyes, like mine, burn
in the new sunshine. Like mine,
her eyelids flutter, close
and open, close and open.
The grace of air blesses
each delicate gesture.

She turns on her side, and
growing things change from
yellow to pale green. Her arms
are raised to greet the light,
and pale green becomes bright green.
She sways in a circle, stands,
then falls into blue-sky flight.
All day the air is buoyant.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Poet And His Flowers

In his loneliness
the poet began to envision
the whole world
as a field of flowers
native to his region.

It consoled him,
it gave him hope
that he could grasp
a beauty commensurate
to his dream of happiness.

A walk through
his field of wild flowers
early or late, himself bright
or blue - No! his mood counted
for nothing among wild things silent

and growing more lovely. They
are creatures of sun and rain
like himself. All things bow
to sun and rain in their turn,
scorching heat gentled by fresh water.

It was his good habit
to rise from his desk, littered
with papers, covered in scribbles
and corrections, and leaving behind
the poems he was writing simultaneously,

and carrying nothing, his mind as empty
as his hands, leave his house
and enter the flower field, there
to live through sensations for a while
until he was fully restored. He saw

two stalks of Wild Rye
bending away from each other,
like an index finger and middle finger

shaping a victory sign. From within
the rye, a lordly Sideoats Gamma

arched over, with tiny petals
hanging downwards, like a row of bells
too shy to ring in the silence
of growth. Thimble Weed shoots
rose up straight without restraint.

A patch of Stiff Goldenrod made
a stand as sturdy as the nearby
Sumac Bush. Surrounding the sumac,
Black-Eyed Susan, abundant and thriving,
displayed their bold energy.

Bergamot and Yellow Cone Flowers
vied with each other in height,
useless to say which is the taller.
And Bergamot's swirling scent made
the air heavy with sweetness.

Blazing Stare should have a stanza
to itself because it displayed
a different kind of light, glowing
from within and growing brighter -
it is an angelic apparition among flowers!

His walk come full circle, the poet cast
one last look over the flower fields.
'Someday, ' he shut his eyes, 'I will see
Ophelia gathering flowers and won't
hesitate to speak to her. Until then,

'I will settle for the visitation
of angels.' His eyes wide open, he smiled
and sighed at the same time. He returned
to his writing desk and the four
poems in progress... The night flowed on.

Daniel Brick

Charles Baudelaire In Extremis

Partially paralyzed, rendered
speechless after a stroke,
the dying poet argued with his doctor,
a fashionable atheist, about
the existence of God. He pointed
toward the setting sun -
its golden sheen burning
across the low horizon, framed
by skeletal trees - and he
mouthed strangled sounds, and
kept pointing and gesturing, gasping
for the words that once flowed
so easily from his lips to the page.

But what was his meaning?
Did he mean only a beautiful
God could have created the sunset?
Or did he mean the sunset itself
was a god, that it was enough
to worship its timely recurrence
every night of every day across time?
Or in his affliction had he acquired
the sky's view of the landscape?
And in that passionate apprehension
had the poet of Flowers of Evil
finally achieved a full blossoming
within his yearning soul?

Daniel Brick

Dazzling Children

Over the soft warm islands
of the South Pacific,
the sun traced its daily journey
until MAUI shook his fat finger
at the course of day
and stalled it so that
his mother had time to cook
his food properly and serve it.

Abraham mixed a child's
daydream with a thought too big
for a youngster's head and came up
with the notion of One God...
He was puzzled then
when he watched the half-brothers
give each other full body hugs and kisses.
Ishmael held Isaac's face between his hands,
saying, 'Dear brother, may your stars
multiply in the heavens a thousand fold.'
And Isaac bowed deeply to Ishmael.
Both were smiling into a gray twilight.

Then Jesus confounded
wise men in the Temple.
They looked around nervously
avoiding each other's eyes,
since they all felt stuck
in the subtle webs
of a child's brain
with a divine mind inside.

Heracles sat up right in his cart,
laughing and delighted that he could
squeeze the life out of Hera's snakes,
their insides bulging out of their mouths,
while Iphicles played the sobbing wreck.

Their second-born fixed the hammock's shadow
so it fell precisely on his face

as he lay in a repose so still
his parents could hardly believe,
'This too is our child.'

Daniel Brick

The Failed Dance

In this dance we drag
our feet, it's become
little more than a way
to avoid stumbling.

Where are those graceful
moves we so admired
when we watched Fred and Ginger
sweep across polished floors?

We look to YOU to give
the signal that will save us,
but you whisper, 'Fond hope',
and turn your back to

the growing crowd of viewers.
We're out of sync, it's a mess,
and yet no one complains.
Some even applaud, but -

for what I cannot tell, unless
it's the welcome silence
of our performance. Or is viewing
failure itself the main attraction?

I'm afraid to ask, afraid
to break the silence, especially
if the answer proves to be
ambiguous, puzzling to all.

My fellow dancers suddenly
abandon our measures, leave
at once, no ceremony else, no
last word of encouragement.

I am really alone now,
standing in an empty place,
recovering my uncertain sense
of balance as best I can.

Nearby in a stunted hedge,
a song-bird provides hesitant
music. I stand very still,
trying not to scare him off, clutching

against my chest, my only
known book, ILLUMINATIONS
by Rimbaud. I will wait
here on this abandoned dance floor,

by the hedge and the song-bird
until one of the locals finds me,
comes close to me, pointing to the book,
and whispers, 'Read from it out loud'.

Daniel Brick

Gleeman Brian

CuChulain constantly disturbs my sleep.
He comes to me, his eyes still glazed
with battle rage and blood.

He cannot speak. He's forgotten
all the words our people share.
He shakes the sleep from my body.

He growls at me, he bellows into my ears.
CuChulain clears my mind of thoughts.
He tells his story through gestures.

How he chose his weapon: an august sword
on which is carved a warrior's secret
only blood-thinking can read.

How he chose his ground: a hillside
of such lush green grass that eyes
blind with dust feel rainbow joys.

How he faced his foe, the bold warrior,
in the final still moments:

.

How he let the sword kill,
while his mind roamed freely,
across the morning horizon.

Daniel Brick

Alien Script (Inspired By The Book Of Daniel,5 & 6)

Suddenly, the evening stars blaze across the heavens.
Brilliant light and brilliant music
cascade across the marble courtyard.
Clouds slice the moon. Shadows and lights
contend to beautify the one thousand revelers.

The young King, attired in purple robes,
dances gracefully in the fumes of wine.
His ecstatic lovers sing of flowering gardens;
his whirling friends entrance him with flatteries.
Servants pour wine into vessels stolen from the Temple.

The young King cries in a voice of jewels
mined from the Mountains of the Gods and Goddesses,
'This wine flies like a bronze butterfly!
This dance scatters stars over the golden carpet! '
His Queen hands him fresh wine in a vessel from the Temple.

* * * *



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A shudder passes like a malevolent wind
through the revelers, reeling on emerald cushions,
slipping from jeweled thrones. The hot wine
freezes in their parched throats. The vessels
from the Temple in Jerusalem fall from their hands.

The young King's glazed eyes see the hand
write a message in an alien script. He is terrified
by what he cannot read. In a clay voice, he croaks,
'Whose mute god scrawled this emblem? ' He trembles,
he stumbles, the purple robes hang loose around his body.

His Queen advises him to summon the dream-reader,
to bring Daniel to his desperate banquet, Daniel
reads the alien script in night's alphabet, Daniel
drinks no wine poured into vessels from the Temple.
the alien script that makes

Daniel translates

another man King. The young King's brain is fogged

by wine drunk from a chalice stolen from the Temple.
He dresses Daniel in purple robes and gold chains,
and declares he is one of the three rulers of the kingdom.
That night the young King is murdered. King Darius prevails.

* * * *

Daniel's eyes burn with the glory of serving
the one God, the true God. His hands have touched
the empty splendor of purple garments, his ears
have heard the hollow ring of coin and crown.
His speech displays his delight in the glory of God.

'I feel the presence of my God - in the lion's
roar, in the fire's breath, in our circle dance
of joy. I see my God. I watch his beautiful Face.
HE IS OUR LIVING GOD, HE ENDURES FOR EVER,
HIS EMPIRE NEVER COMES TO AN END. HE SAVES,

HE SETS FREE, AND WORKS SIGNS AND WONDERS
IN THE HEAVENS AND ON EARTH. ALL TREMBLE BEFORE HIM.'
Three times each day, Daniel went down on his knees,
praying and pleading with God, to bring peace into
the Kingdom of King Darius of the Medes and the Chaldeans.

Daniel Brick

Crow Summons

Twilight settles over Como Park.
The small lake sleeps within its quiet banks.
A rim of careening cars orbits
the green freshness of my slow walk.

