

WITLESS

Merriam-Webster

witless adjective

wit·less | \ 'wit-ləs

Definition of witless

1: destitute of wit or understanding: foolish

2: mentally deranged: crazy

Synonyms

airheaded, birdbrained, bonehead, boneheaded, brain-dead, brainless, bubbleheaded, chuckleheaded, dense, dim, dim-witted, doltish, dopey (also dopy), dorky [slang], dull, dumb, dunderheaded, empty-headed, fatuous, gormless [chiefly British], half-witted, knuckleheaded, lamebrain (or lamebrained), lunkheaded, mindless, oafish, obtuse, opaque, pinheaded, senseless, simple, slow, slow-witted, soft, softheaded, stupid, thick, thick-witted, thickheaded, unintelligent, unsmart, vacuous, weak-minded

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Horace Walpole is often quoted for his insightful observation “The world is a tragedy to those who feel, but a comedy to those who think.” We have that unique ability to view life as whimsical, absurd and comical. Even millennia ago, such a wide-ranging philosopher as Aristotle remarked “The secret of humor is surprise.” I also like T. S. Eliot’s perception “Humor is also a way of saying something serious” (assuming *Witless* merits any serious content.)

These poems evolved from my experiences, ranging from amusing to ludicrous, mundane or transcendent. Whether you find them droll or dull, irreverent or innocuous, amusing or aversive, iconic or ironic, sardonic or shallow, subtle or savage, funny or frivolous, grandiose or grotesque, majestic or macabre, rewarding or repulsive, clever or corny, shall depend on the degree of wit within (although I purposely avoided sounding like I’m alliterate.) A few glare with atrocious puns and qualify both as eyesores and ear stench.

Credit is due to many characters who honed my wry sense of humor. The men on the paternal side my family were perpetually good natured, humorous, playful, and ready to kid and joke. A few anecdotes follow, which seeded the thistle of these poems.

My grandfather, Samuel Venable was nick-named “Happy” for his jovial disposition. When I was a preschooler, gramps was milking a cow on his small tobacco farm in Castle Hayne NC, and mom stood several feet away at the stall opening, intently watching. He winked at me and with uncanny accuracy squirted mom on her forehead, milk splattering everywhere. My maternal grandfather, Bill Willis, was likewise. He would take out his false teeth, hide them in his large hand, and open his cavernous mouth. As a toddler, I was bewildered at such a sight! Where did they disappear? On another occasion, he kept tempting me to bite his thumb by pushing it near my lips “Bet you can’t bite my thumb.” I bit and he pushed a red pepper into my incisors. I cried then but chuckle now—that limey rascal! Hence, bad taste began. Lastly, my dad, Paul Venable, was as funny and made the most outlandish faces with accompanying crossed-eyes. Whenever he left his business office, wearing his fifties suit to watch me perform in grade-school plays, I knew I dared not even glance at him or else I would lose it in hopeless hysteria. My brother Paul Wood was playful with puns: “A skier jumping from the lift hurt his ski toe.”

Over the years I snickered (still do) at daily and Sunday comics in their absurdity. Blondie, For Better or For Worse, Family Circus, Beetle Bailey and Hager the Horrible remain incurably witty. (My wife finds Hagar unamusing; I should add.)

Perhaps the best sense of humor is being able to laugh at oneself with a bit of healthy self-deprecation. You decide if I succeeded and moreover if the title is apropos.

Previously published ones are noted in parenthesis. *Bluepepper*, clearly having good taste, published the most.

Peter C. Venable © 2020

BAD TASTE

GUSTATORY NUGGETS

Haiku You (or In Bad Taste)

On the beach: rain drops

Titillate my lips and extended tongue

Then splat! A gull dropping.

(Hobo Pancakes)

Ψ

Morning is Broken

A cardinal preens her nest.

A Mourning Dove coos over the rafters.

Amaryllis bouquets the porch.

Sun pours on cheeks.

Bacon lodges between front teeth.

Spooning (In Good Taste)

Spooning submerged granola under strawberry yogurt
in a wine glass is like—nothing! Any simile profanes.

Spooning granola under strawberry yogurt
is pure metaphor—transporting me,
spoonful after spoonful

as I shut my eyelids

munching, slurping, my mind
seated still in a dark movie theater

until I scrape up the last crunch

and lick the last pink drop...

The Oh! Factory

cut open medium-roast coffee bean bag
inhale leisurely

measure beans in a coffee grinder pulverize
smell robustly

empty into a filter pour boiling water
whiff deeply

dip teaspoon into honey
breathe in

stir a stygian whirlpool
snatch the scent

squirt whipped cream add organic milk dash cinnamon
savor aromas

lips

your

parting

slowly

it

raise

FUR AND FEATHER FIASCOS

Fissure

Every autumn grandpa hunted Bob White.