Two crows call insistently from an oak tree.
Three more join them, settle within
screening leaves, calling for more of their kind.
Four circle in on different arcs,

blending their fluttering voices. Then,
at some appointed moment, they rise in flight.
I watch amazed as a dark cloud disperses -
eighteen black wings flow in silent blue flight.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The One True Dream

I was sitting under an oak tree
in a vast, trackless forest,
alone, until I saw a hooded figure
stride passed me. I said, 'Are you, too,
a searcher through the abyss? '
There was no response from him.
I touched his shoulder, merely
to make him faced me with his denial.

Suddenly -
my hand, my arm, my shoulder -
every nerve ending within -
glowed and tingled, brightened
beyond expectation. As he turned stiffly
to face me, I saw he was
a luminous creature...

I awoke, still heightened
in every nerve, and
HE WAS THERE
in his radiant gold-body,
with his incandescent face,
just across the bed from me.
I blinked again and again,

but he remained still
and silent, in the same place,
and the shining strength
of his presence calmed me.
My fear should have been
a paroxysm of terror, my
sleep invaded, my house

invaded... but I slept,
twice I awoke, the second time
he was gone... For three days,
I mediated all disputes, brought
composure to troubled friends,
helped strangers find their

way, had ample time for joy.

Daniel Brick

In The Beginning... (An Alternative Account)

from GENESIS 3/22

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE

Then the Lord God said, 'Now that the man has become like one of us in knowing good from evil, he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the tree of life, too and eat and live forever.'

* * * * *

Then the Lord God said, 'We must plant more trees and shrubs - harmless ones - around the tree of life. We must hide it from them in deep foliage. To live forever must never become their fate. It's too late to stop the stirrings within them, but never, never will they steal life eternal from us as the serpent did, Go, and summon more Cherubim and more flaming swords! '

* * * * *

The man and the woman sat contentedly, side by side, on a slightly sloping ridge of aromatic grasses.

The huge arch of branches and leaves of the great tree sheltered them from the fierce beams of the sun.

They had folded the skin tunics made for them by the Lord God, and placed them in a neat pile nearby. Once again, they were comfortably naked. But suddenly, without understanding his impulse, the man got up, looked into the hot sky into which they had seen the Lord God vanish, and dropped his full weight to the ground, bruising his knees on the hard ground. He did not understand his impulse, but raised both arms above his head, and spoke in a voice much louder than the one in which he spoke to the woman,

'Why, Lord God, did you not warn us about the serpent?

We did not know this creature before this morning.

Why do you call him more subtle than any beast of the field?

'Is his subtle knowledge part of the knowledge we gained by eating the fruit? Is it good or evil knowledge, or both at once? Will this knowledge cling to us?

'When I ask you questions, Lord God, is that the praying you command us to perform everyday? Or is prayer yet

another kind of knowledge you have not revealed to us?

'And do our questions just hang in the air, like the scent of sweet grasses, or do we have to ask them again every morning, like the prayers you haven't revealed to us yet...

'And, Lord God, this last question: the serpent told us about another tree in the garden, called the tree of life. If we find it, can we eat its sweet fruit, like the serpent? '

And the man and the woman waited... And while they waited, they came up with more questions for the Lord God to answer. And after waiting a long time and talking quietly to each other, they watched as the shadows of twilight fell over the trees and flowers and shrubs of the garden. And both were pleased with the golden outline of the other, and both saw the flashing eyes of the other in the cool air. And the woman touched the man's cheek and said softly,

'I know what subtle means. I can feel subtle things stirring within me, which I did not feel until the serpent address me... Until he gave us the fruit and the knowledge.'

'Well, the Lord God has disappeared far above us, and the serpent has crawled deep into the sweet grasses. Until one of them or both of them return, let us eat...

'Yes, let us eat more of the sweet fruit. You gave me fruit in the morning, so I will give you fruit in the evening. Let us walk hand in hand to the great tree.'

The man was pleased with his words and his actions. And he could see the woman was also very pleased. To see her pleased made him feel like a sun was rising inside of him. And so they sat, eating the sweet fruit for a second time, talking quietly, until the perfect sleep of the garden embraced them, as they embraced each other all through the night.

Daniel Brick

I, Cronos (Inspired By The White Goddess Of Robert Graves)

Common ancestor of gods and men
I followed Chaos
through ages of cataclysms and envies.

Boastful and exultant
I play a waiting game,
at once King and Fool.

My omen birds,
crows and ravens,
my black birds eat red berries.

My loyal dancing clowns
wear festive rings
on their Fool's Finger.

The child gods and goddesses plot
to exile me. After my Golden Age passes,
only poets will keep my myths alive.

Daniel Brick

Earth Anthem

Witness the fervor
of our enduring trust
in the Cosmic Order.
Planets, fire and sleep

riddle our fates.
They are Gaia's actual music
scored for human love or mortal hate.
By natural choice we are enthused.

Once in orbit we must
join the older sky-wanderers
returning along bent paths
to their rings of sleep.

We must unwind a double life
of time on earth and time in space.
Our destiny determines
this sense of flight

through vast silences of night.
Whether we stand rooted to earth,
looking up, or looking back,
from a careening space ship:

Let us praise
our sun-ripened skin, our moon-meshed nerves.

Let us enter
the dark cathedral of this holy earth.

Let us join
the spinning hymn of this sacred globe.

Let us raise
our jeweled hopes for this new age.

Daniel Brick

Before Hurrying On

Along the lake's edge, pale reeds lie broken.
Ducks disturb the surface: they spell
their message with a single letter,
forever vanishing, forever reappearing.

Red-winged blackbirds cluster overhead:
one giant wing glides through deep sky.
Two children patiently fish in Mud Lake.
Then we embrace before hurrying on.

Daniel Brick



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Readiness

The grape vine gets thirsty
waiting for the drinker.
Too full of itself
it longs to be empty.

Impatient for the listener
the flute slips from its case
ready to drop into place
and begin its sweet song.

The poems hide in plain view.
Dark in a bright world
they hope to see farther
than the clearest lens.

Daniel Brick



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Closed Eyes

fierce soldiers pursue a mightier battle
prospectors stagger after newly rumored gold
temporary souls argue the permanence of loving flesh
a garden occupies the center of every landscape

the individual heart reaches the deepest mind
every loss turns into an opportunity
a crow flies into the fenced yard
dreamers vow to breathe every moment as if in love

close your eyes and listen to the piano
its music ranges freely across wide spaces
its silence traces the true path of time
sounds and signals are perceived as the same thing

you must now agree upon a signal:
a minor key drawn from a nagging melody
a young man whose face recurs in dreams
the rose your sister touched with her dry tears

(This poem was inspired by repeated hearings of
'Closed Eyes', a piano piece by Toru Takemitsu.)

Daniel Brick

Owl

Moon-hunter, soft-feathered flyer!
Your night spell calls me
into its cool radiance.

Shadow-bird, doom-carrier of our ancestors!
Your heart-shaped face blesses
the simple expedient of crossing paths.

Night-singer, winged dancer of spring!
I hear in your unchanging voice
a time-trapped music I too can sing.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Roses And Flames An Angel Speaks

An angel speaks:

Poor demon,
poorer than the poorest beast,
I see you writhe in pain
spinning in mid space
out of control
I hover just outside
the shimmer
that marks the gates of heaven.
For a million years
I have never left heaven.
For a million years
you have never entered heaven.

Poor demon,
outside heaven
I smell the stench of ordinary air
like you, like you, like you.
Here are the roses of heaven.
Their scent is the breath of God's love.
God told me to give them
to you.
I thought they were a gift
from God.
But
when the roses touched your hide
they flared into fire,
flames that scorched
you
already scorched by hell's fire.

Poor demon,
poor beast,
I am poorer
for having seen you suffer.
Please, God, let me return.
Blind me in heaven's shimmer
to the poor demon

poor like me, like me, like me.

Daniel Brick

Three Silences

In another moment
we will ascend
into heaven...
just another moment...
Ah, it never happens

as expected. Why
should it? My mind
which tosses up desires,
thoughts, fantasies,
fears, promises,

all impartially, all
spontaneously, is really
a vast empty space, not
even articulated as prairie,
ocean-floor, or outer space,

just emptiness, but
so vast it can pretend
to be the mind of a god.
It is a god's prerogative
to fully inhabit his spaces,

as if no boundaries
exist. Wherever
he sets his eyes,
boundaries stretch thin,
then vanish, that's

life in such heavenly
space we aspire to
reach in another
moment, in just another
moment, we will...

ascend... another...

For decades
your confidence
certain things have passed
is complete... You can't
even call them to mind.

You don't
believe me? Then try:
First clear a stage
in your mind, then
populate it with

a dozen or so of the hoi polloi -
they are your witnesses,
they're the essential context.
Now give the one in front
a shove. No, a bigger shove!

That's it! Now she starts
another moving,
then they start
more, soon it's a swirling motion.
An orbit forms, and circles until it falters

the way orbits
everywhere decay
and matter compressed
explodes, fragments
now released to wander...

And so your mind-dwellers,
your witnesses, your
hoi polloi scatter,
having lost their center
they flap awhile, fade, then vanish.

And you forget... forever.

The composer steps tentatively

in front of the musicians
who will play his new string quartet.
There is a scattering of applause.
He bows, and then speaks:
'This piece is about Silence.'
He pauses, as if he wants people
to absorb his words prior to his music.
'Not literal Silence, ' he continues,
glancing down at his notes. 'Rather
I'm referring to that deliberate
absence at the center of
the musical experience which exists
in order that the listening self
may encounter itself there.'
He pauses for a moment, lowering
his notes as if new thoughts have
intruded on his carefully conceived
introduction. 'You must believe me
when I say, that center is an elusive
feature of the work in progress.
Sometimes it seems to vanish entirely,
only to reappear at the very end.
You see, we composers walk, tread
rather, a labyrinthine path,
searching for the coherence we can
just barely hear, but must somehow
grasp to complete the - the process,
well, it is a kind of journey,
and it is time for me to withdraw
so you can begin.' He makes a gesture
toward the first violinist, who
immediately raises his long bow.
Three more are poised, and suddenly
sound and silence begin their contention.

Daniel Brick

Half-Turned Pages A Love Poem

That autumn every time I looked
out the window I saw two leaves fall
from a maple tree in my yard.
Always two leaves fell together
as if nature were impatient
to strip the tree bare. Leaves
were falling rapidly all through
the city. I know, I counted them
as they fell, where they lay clustered on lawns and sidewalks.

At a harvest party,
the friends who introduced us
did not expect much,
just another blind date,
nothing more, but the half-
smile on her face
matched mine. We
shared immediate
expectations. Later
that night, around Lake Harriet,

we walked hand-in-hand beneath
the half-turned pages of the
moon, and read
each other's thoughts. Later
still, we sat in my car
talking about anything. Suddenly,
her eyes brightened, her face glowed.
Something else had occurred,
like the sudden descent of light
into a garden of shadows.

I thought, Does she want me
to kiss her? It was my last
thought. I leaned forward
as she did, our mouths met
and our lips shaped a kiss,
and another, and another.
And we entered the region of

As If: as if we had known
each other for ages, as if we were
thoroughly meshed, as if

this is how we wanted to be.
In that moment,
everything made perfect sense,
everything was spontaneous.
Gradually, our lips parted,
revealing two smiles. I hugged
her tighter before letting go. And
it was as if moonlight
poured into the car,
and covered us in its perfect glow.

In the meantime,
the season had changed, autumn
was now early winter. Raw winds
shredded brown leaves, leaving
rows of bare branches. We saw
the naked trees bow to that wind
as if they worshipped an unseen god.
It was a time that made us
think of intimacy, Yes,
intimacy was sorely needed.

She said in a mock-serious
voice, 'We shouldn't meet
like the others at ordinary times.
We must be original,
getting together at odd times.'
I agreed. 'OK. We'll make
seven am glitter, rush into ecstasy
at two am, kiss good-night at four am.'
She laughed in her special way,
then brought out a calendar and a pen.

One afternoon, she was so
sleepy because of our
odd hours, she napped
in a chair while I fixed
our dinner. When I gently

awakened her, she stirred but
stayed asleep. She looked so lovely
I waited with an easy patience,
drank her beauty like golden wine,
and longed for a deeper draft.

I rested my hand on her shoulder,
and gently caressed her flesh,
as I stirred her again. I waited
for a smile to appear. It did.
'There are gifts everywhere for us.'
She told me she had heard it
in her dream, and it charmed us.
For days, it echoed in our minds,
a reminder to count our blessings.
Then, she yawned to dispel sleep.

Days she was sad, she didn't want
my touch. She jerked her shoulder
free. I quickly stepped back.
When I touched her arm
she walked away. I could
not read her thoughts.
I left her alone for an hour.
Then, I slowly, insisently
came to her side. I said,
softly, into her ear,

'There is always a trace
of moonlight in our eyes
when we meet. It's what
makes us so fascinating.'
Her smile covered
her entire face. She
took my hand and lifted
it to her lips. 'I'm sorry.
It's just my mood today.
I won't steal your happiness.'

A few nights later, she
seemed carefree. I read out loud
'The Vigil of Venus', so that

she could hear the refrain,
'Tomorrow let the loveless
find his lover. Let her
who loved once, love again.'
It was a sweet story,
in which ancient lovers grasp
fleeting joys. But her eyes

darkened. She did not respond
to the Love Poem, but turned
away from it. I could not read
her thoughts, so I gave her
the silence that she wanted.
Was the Book really closing?
Then came the night
I learned what was stalking us.
We sat side by side
in a crowded Vietnamese

restaurant. It was as private
a space as the world could offer.
A darkness that was not
nature's fell across the table.
She revealed why we dated
on Sunday or Tuesday,
and kept apart on weekends.
'Another man? How long? ' I
could see her pain.
'Over two years? ' She nodded slowly.

She was stuck between
two men, each one
laying claim to her heart.
The world offered no help.
Mornings still rushed
into afternoons, afternoons
dissolved into evenings, nights
summoned everything to sleep.
Nothing had changed because
three were tangled with love.

I believed in another

life running parallel
to the world's. It is written
in the Book of Moonlight.
I shut that Book
completely... I withdrew.
Through her tears, she said,
'Thank you', and leaned her
lovely head against my shoulder.
It was the last time we touched.

I tried to think of her
as happy in the following days.
Did happiness topple
into place like the latest
in a series of events. There
was no way to know.
But when I said, 'Good-bye',
I was also saying, 'I love you.'
They were meshed together.
She only heard me say, 'Good-bye'.

When I look now into the
night sky, and watch
the moon's orb, it is
a closed book. No thoughts
hover in the air before me.
I breathe that empty air,
and see just the moon's
perfect white glow
lighting the surrounding
space for all to see.

Daniel Brick

Losing August In Memoriam: August Wilson 1945-2005

I'm going to say
Frank
Frank, bring your silver flute
to the crossroads
where the living haunt the dead
and be a jazzed-up Orpheus
with a dozen riffs
on the standards
'Bringing back the Dead'
and
'Making the Dogs Howl In Harmony.'
Look in every direction
before you play,
you're free to turn
in a complete circle.
The young woman with sad eyes
standing under the willow tree
- over there -
will guide you across every threshold
and she will place in your hands
cool fruits which grow sweeter
with every song you play.
Play your highest notes
in all the tempos you know,
play your softest tones
with absolute breath control,
because tonight we're
losing August.

I'm going to say
Katie
come into this make-shift parlor
and sit on the blue-patterned couch.
You don't have to do anything,
you don't have to say anything.
A warm yellow light glows
from within you

and spreads in a radiant pool.
Soon a woman named Roberta
will arrive with a shy girl
who is her sixteen-year-old daughter.
They're here now, standing in your light,
holding hands, smiling at each other,
almost laughing they're so proud.
Roberta remembers
when she was her daughter's age
you taught her
how a daughter shows gratitude,
how a mother shows love.
And now Roberta, her daughter,
and you, Katie, and all of us are here
in the yellow light you spread
past the edges of the street,
because tonight we're
losing August.

I'm going to say
J. Otis
you arrived without a summoning.
You know what you have to do:
Build a pyramid in record time,
with a point that touches heaven
and a base wide enough to cover
all the precincts of hell.
I can hear you building
the most beautiful black pyramid
with sound blocks only you can heave.
You're standing on a stage of your own design,
there's a pile of poetry books nearby,
and you're heaving sound blocks:
trumpets blaring, sliding trombones,
sharp saxophones, even drums drumming
in a wild syncopation of jazz fury.
And suddenly it's you and Youssef,
and Langston, Amiri, Bob, and
just to the left, come Lucille,
Nikki and Rita, all of you
crowding together in the shadow
of a perfectly shaped pyramid,

because tonight we're
losing August.

I'm going to say

Louis

Louis Alemayehu

come singing and dancing

with Ancestor Energy

down the street named Grief Street

and make it forget its name.

Turn your ebony songs into a racket,
change your carnival dance into a riot.

Conjure the rivers that only flow

when your left hand touches

their headwaters,

and your right hand holds

their deltas:

Black River, Red River, White River, Brown River -

Louis, make them converge here,

because tonight we're

losing August.

I'm going to say

Quincy

you're so far away, the distance
makes me dizzy, and I'm reeling.

You're far away, but you're listening.

I know you're listening:

Griot-man, you tell our stories,

you listen to our stories.