At dinner, he always warned “Bite slowly”
but at nine years old, holster
and cap-gun strapped to my hip,
Chipmunk cheeked with mashed potatoes and biscuits,
gravy odor filling my nose, I chomped into the spicy meat

in rapture—eyes closed—

I bit on a birdshot, chipping
and cracking an incisor down the middle.
My tongue found it, spit it out
on great grandma’s Royal Albert china plate.
It rolled up the edge and back to rest by a pea.
Gramps shook his head.

I let out a cry a neighbor declared she heard a half-mile away.

Fifty years later
my tongue still probes its worn cleft,
that metallic aftertaste
tainting every buttered biscuit,

birdshot embedded in every bite.

(First Flight)

Predator

I named a plastic black rat trap Pac-Man.
It brandishes saw-toothed jaws.
Baited with crunchy peanut butter,

it waits by birdseed sprinkled on deck handrails.

Squirrel flits its tail,
hops up the stairs to Pac-Man
sniffing, sniffing . . .

Squirrel creeps to cavernous chops,
twitching whiskers,
stretching, neck stretching

its nose—a whisker away—
swoons over peanut butter delicacy.

Squirrel pulls out his gray head
and what happens next, I'll never know:

three times last week Pac-Man sprung
at the bottom of the stairs, saw teeth locked

and Squirrel watches me from a branch
chewing birdseed and

fluffing his tail.

To Be Continued . . .

Clawing . . . gnawing . . . fingernails
scratching on sleep's blackboard . . .
I grope, switch on a lamp, stare upward.

Attic alien. *Rodentia* member. Furry fiend.
Rapturous rodent. Incisors beaver sized,
sharp as wood chisels.

Quiet now—it dreams in its insulation nest,
warmed enough from my heat pump
this winter evening.

Hardware store tomorrow.

Up the attic trap door. Stale cold.
Skeletal beams form numerous triangles.
Shingle nails jut iron stalactites for my brow.
I position mouse traps, a rat trap, animal cage trap,
mouse and rat glue traps—all dappled with delectable
walnut bits, cracker crumbs, peanut butter

and one homemade miniature guillotine,
with a weighted and angled razor blade,
mounted on an upright frame,
WD-40 oiled, posed, baited
for a whiskered head—
an empty-half walnut shell
for a basket.

(THEMA Literary Journal)

Cawcophony

Caws grate on January calm.
Through skeletal branches, fingery twigs,
a huddled shape roosts next to an ivy trunk.

Crows hover above, squawk from neighboring limbs.
It gazes, ear tufts silhouetting grey skies.
The black horde thickens, circling, cawing
over the bleak Sycamore. Cardinals and jays
gawp from a Blue Spruce. A cat

stalks out of the deck
and crows turn towards it.
The owl bursts through a woody portal,

feathers spiraling toward wet pine straw. Canadian Geese
honk inches over treetops. The cat

races under the deck chased by a Mockingbird.

One by one crows rise and plunge
in winter mist. One remains, ruffles feathers,
preening, glaring at the empty perch,
hoarsely clicking at the memory
it cannot forget.

October Repose

Neck cushion snug, visor shading,
I slip away, *Chasing Frances* in my lap.
A yard over whack breezes sways an oak

and whack plump acorns whack plummet
whack whack on the hood and roof
of Miller's pickup, dented from past acorn volleys,
whack whack whackwhackwhack

sounding like Mable's 22 Browning T-Bolt
cracking across distant Dry River Gap

then Miller reeves his chainsaw,
and his wife aims her leaf blower,
blasting acorns and whack
against the porch screen.

So goes the nap.

(Poetry in Plain Sight – community poster)

ERRONEROUS EROTICA

Moon Berry Delight

You stand unsuited—
chocolate dipped from solar vats
under moonlight frosting,
breasts and thighs are decorated
by two vanilla stripes (cherry topped).

Snowy teeth
flurry inside a pink cone.

Ψ

Sandy

As the bungalow quivers, shift,
nude bodies stand, locked inside a broom closet.

Pressing together, storm surges drenches
the shorelines, brackish crests
blast and batter,
darkness clamps tight
as mussel halves, until a salty blade
pries open the basement
filling the corridor

and the bungalow floats away.

No Sleaze, Please

Act I - Scene I

Fog drips from gutters

and cascades down bungalow steps.

At the Palm Room an actor plops on a rickety stool.
Cigarette clouds spiral through the rafters,
creep under table and halter tops,
and coil around her thronged ankles.

Hunters all, the cast scans with crosshair eyes.
Well-rehearsed lines are eager to beguile.