Griot-man, Quincy,

only you are brave enough

to carry this sorrow-load.

I can see you getting ready, your mind

as clear as a singularity,

you stretch your back, you

flex your muscles, then

quicker than a thought, lift the load

straight up, over your shoulders.

You adjust the weight, it's almost

out of sight. Quincy,

you carry the sorrow-load,

your heart expands, and you carry
the sorrow-load,
because tonight we're
losing August.

And I'm going to say
Maya, simply
Maya, you're here.
Come into the warm yellow light,
join our circle. Here's Frank.
This is Katie, and that girl turning her
head and waving to you
is Roberta's daughter, Gina.
J. Otis is at your side, Alemayehu
is getting you some water.
And Quincy is listening to you
over there in that pool of light.
Maya, you're here with us,
and it's like a bird who has just
learned how to sing, and he's
singing and trilling, racing through
all the notes he knows, and suddenly
he realizes he's flying! Maya, you showed us
singing and flying are the same,
and we need to do both,
because tonight we're
losing August.

Daniel Brick

First Conversation

We shared more than words,
more than the thoughts behind the words,
more even than the feelings shaping thoughts.

You and I recognized a common name,
like the red light at night's edge
a hopeful traveler sees in an alien land.

We cannot finally know
if each had ended an old year alone
or both had begun a new one together.

Daniel Brick



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Accidental

In the blink of a random
question crossing my mind,
it happened,
and everything changed.
She ran without thinking,
looking neither left nor right,
darting into the street
toward the one who made her smile.

All the driver could have seen
was a blond blob of hair
bouncing over his car's roof -
then the collision,
then the shock.
One of my many students
her name was Laurel,
often self-absorbed and pretty.

I slammed on my brakes, stopped
my car in the middle of Marshall Avenue.
I thought,
Was that the last time
I will see that smile?

I rushed across the street,
looking neither left nor right,
already grieving for her broken body.
But she was already standing,
dazed, whole, miraculously safe.
She did not hear me speak
as I steadied her trembling body.
Her friend arrived,
hugged her, and said
exactly what had to be said.
She was the better comforter.

After the necessary statements,
and the endless phone calls,

the driver stood,
conspicuous, confused,
alone in the crowded office.
A gray-faced man
with thinning hair
and sagging cheeks,
his hands fell to his sides
like pale rain.
No one noticed him,
his face an emblem of remorse.
Suddenly, I realized
I could have been that man.
I was only the witness.
Next time,
I may be the comforter,
he will be the witness,
and she will be the driver.

Daniel Brick

May Night

Already this night is a poem.
Heavy clouds overtake blue metaphors.
They convince the sky
its crystal heart must bleed.

Rain searches for its analogies.
Dark water
mixes with dark earth
and through the air

swirls their wet black smell.
Night looks at herself
in the black mirror
bordered by a million stars.

In a jade palace
the Princess of Night
watches her lover smile
in a cloud of stars.

Daniel Brick

An Ancient Roman Bust (Minneapolis Institute Of The Arts)

Your noble beard is now just white dust,
and age will still crumble your stoic dignity.
The graves you served as mute guardian of grief,
are now, like your eye sockets, paintless and empty.

Every hammer blow of some weary slave
chipped away layers of lies to reach your face.
I only hope, as bright colors fade from my view,
I may be so polished to my native sunburst stone.

Daniel Brick



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Minotaur

I

We delighted in the sweetness of grass.
We rejoiced in the fragrance of rain.
We sought only readiness in sleep.
TOGETHERNESS was our motto.

Our desires entwined like summer vines.
We drank wine pressed from the purest grapes.
We anointed our heads with fresh oils.
Who can tell us this was not love?

II

Must I burn my dearest book?
Must I rip the yellow threads from my
 favorite gown?
Must I choke on the choicest fruits?
Must I sleep always in an unlocked room?

Yes, yes, yes... yes.

III

Some of us are innocent.
Some of us claim innocence in firm voices.
Some of us stammer, fall silent, then start over,
 with bowed heads.

All of us are on the move.
I, for instance, have loaded a cart with my things.
It contains everything I need for eternal life,

The weight is crushing my remaining strength.
I can no longer look at what's ahead.
I twist backwards, staring at the grooves
 my heavy cart carves.

Is this the path my friends will follow?
Will my enemies find it first?

Should I hoard these things, or discard them?

IV

Escape by sea! Stride
on board, grab hold
of the mast, turn
the sail into the wind.
Throw back your horned head
and bellow again and again.

Escape by sea? Crawl
along the wet sand, adjust
the broken sword
in your gut, gaze
across the water. Throw back
your horned head and howl.

V

Finally, this is my fate.
This is my drawn-out end:
stumbling, panting,
waving my mighty arms
in the unresisting air.

A child walks ahead of me,
holding my rough hand, guiding
my staff. She cradles
sheaths of wheat and barley.

Their fragrance reminds me
of wide meadows, of tilled fields
I crossed without fear
during my days of glory.

Now, just a shaking outcast,
I stretch out my hand
and touch the girl's hair.
She does not shiver or recoil.
Such a joy I never knew before.

The Poet Speaks

Homage to Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati

I heard from a friend
Americans paint words
on their bombs.
They write,
BAGHDAD, GO TO HELL
or
TO IRAQ WITH LOVE
or
VICTORY AND GLORY

And I wonder,
how many words does it take
to kill?
How many to kill an old man
hobbling down a dusty street?
or three children
playing in a mud puddle?
or two lovers
caught in a trembling embrace?

How many words are needed
to destroy a mosque?
How many words are needed
to destroy our prayer?
How many words are needed
to destroy our faith in God?

And I wonder,
how many words does it take
to stop the bombs?
How many to reach a determined man
leaning over papers in his oval office?
or three patriots
cheering and flag waving?
or two pilots
climbing into their F-16s?

How many words are needed
to touch their hearts?
How many words are needed
to change their hearts?
How many words are needed
to erase the words of war?

Can I still be a poet
in this time of war?
Perhaps I am just the hobbling man
or the fleeing child
or the trembling lover.
Perhaps my words have burned
to smoke and ashes,
words of peace scorched
in the fires of the words of hate.

Daniel Brick

Between Tucson And Phoenix

Saguaros have rested
for two hundred years
on the slopes of Pinnacle Peak
before continuing their ascent.
A few on the ridge wait for the others.
The nearby peaks darken their mirrors
to show the clouds
the shape of their beauty.
White rocks bleach
the air we breathe this morning.
Green hearts cluster
beneath blue metallic suns.

Daniel Brick



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The King's Banquet

Even the birds are arriving early, whole flocks
settle in the welcoming trees.

Roses and friends are twined in eagerness, it is
the beginning of Spring.

Winebringer! Our guests are still holding empty glasses!

Look, dear friends, how the refulgent moon shines
in the King's resplendent face.

He promises to satisfy every hunger before dawn. On the lawn
angels place covered trays on a long table.

Winebringer! Fill all the cups again with the reddest wine.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Her Sugar-Lipped Kisses

How can the rose be beautiful without the cheeks of
the beloved?

And without wine, of what use is Spring?

Basking on the lawn and breathing garden air are joyless,
unaccompanied by tulip cheeks.

For there is no beauty apart from her embraces and
her sugar-lipped kisses.

Without love-making, garden, roses, wine - all cause sorrow.
And this sorrow stops the flow of poetry. Look! _____.

Daniel, you must have a thousand sheets of poetry lying around.
Take any one. Polish it. Present it to her as a peace offering!

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

The Mullahs

Pious and proud in their prayer arches and pulpits,
in private they make love to their idols.

They set traps in their homes to stop the passage of angels.
They prepare long lists of people who must do penance.

Daniel, we all know your poems can win the beloved's heart.
Enough! Write a simple poem today that will change hearts!

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Morning In The Tavern

The messenger took up the cup, quaffed the wine,
and called for more.

Every Sufi in the tavern stretched out his empty cup.

When an angel in the morning leads the way,
what else can we do but follow his example?

He tells, without speaking, that today, above and below,
will be a day of drunkenness...

Then he slips away, as we carouse with fresh wine and new poems.

The angel ascending wishes all of God's missions
could be accomplished so easily, with so much time to spare.

Daniel, even the scent of wine intoxicates you,
and, wonder of wonders, five times today you will write a poem!

Daniel Brick



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After The Long Winter

Disconsolate, the prince wanders through his dry garden.
How can the lilacs bloom if she is not sitting in its center?

The musicians are exhausted, their instruments are unturned.
The poet stammers again and again. His white head bowed, he
falls silent.

Servants have spilled another vase of wine before it could
reach us.

The red liquor stains the yellow-green grass.

Oh, my prince, what can you expect of me,
when so many worthy men stumble in the tall reeds?