She circles a beer glass with a talon fingernail.
Dusty words spill on a paper napkin,
folded on a razor-creased skirt.

Act II - Scene I

At 2 A.M. footlights turn off.
He passes the audition. Ophelia mashes her butt.
They swoon and waltz to her theater.

Script cues from invisible directors
lead them into center stage.
They finish their lines and the action begins.

Act II - Scene II

After the performance,
her snores resound applause.
He genuflects to his audience
and tiptoes off stage into the night.

Accelerating from the beach, Horatio's voice whispers
"My Lord, how lust makes cowards of us all!"

Act III – Scene I

At the health department audition,
the test was negative.

All Is Well. Really.

At Fifty. Sixty. Seventy.
At each decade I stop, dwell—
Ten more past. Are they gained or lost?

Blow out candles. *All is well.*

But at an unguarded moment,
Trudging up a long stairwell,
I pause, clamp a slick handrail
Hear a mute alarm bell.

The mind flips to erotic times
At a Myrtle Beach hotel . . .
Rested, I trudge to the top step,
Glad at least my feet don't swell.

I know my time is running out—
I'll breath my final farewell.
What then? Extinction? Afterlife?
What follows? Heaven or hell?

To the bedroom. Switch on the light.
On the desk is a seashell,
A memento from Myrtle Beach.
Sniff—*Still has a salty smell.*

North End

We walk on shelly strands
as a pin-ball moon sheds shavings
on wrinkled waters and grass-capped dunes.

We disrobe and tramp through tidal pools
as August gusts lick our bodies.

You dart into breakers, cheeks flashing.
We scan for walkers on the shore.

Water laps lustfully to seducing dunes,
Recedes, mounts again.
We race behind one peaked with sawgrass.
You shiver, eyelashes shining silver streaks.
We sway like sailboats.

Diving into foamy surf,
sand coats wash away.

Dashing to our hidden dune,

our clothes are no longer there

Ψ

Her Rose

He delicately parted
her pink petals,
glistening with
tiny diamond drops
wider and wider,
peeking into her crimson heart,

then pinched the green stem

and deftly put it in the narrow vase

on the windowsill.

Principles of Fluid Dynamics

Viscosity = density of the fluid.

Liquid takes the shape of the container

that it fills but retains a fixed volume
and an incoming solid with defined shape and volume must have
constant viscosity to increase velocity and decrease abrasion.

Temperature must be neither too hot nor too cold
to prevent pressure differences and surface stresses.

The fluid flow and penetrating shape must be
relatively steady with time (hydrostatic equilibrium),
because

Titillating touch + increased time = overflowing viscosity,
called Erosdynamic.

Aqueous explosion is the result.

Decreased viscosity + increased friction = blocked fluidity,
called friction factor.

Absolute zero is the result.

Titillating Your Fancy

Your wrists and ankles are bound on bedpost corners.
First rule: anytime, you are free and shall be unbound.

Second rule: I can only stroke with one index finger-tip.
Or pause to press lightly. Pressing and stroking—
My finger-tip always in contact with your skin.
North to South Poles, and Equator. Peaks and plains.

No skin-denting pressure, rapid motion, or probing allowed.

Last rule: anywhere I wish. Anywhere you wish.
Always, same speed and feathery touch
or pause and press. Igniting skin.
My fingerprints everywhere.

Be still as long as you can.
Be silent as long as you can.

As long as it takes.

Vasectomy

In the urologist's waiting room,
Joe hunches over a National Geographic.
Each page slams like sheetrock on a concrete floor.

A nurse smiles, beckons him into an office.
Heart fibrillation begins.

The doctor peers over a surgical mask
and furnishes a pep talk. Joe's hands clamp
on the table; knuckles jut into the walls.
His eyes weld to an instrument tray:
scissors, tweezers, hemostats
and some diabolical gadget.
A curved-suture needle twinkles at him.
Doc grips a syringe—pricks, plunges,
then the scalpel . . .

Joe stares into a ceiling bulb
and whisks into a phosphorescent tunnel
where rainbows arch, dissolve into bubbles,
and pop into pinwheels.

Something distant yanks

and Joe lifts his head. The doctor threads and tugs
a knot, removes a blood-speckled mask,
and hums Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald
while leaving the room. The nurse takes Joe's hand,
guides him up, and escorts him into the lobby.
At the door she leans toward his ear,

“Want to come to my place for drinks after work?”

(Bluepepper)

Cruzen Rum Shack

Sunday. Well before Happy Hour.
Palm trees sway like masts where
a blackbird rides against cloudy crests.

A windswept man strums his acoustic,
rasps *It's better than drinking alone*

Pop tops percuss across the pool,
wafting memories of the Wit's End
eons ago, when smoke blunted floodlights.

They bask, oil simmering on bronze skin.
1 = 10 . . . behind shades my eyes
sculpt her supple shape.

A few distant embers glow, fade.
Sing us a song you're the piano man
Sing us a song tonight

Last chorus.

(Bluepepper)

Ψ

A Tale of Two Frogs

Frog Koan

In the spring pond multitudes of frogs
chased, clamped, and copulated.
An old bullfrog, observing from the bank, croaked.

Frog Finale

The oldest bullfrog surveyed, jumped in,
clasped a thrashing young female,
thrust in a frenzy and then croaked.

MISCELLANEA

Allegory of Ducks and The Family

A badling of ducks waddled furiously, and quacked vociferously as they approached a family, who tossed them scrumptious portions of sliced bread, French fries, birthday cakes and cupcakes—which they gobbled voraciously. Gorged, they turned tails and strutted back to the swamp, where they basked and planned for tomorrow’s buffet.

Ψ

Quatorzain

Questioning
Quantum quarks,
Quirky quasars;
Quincy
Quarreled,
Quivered,
Quoted,
Quibbled.

Quashed,
Querimonious Quincy
Quaffed
Quarts.
Quite quenched,
Quincy’s quandary quelled.

Ψ

Regarding Irregardless

Regardless of irregardless,
editors regard irregardless as irregular
in proper speech,

regardless of where in verse it irradiates
(which is also irregular
regardless of radiant speech.)

Disregard this and regard at Irregardless’ funeral,

how cascading, mourning wisteria
wept lavender tears in hysteria.
The Rational

“The Rational is Real and the Real is Rational,”

A buttress of Hegel's Mind

and my mallet-and-chiseled Absolutes.
How my Easter Island idols are adorned
with gull droppings and scales!

Come, tourists, and meander
in our taxidermist's museum of stuffed Beliefs—
are they winking at us with their glassy eyes?

Come, and ponder
as we go spelunking in Plato's Cave,
and meet our flickering shadows.

Let's ascend our ancestral stairs
to Reason's Tower and marvel
at Syllogism's Sculptures.

What, then, are these Monuments
which assemble our Real minds?

(Bluepepper)

The House Is Spotless but Unclean

“When an unclean spirit comes out of someone it wanders over the desert sands seeking a resting place and finds none. Then it says, “I will go back to the home I left.” So it returns

and finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and tidy. It goes off and collects seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they all come in and settle there; and in the end that person's plight is worse than before" (Mt. 12:43-45).

My house is more than swept clean and tidy.
I paint walls—sandpaper commodes and tubs—
polish horizontal surfaces—wipe vertical ones—
mop floors—steam-clean rugs—dust attic slats.

When the dogs come in, Big Foot faints
and Stumpy goes into shock.
I rush Stump to the vet.
The poor devil is still not right.

Seven unclean spirits move in
with no intention of paying rent.

Envy criticizes neighbor's manicured shrubbery;
Covet scowls at his vehicles;
Lust leers into her window across the street;
Gluttony devours bagels like Cheerios;
Sloth lolls on the couch and pimps
dust bunnies under the hem;
Anger fumes at the computer;
and Pride buffers them behind vinyl siding.

The house is in uproar:
Envy, Covet, Lust, and Gluttony
Brawl with Sloth, until Anger
hikes the thermostat and wall paint blisters.
Pride spits and squeegees the windows.

Brillo Pads, bleach, ammonia, pine oil, Acetone,
bug foggers, alien blood, and even house exorcists fail.

How do you get rid of unclean spirits?

Angel-Dusted

and bath-salted,

he aimed a corkscrew into his palm
and twisted and twisted

until it screwed through
the dorsal skin nearly an inch—

like a badly botched titanium screw surgery—

and he reached for a bottle of wine

and I waited for the next twist.

(Bluepepper)

Being Stupid Excerpts

“Being stupid is not a natural, innate trait
but takes years of dedicated practice”

she announced over her half-moon reading glasses,

glaring at our 9th grade English class.

She patented my most notable trademark as I grinned at a buddy,

“You blithering idiot, get to the desk at the back of the class.”

Knowing nothing about the adjective *blithering*

I obeyed her prophetic direction, wondering if she used a comma splice.

. . .

Decades later I drove 100 miles to a workshop,

ran out of gas before cell phones era,

walked an hour with a gas can in Noah’s deluge,

and finally entered the facility—

water and sweat dripping on my face, shoes squirting water—

the receptionist said (with blithering idiot intonation):

“It’s tomorrow; didn’t you read the registration form?”

To be continued . . .

Senioritis

Helical spirals spliced into a pit bull-boxer.