Release me, prince, to seek her in other gardens,
the memory of the scent of lilacs my only guide.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Mystagogue

I

I stand alone
I watch people I don't know
Incense replaces breath
Faith wraps me in a sudden appeal

II

The altar believes in fire
The fire believes in heaven
Heaven believes in God
God believes in prayer

III

There are twelve corridors
in the great stone tower.
There are twelve towers
in the great stone city.
There are twelve cities
on the great stone plateau.
There are twelve plateaus
against the great stone sky.

Daniel Brick

All Of The Sun And Most Of The Light

At Lake Harriet

I can measure distance
by counting anchored boats.
There are twenty
sloshing in the spangled water
between the sun-glazed beach house
and the shore's northeast bend.
Or is the number twenty-two?
I counted lazily, resting
by myself near the crowded dock.
Numbers don't matter, I thought.
Figures matter. Like the figures
of the anchored boats and the figures
of people moving past me
in the streaming sunlight of noon.

I watch, lazy and delighted
in the heat haze of sunlight,
two fishers in a long canoe.
The fisher in a blue hat tosses
his line half a boat length into the lake,
leans back, relaxes and falls asleep.
He misses the fish, two boat lengths away,
jump out of the water
into a brief moment of light,
then plunge back into safe waters.

The other fisher,
the one in a black vest,
sits upright, silent, his back
to the crowd, his eyes on the line.
He is the ready one, ignoring
the sun, intent on his mission,
undisturbed by the sleeper nearby.

The canoe slides four boat lengths
along the shore. The fisher in the black vest,
still upright, paddles the way he fishes,
intent, speechless, prepared,

while the other fisher,
the one with the blue hat, lies
stretched out, perfectly asleep, taking in
all of the sun and most of the light.

Daniel Brick

Earth Music

A lone wolf howls
into the night.
Five wolves hear his cry
and venture across the dark ground.

Theirs is a concert of
alternating howls. A man
alone listens. He knows
this earth music. Always

he is attentive to it.
He is patient as their
howls crisscross distances.
Even in his sleep, he is awake,

counting the measures
of the animal noise,
turning it into the concerto
that makes all flesh on earth one spirit.

Daniel Brick

Still I Slept

The traffic was loud.
Car wheels slapped the pavement
like wrestlers hitting the mat.
Still I slept.

The neighbors were partying.
Empty beer cans hit the trash can
like bullets ricocheting off a target.
Still I slept.

The rain fell after midnight.
Hailstones battered metal awnings
like raucous music by angry musicians.
Still I slept.

Dreams turned into nightmares.
The strawberry patch at Fergus Falls
looked like blood surging from a gashed flesh.
Still I slept.

Dawn pressed against the window.
The light shone golden
like a silent cascade of tiny coins.
Still I slept.

The early hours were fragrant.
Morning spread itself across the landscape
like a soft blanket of transparent green.
Still I slept.

Unexpectedly two great eyelids closed.
No promises were kept, no expectations,
met. Hope stopped, love never began.
I awoke.

Daniel Brick

Shelley

Once low mist smoking beach sands
Harriet and you launched small wooden boats
carrying verse cargoes across the Irish Sea.

Later co-exiled with your new wife
and newer friends you wandered through
a vast and troubled world.

Lighting those years of Poetry
ten thousands candles melted back to wax
while your mind released the fire

to liberate the ancient couple
Prometheus and Asia
already creatures of their own conceit

proud and strong and true...
A darker destiny stalked you
and drowned your small wooden boat.

A pyre blazing on a lonely Italian beach
burned to ash everything but your heart.
Your life with children was cut short:

your hands severed from their growth
your eyes blind to their visions
your mind blocked from their wonder.

Herald of a future you could not grasp
your final triumph sang
of our life stretched beyond judgment

to a finer grace of being:
those newly awakened lives
your hands and eyes and mind had served

with the double light
a comet skimming earth
ignites in its fiery descent into open space.

Daniel Brick

The Orange

The girl holds the orange
rolling it from hand
to hand, with a grasp
as light as the transparency
of water. The orange
was ripped from its tree
before its time. Sunlight
it drank still glows
from within its rind
as bright as rain-glossed rocks.

The orange rolls
from careful hand to hand.
In its other life,
it longed to fall,
fulfill itself as fruit,
the sun detaching it
slowly from its branch
the way a snake sheds
her used skin, or rain
washes dust from dirt.

The orange plunges
to the waiting ground,
embraced by handless
grass. A crevice opened
weeks ago to cradle
the round rind
which tightens, then splits.
Seeds spill deeper into
the ever-nurturing earth.
The orange dissolves

into its future, where
the dead become the quick...
The girl breaks the orange's
rind. Its sweet juice
stains her moving hands.
Delicately, she separates

the wedges, and eats them
one by one, seeds, juice,
flesh, and muses, 'Everything
that is cared for is alive.'

Daniel Brick

The Press Of Time

You already knew the wind speaks
in every language. Just listening
you feel dry bark scrap your skin.

You see thin trees, wood chips, green
leaves swaying in the cool air, bushes
shaking and bending, ant hills scattered

across the sidewalks or hidden beneath
yellow-petalled dandelions. As much
winter grass dances around their stems

as new grass sprouts today, yellow
in the yellow light. So the seasons cross
each other in the press of time.

On still days the silence carries
the wind's message. Without talking
you point to every needed sign. Your

eyes and mine look for summer's first day.

Daniel Brick

Two Letter Poems In Spring

I

Warm friends and zither songs
already linked our pleasures
as winter-hardened St. Paul kept us close.
A lunar New Year turned, and suddenly
your new year blended into mine.

II

... A day of unexpected winds
drives foaming clouds across blue sky,
uncovers the wet brilliance of the grass.

Winter-colored birds cross the sunlight.
From bare blackened branches
winged voices chant fragile songs,
piercing both glare and silence.

White light
dispels gray skies and folds of mist
from this spring day I've promised you since TET.

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Three Angels On Earth

I sit across from two tired angels
bent like humans over stale coffee
because all the wine has been withdrawn.

Like them I carry the shame of
a failed mission: the people
long ago I was to ignite with love

failed to notice even a tiny spark of
divine fire. They spent their lives
in useless frenzies, left me bereft.

How can we celebrate
when such large chunks of sadness
block both view and passage?

How can we throw back our eyes
and peer across the heavenly spheres
to glimpse the burning rays

of Heaven, where the Throne of God
casts its luminous shadow
over legions of adoring angels?

These mournful angels are blind
to traces of the glittering road
leading them back to Heaven.

Descent seems more likely
than ascent. They feel sharp pains
knowing mortal creatures suffer.

'O Faith, such a thin thread
to wind around mortal lives!
Can we not cable their souls

with a stronger sinew, something
lasting like friendship, something primal
like family, something fierce like love? '

So they pray like desperate humans.
Soon in Heaven they will know
perfect bliss, their moments

of pain dissolved and forgotten.
They will ascend from earth
through circles of water, air,

ether; through the nine
Heavens, each Heaven
purging more of the mortal

sorrow clinging to their
angelic beings, until
in ecstasy they reach

the Sphere of the Divine Pedestal,
and soul, heart, mind
fuse in perfect awareness

of God's endless wonder.
They will stop at the Sphere
of the Divine Throne,

joining all angels and saints
in the pure bliss of worship,
all earthly passions released.

Daniel Brick

Poems And Time

People often assert poems and time are enemies. Professor Louise Cowan thinks it's open warfare. She declares, 'Throughout all poetic utterances, whether or not openly acknowledged, runs the threat of the poetic enemy, TIME. For time inevitably leads toward mutability, and behind change and loss lurks the spectral image of extinction.' WOW! I think we need a prose poem on this issue:

A poem exists in an infinitely extended present tense. It's true. A poem never has to search for lost time. It calmly exists while past and future tenses madly swirl around it. A poem has been known to smile, even laugh when past and future exhaust themselves with activity, and lie sprawled and breathless on the floor of endeavor. A poem knows where it belongs and it can wait in that space for centuries, yes, centuries, without showing a trace of discontent. Every poem is timeless!

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Odin's Farewell

Half-eyed, I see
even bright day
dimmed to thin dusk.
Time and tides
wind my life
around and around
the paths of fire,
the screen of rain.

I walk through water-splotches,
stumble over red rocks
under blue-sky glimmer.
Here is the Great Sea.
That much earth-craft I know.
Huge gray rocks jut from the Sea.
Morning mist pours over them.
A lone horse walks slowly
across the sands, toward me.

Years of fire unreeled
a wide slue of stars,
heavenly whorl I watched,
soon grew to worship...
In all weather I wait in wonder.

I hung forward
from the Great Ash Tree
from day-red to night-black.
I know the holy beginning-work.
The Great Ash Tree is a huge spear
driven through the hearts
of the three worlds.
I grabbed the runes myself.