Roxy yawns a pink cavernous maw,

teeth sharp as thistle thorns,
then she sleeps, twitches, dreams of chasing
backyard squirrels or a hurled leather bone

and seconds later all this is memory.

Seems my life is always past tense.
Me? A reconstruction of reminiscences
like Roxy's yawn a moment ago—
no longer now, but then.

I am memory, a half-step behind awareness
stretching longer and blunter each decade's breadth

as life shortens between trips to grocery shop
or physician tests.

The dog snores. Did she yawn a while ago or was that yesterday?

Never mind.

(Lighten Up Online)

Back On The Grid

Even off the grid, during coffee,
bishops' diagonal, knights' jackleg and ripple

the black surface. The king bubbles on the bottom.

“Not yet—later.” Right. The queen,
graven on the cup, taunts, bares an ankle until

I robot to the screen, key “Expert.” 8x8 grid opens.
16 pawns genuflect; backrow regalia armed to pounce.
Black and white as there ever was.

The first pawn spawn’s today’s metastasis,
square to square, row to row, one by one they fall.

Beaten. Again. By Deep Blue’s kindergartener.
“Damnit!” Never ever resign—
X it off the grid. Start again. And again.

Win or lose, zero-sum outcome.
Just a game. Live or die, for I,

the possessed. Just a game.

“Right.”

Gideon’s

At the medical practice, a *Gideon’s Bible* gestated
between stacks of *Good Housekeeping*, *Popular Mechanics*,

Women's Day. Guns and Ammo was conspicuously missing.

Gideon's Bible was bookmarked with a sticky
and he opened it to highlighted verses:
“It pleased God through the foolishness of the Gospel
to save those through faith. We proclaim Christ nailed to a cross.”

He looked blankly, set it aside and reached for *Readers' Digest*.

“OK, coming.”

Time to hear the results of the biopsy.

Ghost Crabs

Ghost crabs have
burned-matchstick periscopes.

They flaunt ivory claws,
strut by neighboring bluffs,
duel over property lines.

I think of my sheetrock burrow,
my sandcastle tucked in suburb strands.

One king crab fashions the highest tower,
perches, taunts rivals—
until a draining ice chest
erodes his palace into a wet lump.

A siege of sand gnats attacks in bloodlust fury.
Cursing, I rise; the crabs dart into their dens.

Over sandy rims they peer at the ghost man,
scurrying up warping steps
and fading between bungalows
into a dark hollow surrounded
by mounds of sand.

(Veranda Literary Journal)

Last Cruise

In the Jewel of the Seas, 6th floor at ground zero
You should be dancing (that eunuch voice!) lured

By a line of rump roasts and Botoxed cheeks
skewered by the Caribbean sun.

Ringed by stretch marks and sleeve tattoos,
the primate centipede pumped and vacillated
under a mirror disco ball's glitter.

I requested the DJ play

The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

Security was called.

“You should be dancing, yeah” they said.

Another blithering expression.

From the brig I ate leftover French soup consommé.
Through a porthole against the night one white bird
flapped through salty pitch next to the Jewel,
122 nautical miles from Cozumel.

Damn bird should have more sense.

Ψ

Miami Arrival

At the Miami Airport Customs section
I admitted Costa Rican seeds to a holstered guard
were contraband in my Ibuprofen bottle.

A camouflaged soldier alerted his M-16.
An agent scrutinized his laptop. My 60's protests
and subversive Letters to the Editor were unrecorded.

A Public Intoxication conviction
in Black Hills South Dakota was unrecorded.

He impounded the alien seeds and gave a blithering idiot gesture
to move on toward baggage claim.
At Seventy Something (And Counting)

I am the tin man. My body rusts.
My shoulders squeak doing pushups.

Autumn swings its frosty scythe at my heels
as I clatter over pine straw paths.

After showering, flab flows over my hips.
I pluck a mushroom growing between two toes.
Crow's feet claw at my cheeks.
Ear hairs breed sea urchin colonies.
Then, in my bathroom mirror,
a hooded bathrobe beckons from the closet.

I give it my best obscene gesture.

. . .

Over the Rainbow arcs
across the ceiling and fills an empty flowerpot.
Squirting a water pistol, I chase the tin man to Oz
and hurl yellow bricks at the lion.

Back in Kansas, I rattle through the hall into bed.
The emerald hue of Oz glitters from the fish tank
on the curves of Judy's body,
But damn munchkins keep peeping over the mattress.

Then, Toto whines by the door, looking very guilty.