Two ravens warn me daily,
my World's midnight will be
the work of fire and rain,
This is Wyrð, it cannot be stopped.
The runes only whisper.

How can that half-speech help?
How can I swell it to whole speech?

Beast against God,
each is doomed in strife.
All strength spent
Only love is left below
to build the worlds again.

Earthlings,
man and woman,
lift the fire from within.

Daniel Brick

Capriccio

Tess, dry your tears. She said,
It's a tanager! He said, No. it's two!
The young poodle plunges his whole head
into the rose garden fountain, anxious
for water. No wonder you're in pain.
In Paris, this July, the sun was
still out at ten pm. I checked
my watch, Still light! In Paris!
At the top of the center statue
of the rose garden fountain
a naked boy, like one of Prospero's spirits,
stands steadily on a dolphin's head.
The anxious water slips out of the dolphin's
mouth, cooling the air creatures breathe.
The boy spirit dances on one foot
with complete confidence, four others
look up and smile. The Sufi
with a hooked cane declares liberation
without effort, promises
the quotidian itself is redemption.
Oh, the music last night! The book
of eighties photographs last night.
The moon last night, shining alone,
before the stars. Are you in pain
again? or yet again? I want
to be sensitive, I want
to be or not to be. He will not accept wonder.
It's not too late. That's what I've
been saying all along. No wonder
you're in pain. Do fast walkers
make fast talkers? She finally
left him. How long it will last
I do not know. I know the difference
between sun and light. I want
all of the sun today to tan my body.
The children run ahead of the adults,
talking about their crowded lives.
No wonder they're in pain. A pilgrim
in a white shirt and black tie

tilts his head and preaches
the light of Jesus. It is
too late. It's a time of wonder. A woman closes
her journal and leans forward.
There are roses everywhere
in a business suit dreams of the woman
waiting in his journal. It's never
too late. It's enough to make
the sun shine everyday. A runner
with earphones assures us it will rain.
He backed him until when? The bitter end?
There are promises everywhere. That's what
the light itself means. Their faces are
extinguished by the noon sun, but the colors
of red, yellow, blue, green, white itself
can only be seen by a steady eye. No wonder
this day is blessed. The readiness is all.

Lake Harriet - July Afternoon

Daniel Brick

Washing The Baby

I kiss your sloppy hands
before I wash them.
You don't resist my care.
Instead your head falls back,
and a tiny yawn creases your cheeks.

Your eyes shut tightly,
and I wonder what they see
inside your head. Is there another
darkness there, different from the night?

Or do you see a light
that only children know,
a light so dim in me
it can no longer trick my eyes?

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Wonders

I

Just past the moon-curved waterfall
a woodland goddess changes
into a slender girl with red-brown hair
bent over in reverie,
then into a broken tree trunk
with white-brown bark

torn to show the inner red wood...
Cloud-smoke floats over a grassy plain:
six horses graze in slow motion,
light rain washes their red-brown hides.

A score of pigeons circle twice
before winging out of sight.

II

Tai Kwan Do aspirants
in white swirls of abrupt gestures
envelop their instructor
deep in concentrated calm,
beyond those still attacked and attacking...
Somewhere nearby,

a bigot's mind is healed:
cut down by cancer, he is cured
by chronic pain from causing hurt,
prays for life, all life, his life.

Between partners divided by doubt
the Choice coils, ready to strike.

III

Again Joseph is summoned.
Dreamers proclaim his speech
as lucid as sharp colors converging

on a fauvist canvas,
as spontaneous as two dancers leaping
through shared space.

Playing Shakespeare's Hermione
an actress adds subtle inflections
to each night's performance,
steadily turning Character into Self.

Three dancers gather imaginary flowers,
fling them over an embracing couple.

IV

A young poet drops his pen, astonished
by the twenty lines he has just written,
certain it is the Poem of Total Realization...
A blind Cyclops cries for beauty,
King Fool pants for a purifying stream,
the youngest priestess stares into the oracle fire.

An alien astronaut,
hurtling across Jupiter's lordly orbit,
in a blink of light speed,
feels Space Rapture

for the first time in six hundred years
of space flight.

Daniel Brick

Tweel's Parting Song

A beautiful new world calls me forth.
I'm finished circling and stumbling
in my small cage of your care.
I'm ready to launch into the Great Sky
where eagles, crows and herons will greet me.
I'm their brother:
our wings link us together
into one long and graceful flight.
I'll drop a tiny yellow feather
from the Sky to the Earth
to show you
I LIVE I LIVE I LIVE I LIVE

Daniel Brick



PoemHunter.com

Without Effort

'A certain man has been abroad for many years; he is alone, and the god Poseidon keeps a hostile eye on him. Then after suffering storm and shipwreck, he comes home.'

Aristotle's Summary of Homer's 2nd Epic

In my mind's eye I see
Odysseus, the king with empty hands,
stand by the great ship
glowing with his riches and legend.
The sun in Phaeacia blurs
ocean and land: shore and plain
converge with waves and winds.
Odysseus, on the day of departure,
blinks into the wine-bright Aegean.
Time and again he turns craning
toward the sun, impatient for day's end,
for the open sea. He no longer
needs to bear hope: Ithaca
he can reach without effort.
He could do it in his sleep.

The Phaeacians spread a rug
and linen blanket on deck.
Odysseus embarks, lies down,
lies still. They ferry his sleep
across the foaming purple night-sea.
Ghosts, busy with oars and sail,
flit passed his dreamless eyes,
as he surrenders, falls deeper
into the moon-life of sleep.
They pray his long-tried mind
will dissolve like sea-mist
engulfed in spreading sunlight.

At dawn they place him,
still asleep, on his native shore.
In utter silence they leave
him, a secret king alone
among ancestors and enemies, a man

equipped with the gods' own wisdom.
In the near distance
the gray-eyed goddess waits,
without sleep, smiling
over his mortal needs.
She muses, 'Soon the sleeper
and his mission will be one.'

Daniel Brick

The Abandoned Poem

I wrote a long poem
for you this morning
in the pure light
of an untouched day.

The poem was marvelous!
It took two hours to write,
two hours to revise,
one hour to copy neatly.

As I read the final draft,
I felt I was in your presence:
your flesh as pure as the light,
your mind as untouched as the day.

The poem was one moment
a window through which I saw
your beauty. The next moment,
a mirror reflecting our joy.

Then a darkness that was not
nature's fell across my desk.
I dropped my pen, closed my
notebook. My mind, like a whirlgig.

This poem, these paper words
contained no trace of you:
the down of your face,
the curve of your legs,

your breathing lifting
your breasts, your lips
parted to speak, or parting
to kiss - Yes,

words are such perfect
traitors: they make promises
that warm you, like summer light,
they create spirals of hope.

For those hours of composing,
the words performed miracles
of desire, produced wonders
of expectation, and then -

I dumped the three sheets
in the yard as I trudged
to my daily tasks,
silent, sullen, sorry.

That evening, as twilight
slowly finished what
morning light had begun,
I saw you, sitting alone,

on your balcony, half-
hidden by a vase of flowers.
Your hands held my poem,
your eyes gazed intently.

I stood leaning against
a maple tree, watching
this impossible scene,
wondering what words were left.

No longer traitors, I
sifted through my mind
to find the words closest
to touch and to silence.

As I looked up in desire,
you suddenly looked
down in anticipation.
Words dissolved into gestures.

Valentine's Day
2014

Daniel Brick

What Poetry Means To Them

Poetry means a clean sheet
of paper to the anxious poet.
He covers the dry page
with moist words,
squeezed from his heart's vocabulary.

But children romping on the playground
tear the paper to shreds and fling
the pieces into bright air.
They drift down like big snow-flakes
which will never melt.

Poetry means the nagging memory
of the lost one
in the surviving one, always two
on either side of death, both waiting
for their next embrace.

For our grandparents, spying
on the seasons as they
shift and glide,
poetry is the slow rhythm
of the mantle clock.

For the thinker,
poetry lingers in the space
between her widening thought. For the lone
lover and the perfect fool, it measures
the time desire burns.

Everyday they show us
poetry is nothing but a gasp, a breath
breathed into surrounding air,
a cry that echoes again and again,
the soft touch of a hand we never see.

Daniel Brick

Sonya's Visitors

Some mornings
I talk to
Matisse
before breakfast.
It's very casual,
pajamas and café au lait,
and in no time
I have ideas,
so many he helps me
stash them in a secret
cupboard only we
can find. Then
he's off to meet
his Algerian muse
or his Hungarian model.
He waves to me
from the sidewalk
and leaves his footprints
in the freshly fallen snow.

Paul Klee sends
an angel
with a small breakfast.
He's so generous,
this Swiss magician
of the left hand.
But sometimes
he forgets his promises.
'I'll visit your studio
next Saturday - '
And he's off
without even waving.
Saturday arrives
but not Paul.
One of his angels,
looking sheepish,
is at the threshold,
wanly smiling, and waving
before lifting herself into flight.

In late morning
I have tea
with Erna.
Her eyes are heavy
with lost sleep.
'Every day is the same.'
She tries to smile.
'Kirchner won't settle
down. He's a bundle
of nerves. His palette
is a mess of colors.
Lately, he
stirs and swirls
them for an hour
or more, then sets
it down and disappears.
He's so good at vanishing.
What should I do, Sonya?
What can I do? '
I pour more tea.

'Where's Picasso? '
It's Apollinaire,
by himself
which is already
a crowd! He's
in a white suit
with a fresh flower
in the lapel.
'Marie gave it
to me, last night, '
he says quietly.
He walks up
to my wall of nudes,
stares at them
from a distance.
He fixes his eyes
on the one
with smooth pink skin.
'This one and Modigliani's.'

Apollinaire twists his body,
his eyes still fixed on the nude.
He collapses into
Robert's chair
and sinks into
his heavy thoughts.
Minutes go by.
Suddenly, he shakes himself
violently
and springs up.
'Where did you say
Picasso is? '
I recall something Breton wrote.
'He's nearby, Guillaume.
He's hunting in the neighborhood.'
Apollinaire is satisfied.
As he ambles off,
he hands me a letter.
'This was wedged in the door.'

'Dear Sonya,
it's late, so much
later than I realized.
you know -
I can't wrap my hand
around the brushes
anymore. My fingers won't
close tight like a fist
or loose like -
like what? They're putting
their paint
on my 'Blind Man's Bluff'!
I'm sure it's for the best.
But I feel so helpless:
every day I need
to renew my trust.
As ever, Max.'
I refold his letter
and place it next to 'The Ice Skaters.'

The afternoon
is rushing

into evening.
I am finishing
a watercolor
I started after lunch
with Van Gogh
looking over my shoulder.
He never says much
but his presence is
like a vase of irises
that shine brighter
as night encroaches.
I worry about Vincent,
but he just rubs
his huge calloused hands
together and smiles:
'Sonya, I'm so glad
you're a painter, too! '

It's past
five pm.
Robert has just
finished with his last client.
They are saying
good-bye in the hallway.
I hear the quiet
murmur of conversation
punctuated by occasional
bursts of laughter.
So this is the life
of an artist today!
Day in day out,
I put brush
to paint, paint
to canvas, canvas
to wall. And
it is enough....
Matisse is coming again tomorrow!

Daniel Brick

Page One

Some days
all I can find is
Page One,
and of course what follows,
what multiplies, what complicates,
confuses, makes me want
to start over. And
there I am, on Page One.
Shouldn't I be on page 10?
or page 12? or at least page 5?
... I understand this only dimly:
I'm the one who started on
Page One, and there must
I always begin again.

Page One
is a lonely place.
When I look around, no one.
I spin on my immediate axis,
fast, faster, even faster,
then slower, then stationary,
suddenly stationary,
my head reeling
and stopping at the same moment -
here am I on
Page One, but
wiser, less grasping,
with not a trace of vanity,
ready to watch and learn.

The Master Volume
sends out
mission experts.
They are serious young people,
capable of communicating
in seven languages.
They wear no masks, their faces
reveal true emotions. Take
your pick. You can't go wrong.

If you don't need their help
to reach page 2,
ignore them rudely. They will
move on, hesitantly,
seeking the ones in need.

'So, you're still on
Page One. I'm Sebastian:
one day I will die
in exquisite agony
for a new and beautiful god.
In the meantime, I serve
among these shadowy helpers.
That's Lionel, who bends
the I Ching to his will;
that's Adrian, who can look
at any spread of Tarot cards
and select the coolest future;
there's Eleanor of the Witch Pack,
who cannot often be trusted.

'There's Cassandra, way in back,
who's lovely, ingenuous and mute...
Who would have thought
so many electric
figures would occupy Page One?
The energy is dazzling! Someone
on page 12, at this moment,
claims it is blinding her
further progress. Out of courtesy,
it's time for you to move on,
at least to move off,
ideally shut
things off, reduce
the brilliance to a glow.

'That's your signal, Ephebe.
The others (You didn't notice
their departures.) are running
toward page 2. Don't you crave
to join their rush and riot?
Look! One of them turns around,

his lips are moving, but he's
too far ahead of us to hear him.
Us? Actually it's only
you. I'm just a voice
in your head, an impulse
in your gut, a readiness
in your disposition.
Can you make sense of my presence?

'Don't you get it yet?
I'm bored stuck here
at the starting point.
I'm getting annoyed
by the sameness of this place.
I feel the tug from energy
sources out there...
I'm breathing the earliest
sweet smells of a distant spring.
Isn't that what you yearn for?
Breathe and smile. Do you get it now?
I'm letting go, hands free,
eyes closed, facing
another direction which promises - '

Page One is a comfortable
place. It's the Island of
the Lotus Eaters, not far,
in a fast ship, from Calypso's
Ortygia, where a goddess yearns
for me, and prepares a cup
of nectar. Circe could be a problem,
but with 'moly's' help
I'll survive a whole year,
enjoy the happiest sex,
surrounded by tamed animals
who are also stuck on Page One.
I see the detritus of adventure -
bronze swords, embossed shields,

the broken rudder of a mighty ship,
torn pieces of black and white
sails, a staff of authority

for speakers in an Assembly,
coins from kingdoms ringing
the Mediterranean, a treasury
of gems - all scattered along
the wide shoreline of Page One.
What does all of this mean?
What impulse? What voice?
What readiness? Is my odyssey
a book whose pages I turn
one by one? or is mine
the journey outward, into -

TERRA INCOGNITO! The very phrase
itself is electric. To speak it
is to repeat it, repeat it
faster and faster. It's become
a chant, an incantation,
something more than speech, beyond
words, a spell
of creation, a musical phrase,
music itself. This is no longer
just my voice. I-joined to
a chorus of others,
we-harmonized into swelling
sounds, a symphony
spreading across lands, seas,

skies. O, the spacious air!
I'm tumbling, I'm careening,
I - no, WE are in flight
far above places with numbers,
beyond beginning and ending.
Our thoughts are dissolving
into a hum of perfect meaning...
That symphony
carries US, contains US,
recreates US. Our memories
fade into the 'plenum'.
WE were so alike, stuck on
Page One. WE are raised above it.
WE are flying free, together, whole -
This symphony is the World!

Daniel Brick

Witness

O clear winter night!
A red deer steps out of the forest.
She stands in a pool of blue light
and watches the lake freeze.

The golden angel of the western sky
beats her vast wings slowly.
Her crystal tears
fall into the same lake

the deer watches.
I come to the shore of the lake.
I give it a name:
Lake of the Yellow Moon.

I take the place into my memory.
The deer turns her head,
slowly bites a leaf from an ash
and chews it deliberately.

Above me
the angel hovers over the freezing lake.
Beside me
the deer stands at the water's edge.

There is no wind.
There is no ripple.
I will wait here
as long as the deer and the angel.

Daniel Brick

A Reading By Robert Bly Wiley Hall Oct.16,2013

A lyre slants against the chair
you sit in.
Silent and alert,
as ever it waits for the poet's touch
to shimmer the strings
into sharp sounds.

You sit still,
revolving poems in your memory,
sifting them
to find the ones we
can grapple with, take fully
within our minds.

Late in the evening,
we discover the mind's neighbor,
the shy soul, so often hidden,
suddenly appears, having
already written these poems,
so ancient and abiding

is the measure of your words.
And we realize
as cold October air
bites our homeward faces,
that your soul has been laughing
us into joy for almost nine decades.

Daniel Brick

Angelic

Keeping faithful watch
for angels, I have become one.
But my wings are folded.

Sometimes a breeze lifts
a few feathers. Some loosen
and float into blue air.

The rest press tighter
against my body. I cannot
release them, no matter

what image of flight
crosses my mind. I wait
under October's leafless trees

to hear the awful beating
of my guardian's huge wings.
Only then will I see

my other face, radiant
and calm. Only then
will I be able to spread

my prisoned wings, rise
in silent imitation
and know the angel's endless flight.

Daniel Brick

The House Of Many Rooms

In the house of many rooms
someone sleeps.
Someone can be anyone,
so the sleeper is you.

I'm awake
because I've finally understood
the house of many rooms
is no place to sleep.

Floors creak
even when a cat pads
from room to room.
When the wind blows,

walls shudder,
windows shake against their frames.
The wind whistles over the roof,
and tiny clots of dust fall down the chimney,

down to the fireplace,
into the living room.
Someone could choke on nothing there.
But someone is asleep,

breathing the dirt in and out,
while knives flash in the kitchen,
hammers pound in the workroom,
and all the beds sag

under the weight of ghostly presences.
I'm here to tell you,
stay awake,
in the house of many rooms.