(Crucible)

The Novel

on the 71st page about a fictitious character
blundering through the manuscript

and coincidentally or not fictitious in life

written in his 71st year
coincidentally or not

the biggest adventure 1975—
the protagonist hitchhiked from Charlotte
to a closed bus station Fort Lauderdale
wall clock 2:11 thermometer 81° he burrowed
in a sleeping bag under a palm tree
cars peeling back and forth slight drizzle
then tropical water-balloon rain pounded
him awake soaked the bag zipper stuck cursing
he inch-wormed wiggled to the station's eaves
ripped the bag apart drenched dungarees
sweatshirt wallet backpack hair dark seaweed

a sitting couple just hitched smoking j's
stared incredulously the man's
right hand hidden under a raincoat
coincidentally or not

the protagonist waded away
parking lot swamp up to his knees
lightning flashed his marinated shape
sloshing into a Brazilian Grape grove
a migrant capybara staring back
between Spanish bayonets
chewing contentedly

the novel
remains unfinished
coincidentally or not.

The Vow

this morning you boldly step
on damp flagstones cold currents

stream upward then into wet grass

dew drenches your feet
now walking on mushy pine straw
a bird staring back from a fir

your right heel mashes
a hidden dead branch—sandspur
spikes pierce to the bone

your shrieks pierce through evergreens
as you hobble back to porch steps
eyes watering scraping them off

splintery remains embedded beyond
tweezers and sewing needles
pain currents stream upward

and this afternoon is the 6K race.

(Hermit Feathers Press)

Weightless

Medicare man, grunting 175 pounds three reps
with cast-iron plates big as manhole covers

is all about weight. Not bad, he thinks she thinks
except for the head with more hair

spiking from his ears than on top,
and his turkey wattle is a white-water balloon

but her magnanimous smile
launches him into zero gravity.

Ψ

Helix

Age leaches life
out of my every DNA spiral

as time ruptures double-strands,
and links with other threads unravels.

My lower back knows ruptured cells
from lifting two 50 lb. dumbbells
a week ago—a yearly event my wife reminds me,
and repairs linger longer this year

and longer next year.

The Secret

Constellations on a winter's night—
fogging and clearing from the heavens

of your icy breaths.

The blue snowman
is mute in this backwoods lot.
Silver slivers drape his ridiculous head
and lash his button eyes.

Nobody is around.
Nobody will drive by at this time of night.
You've imagined this moment for years.

Take off your clothes.
Tramp barefoot on the frozen crust
to the snowman until your noses touch—
kiss and embrace him.

Step back, reeling, shivering.

Look up into the magnificent zodiac.

Tell no one. Ever.

The Next One

This one is the Hindu "Song of God," the Bhagavad-Gita.
As in all journeys of spirit, the end is always at the Source.

A “Song” line plunges into consciousness:
“From attachment comes desire
and from desire comes anger.”

I flip the book against the bulging bookcase.
Dust motes blizzard, then settle.

Memories of the book plummet
over countless others. Out of the depths
I faintly glimpse the worm at the core.

Vaulting from the chair, I snatch keys
and streak towards the bookstore
for the next one.

Zen Nonsense

Here and now, how brief we visit:
for there and then is where we lodge.

Memory and daydream
veil our view from the mind's projector.

The child swings and swings and swings,
Pure motion. Then stops, gazes at an anthill,
Pure rest.

Zen whispers.

No matter.

Never mind.

Ψ

Transmigration Wings

Para-Brahma: I want free eats and lofty sex
And of the universe, never ask why—
A world of no suffering or of pain. fly

I was reincarnated as a

Life Is Good

I am in the order *Siphonaptera*.
For the unacquainted, *siphon* means “hollow tube”;

aptera means “without wings” —which is not a problem since I do not fly. Nor do I blink. Ocular bristles protects my two biconvex lenses like human eyelashes. Wish I could wink like you can.

Hard plates called sclerites cover me.
I wear backward pointing hairs and
scurry easily between Brobdingnagian spikes,
skitter away from nails, teeth, and claws.

I use a needlelike drinking tube for meals,
like you humans would use a straw
to suck a red snapper cocktail.
My saliva numbs so I can siphon in peace.
We’re not that different when we dine, are we?
Like vampires, sunset is my Prime Time.

Lilliputians? I can catapult myself
with laser accuracy to my dinner buffet.
If I were your size, I’d jump 250 feet
vertically, 450 feet horizontally.
Your pole-vault record of 20 feet or
record long jump 29 feet is a big deal?
I’d do that on one hind leg.

I have alluring pronotal and ganal combs,
which charms and enchants females. Irresistible!
If I was human sized, my protuberance would
measure 13 inches—2.5 times my body length. Ha!

After my ladies first thirst quencher, they lay
20 eggs a day, 5,000 or so over 2-3 months.
We are negligent parents—too busy sucking,
copulating copiously, and resting
over some 30 days.

Human hosts, a toast:
we hide in carpets, couches, rugs, chairs,
clothes and banquet on your furry pets
but we are always thirsty for
juicy human plasma cocktails.

(Lighten Up Online)

Reckoning In A Church Graveyard

There are cemeteries and then
there are church graveyards. This rural one

has many tombstones, ground and scoured
by rain and ice and wind and bird squirts
and blotted by lichen and grime
Here Li ances Sm rn 1888 Di 01

Sure, boys sprayed paint and worse unzipping
blasphemies as boys will do, unrepentant
but this evening:
the churchyard, at twilight
parking lot vacant crescent moon
sickling through cottony clouds

as I pass rowed headstones. Night's shroud
settles on my shoulders. Scorched grass
crunches beneath my sandals. Fireflies,
disguised angels, hover over memories below.
Nightingales sing antiphonally to
silent applause. A numinous feeling

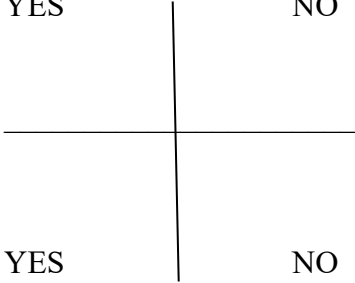
flows in this soul, skin-sheened silver . . .
some blob lands on my toes—freaks me
until I see black eyes gaze at me—a toad.
He empties his bladder, hops away
for a she-toad or succulent slug.
Unrepentant.

Probability Theory

The board game waits years on an attic chair.

His finger draws a smiley face on its dusty box.
On the top is written THE WAGER

He lifts off the lid, unfolds the board as
dust rises in a light shafts. Printed on the board are
four quadrants forming a square with “Yes” and “No”:

GOD IS:	YES	NO
		
GOD IS NOT:	YES	NO

No dice no pieces no numbers no cards no chips no spinning arrow

There is a single printed instruction

WEIGH THE GAIN AND THE LOSS – WAGER WISELY

He closes it, plops it on top of a Monopoly game, and leaves.

What the hell kind of a game is that?

Pop Quiz

The philosophy professor, having read Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,”

placed it on the podium and scanned across the classroom.

“Try these on for size.” Touching a mole on his cheek, he bellowed

“Who am I?

Where have I come from?

Where am I going?

Why am I here?

Where do I belong?

Do I matter?

How long have I got?”

We wrote or keyed, then scrutinized his gaze.

Still as a Greek statue, he searched our faces.

“These are the most important questions of your life.”

He dropped The Republic into his briefcase.

A student raised his hand,

“When is it due?”

Poetics of Fishing

Image said, “the bare fishhook or fish scales glitters more in moonlight?”

Metaphor said, “I fish in troubled waters.”

Simile said, “you are more like a fish in troubled waters.”
Alliteration said “fishing is festive under fluorescent lamps”
Allusion said, “never fish in the belly of a fish.”
Hyperbole said, “the fish that got away was the fish for all the ages.”
Personification said, “you smile at troubled figures of speech.”
Paronomasia said, “you might smile at troubled fishes on beach.”
Paradox said, “big fish humbles, and small fish exalts.”
Metrical Rhyme said, “no fish on a dish is caught by a wish.”
Irony concluded, “those wise fish in troubled waters without bait.”
Editors replied, “in fishy poems the head always smells first.”

BAD VERSE

Three Stories

From wet we came and dust we'll be
Under this dome: soar or descend:
The office of mind's frontal view—

To bedroom spaces, passion's latest trend—

Then to the cellars of our brains,
Memories of past baggage swells.
Within these three floors—up and down—
Is where the raiding chimp or human dwells?

Ψ

Dark “Matter?” Dark Mind?

As galaxies outwardly swing,
The “mystery mass” is the thing:
They thought it was gravity
But All is a cavity—
So Physics was left holding strings.

(Parody)

Enlightenment's Descent

(For Ken Wilber)

This evolution has no rest
for I or We or It;
it's all a nest . . . in nest . . . in nest . . .
and each sifts down its grit.

Since when is height the better view
or span the viewer's quest?
I'll take the bottom's residue
and blame the upper nest!

What's at the top, the summit's peak?
There sits an empty nest?!
This is the height the gray hairs seek—
a formless Everest?

I dissent from that Ascent
and live my life unblest.
I favor one of sheer Descent,
and nest in Spirit's breast.

BLOWING SMOKE

The Six Wise Men and the Camel

These six men, quite logical,
To learning much inclined,
Had come to see a camel

(Though rumored some were blind).

The first approached the camel,
(He thought himself profound)
But pondered as he rubbed its side—
"What camel's thin and round?"

The second neared the smoother end,
And reached with probing hand.
"This does not seem like camel's hide,
but rather feels like strands."