Daniel Brick

Vigil For My Father, John J. Brick

Ghosts demand
as much of your time
as we, your progeny, do.
We crowd around the bed
but they crowd even closer.

They follow you
into sleep
through your trembling eyelids,
lodge themselves in your mind
like sparrows nested in a high elm.

Your hands float
above the sheets and straps,
tracing patterns in the air,
hesitant, delicate patterns
as if you were shaping a haircut

or molding soft clay into an image
of something old and dear.
When you cough and wake yourself,
you drag out fragments of your dream
and hurl them at us,

so confident these ghost events
are the real life you are living.
It is already evening.
The drapes are pulled shut
against the cold light of November stars.

The room shines
in the glare of flat white lights
against beige walls.
You still drift
in and out of sleep,

wake, wonder where you are
and fumble with the sheets,
and then go back to sleep

where everything you dream
makes perfect sense.

Last night, I told you
stories from my childhood
shaped by your loving care.
All the time,
you smiled up at the ceiling.

Then, your head turned
to my side.
Your pale blue eyes,
watery and wrinkled, saw me.
'We have a lifetime of memories, Ray.'

Suddenly, memory had changed
me, the son, into Ray, the friend.
Who can tell
why your mind needed
that friendship again?

'I'm sleeping at Ray Milski's, '
you told the nurse
as she tied your hands
to the side of the bed.
And all this

will be repeated tonight,
and will be repeated
tomorrow, and again
the next day, and the next.
What else is there to do

but talk over the past,
since the future for us
is shrinking,
all our delight squeezed
into the small spaces of the present.

Daniel Brick

'Hieros Gamos'

A thousand faces merge, dissolved
into one face.
The radiance of our doubled sight
dazes two black swans
whose fire-eyes burn with searing red.

No other creature sees what we see.
Walls collapse before we reach them.
We wait side by side for all arrivals,
no departure can occur without our presence.
We measure time in trails of starlight.

Every person we meet comprehends our speech.
When we embrace a stranger, his thoughts
flood into our memories and lodge there.
I hold a mirror to your face, then
to my face, and see the same face!

On our journeys, every turn leads to a threshold.
We find a home ready for us in every city.
Wild birds descend from their migratory paths
and eat breadcrumbs from our outstretched hands.
Neighbors shower us with gifts and good wishes.

Daniel Brick

Four Taoist Poems

I

Scattered rocks lie
beneath the moss-covered boulder.
They are Tai Chi students
resting in the shade of their master.
They have learned enough for today -
It's time to stop
and speak softly to the earth.

II

The grasses display no ambition.
They grow everywhere along the Path
with a tangled sense of humor.
There is a deep truth hidden here
but I'm laughing too hard to care about it!

III



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Walking in the Marsh

Balancing on one leg,
without a thought in her head,
the bird mocks philosophy.
I'm too stubborn to get the point.
I'll come back next week
when I'm ready.

IV

Suddenly I don't know what to say.
Perhaps I should keep my mouth shut.
The barren branch knows so much more
than I ever will
in the Ten Thousand Years.

Daniel Brick

Garvin Heights Winona, Mn

I expected to be dizzy
peering over an abyss
of rocks and trees
into the twenty mile vista.
Instead I was as still
as the surrounding trees,
rooted with wonder
to this high place
in the clean prairie air,
standing above the ravens
who tossed below me
on waves of light.

I leaned against the fence,
felt its jagged rocks
scrape my bare arms
My eyes
like quietly thinking clouds
reflected the crawling world:
pale green river water
sloshed against its grainy banks,
dark green trees scattered
the houses of Winona
across the plain,
low hills trembled
in the blue haze of distance.

My eyes dropped a thousand feet
to the shadowed highway,
then swept up
into a flash of sun.
The light spiraled
through my body,
flaming every deadened spot...
I wondered,
if this is who I am
in the heights,
who will I be in the lowlands?

Between Stone And Stars

Walking down Summit Avenue, I saw
the smooth stones and Romanesque arch
of St. Luke's Church, long ago my family's parish.
Inside a solitary parishioner knelt
in the last pew, clutching his rosary,
reciting 'Hail Marys' in a monotone.
My appearance hushed his prayer.
Then and there total silence
always poised within pale brown stones
spread evenly through the spacious hall.
I walked along aisles of a former grace,
retraced the steps of grade school pageants,
and recalled the child's ready faith.
This is the sacred place
where I first ate divinity
disguised as human food,
first heard God's truth
wrapped in human words.
Once angels' flight stopped here,
and saints lived inside the stone.
I gazed above at giant disciples
drawn in bold black lines,
splashed with vibrant colors.
Their quiet lives of daily love
had taught my inexperienced soul
not every hurt needs a martyr's wound.
Sometimes suffering instructs survival,
merely settles in a person's heart.
I walked on with remembered reverence,
stood before a star-crowned marble altar.
From the dome an immense purple-robed Jesus
sits on a throne of gold and clouds.
Blood flows from his side to nourish
sheep who drink from its red river.
His right hand rises majestically
to spin stars out of their orbits.
I left the church that afternoon
with this simple life-long hope:
someday I want to worship

like a penitent beneath the radiant dome.
Between stone and stars I will be
just a zealous man who loves silence
praying in an empty catholic church.
And this old man will know
from years of quiet prayer
how it hurts is how it heals.

Daniel Brick

In A Japanese Garden (Como Park, St. Paul Mn)

The painter is silent,
half-hidden behind her easel.
Above her the bonsai speaks
in a delicate dialect of branches
from which two crows caw their rapture.

Ripples of speech disturb the pond
whose quiet water is as green as
the tea we drank this morning
while we talked about 'the ten thousand things'.
Silent now, we stare

at two gray boulders
and read in their white streaks
whispers of a prehistory
that will forever enfold us
in a world of language

where everything has a name
that eventually comes to the waiting mind.
The painter remains silent.
Her wide brush scatters colors
across 'the nothing' of her canvas.

We wonder, What does her painting say?
But she will not speak to us.
As we walk passed her, talking softly,
she mixes blue and red and black
into a shape that words will never name.

Daniel Brick

An Incident

At the gates of paradise
the caretaker
put down his flaming sword.
The flames scorched the grass
before the moist red soil
snuffed them out.
The caretaker was weary
of guarding the gates
of a place no one knew of.
He lay down
next to his smoldering sword
and closed his eyes.
Soon the perfect sleep
of paradise enveloped him
like a sweet aroma swirling
around a giant apple tree.
As he slept,
creatures abandoned
in the garden drew closer, gazed
through the narrow opening
into a decaying world.
Birds poised in the air
fiercely beating their wings.
Lions yawned and stretched
next to bleating sheep.
Tigers prowled along the hedges.
A monkey cackled to his tribe
who answered in a scrabble of shrieks.
The caretaker heard their panic
in his sleep. Wearily, he rose,
grabbed the heavy sword again,
and held it across the gates.
Sunbeams ignited its hidden fire.
Slowly, the creatures withdrew,
back into the forest,
back into their perfect paradise.

Daniel Brick

Daedalus In The Labyrinth

The Labyrinth looks deep
into its mirrors.
It knows
seeing is the fundamental work
of everything that grows.
Its hunger for growth is wild
like jagged canyons slicing through the earth.
It devours soil, rocks, sunlight, fragrances.
It leaves nothing behind.

The Labyrinth's winding
confuses itself.
It loses sight of the precious thread,
whose color is a woman's face.
She cannot help.
She has already descended.
The abandoned walls are terrified.
They choke and twist
like dreamers struggling to awake.

And the floor leaps forward!

Daniel Brick

September Comes

In summer, you were stunned
by green things blooming, bronzed
by heat released from every inch
of sky, carried across blue thresholds
by random winds. Oh, how you felt
this is the season of Forever!

'Come hither, ' urged bright morning
and you complied without a care.
'Don't move, ' cautioned the sun
and you sat still another hour.
'Open your arms, ' cried the winds
and you embraced their sudden heat.

September comes, and Nature falls
silent. She has the work of harvest
to perform. You're on your own now
to map the sun, to touch a green leaf
turning yellow, to hold a golden moment
before it fades into winter light.

The days grow shorter, the nights
colder. Oh, Misery! you think.
And yet... Those sumac bushes,
abundant along the river bank,
half-green, half-red, seem poised
in time, as if Autumn will never say-
 'Farewell'

Daniel Brick

Aubade

Stars, fading fast
behind the sun's morning sheen,
shine a little extra light
on us, before we part.

In time, our love
will burn up our lives,
and return to you a tiny measure
of the light we borrowed today.

Daniel Brick



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