With scorn the third approached,
And groped with finger stern.
He cried "By Jove!" and yanked it back,
With tip singed black and burned.

The fourth had eyes acute,
But muttered as he scanned—
"The smoke's so thick I cannot see—
Has anyone a fan?"

The fifth and sixth gave irate stares.
"There is no camel here!
And you who see, you best feign blind,
Or wave to your careers!"

The camel watched them buff his hearse,
And hummed the whole day through.
Old Joe and friends enlarge their purse
With smoke, or snuff, or chew.

Kánnabis Creed

Our bipeds found from dried out twigs and grass,
One plant's fanning leaves and seeds,
Tossed into flames, release a smoky gas.
Inhaled, was better than fermented mead.

They identified the serrated leaf

And in burning they all agreed:
When smoking on mountains, on plains, by reefs,
They soared above on empyrean steeds.

We worshiped this idol with incense smoke
And sanctified this divine weed.
Our eyes would water. We thought we'd choke.
But it became dogma and hallowed creed.

. . .

I'm now a triped with a decade lost.
My neurons are blocked by weed seeds.
My mind is as clear as a window's frost,
And in the rest home I live on spoon feed.

Scoop the Poop

In many parks, our canine friends
Do their business, not discreet.
With baggies posed, to make amends,
The owners scoop, upbeat.

A Western state allows an herb

For connoisseurs to grow
And sell in city or suburb
For aches or painful toe.

This ailing man, prescription filled,
Inhaled the magic smoke.
He floated out; his pain was killed;
His I-Pod played baroque.

He drifted to a nearby park,
Where others, like him, grooved.
He noticed by a fountain's arc,
A baggie left unmoved.

He glanced around and took a hit,
Then strolled to take a peek.
"Oh wow! They left their bag and split!"
It passed his glazed critique.

He packed his pipe and smoked a bowl,
Then breathed out with a sigh.
"This stuff is great!" he did extol.
"Just like the doc prescribes!"

(Praxis)

BOMBASTING

Gorge

A pompous chap, at a pig-pen,
Laughed at wallowing swine.
"Go take a pig, dress it like men,

Back in the mud he'll soon dine.”

He gored himself with shrimp and clams;
Cracked jokes this man endured.
I said “you’re really not a ham,
Because a ham can be cured.

(The Laughing Dog)

Ψ

Personal Belief Exemption

The vaccinations all arrive
From flights, box cars, and highway diesels.

Those vaccinations are prepared
To immunize from measles.

The parents who refuse those shots
Deserve to lie in beds with weasels.

Three Political Pontifications

I

The wise old owl said “I don’t give a hoot
Because their posture and cant are truly moot.
With skullduggery vows, they quibble, refute—
But each with their snoot finds the hand pledging loot.”

II

The speechwriters seek to invoke muses
To beguile the news and the masses.
Whether their speeches amuse or confuse,
Their followers bray like herds of asses.

III

The Asses of Parnassus
Spread wide across the globe.
In Washington, they bray to the masses
With speeches composed of gases,
while pontificating in Lardini robes.

Ψ

Machiavellian Maneuverer #1

He's cunning and twists fiction to fact;
Fact to fiction—a guileful act!

Deny, distort and wily deflect . . .
Make truth obscure and hard to detect

Then add some Twitter attack and misquote . . .
He then sits back and triumphantly gloats:
Someone else becomes the public's scapegoat.

Without Feathers or I Ain't A Molting Anymore

Peacocks migrate and perch in City of Magnificent Intentions on and more off each year
(since they favor recesses over Peafowl sessions, whenever flight permits.) Peacocks
promenade and pontificate about making the Great Eagle—the pioneer and founder of the
Republic of Fowls—great again.

Peacocks are known for their penetrating calls at meetings, and are always ready to fan their eye-spotted, enormously-elongated tail feathers. (They arch and display their iridescent plumage as part of pomposity rituals.) Peacocks flock in clandestine beavies, to partial out the choicest kernels of golden corn—both in domestic zones, and in their plush home nests. (Some even chirp, cluck, and broadcast fowl tweets against climate change in their climate-controlled, opulent rookeries.)

Pedigreed Peacocks are known for squabbling and pugnacious temperaments—especially when, across the Republic of Fowls, common sparrows gather and presume to twitter seditious harmonies. Some sang “Always the old birds who led us into war; always the fledglings who fought.”

Recently, across the Fowl Kingdom, thousands of sparrows sang, and some were cooped up by armies of Blue jays:

“Birds of a feather flutter together,
Regardless of alternative weather.

When tunes of truth and facts are mucked,
Common sparrows get flushed and hushed.

Though Peacocks’ pitch sinuous words,
Fine feathers still don’t make fine birds.

When tunes of truth and facts are shucked,
Common sparrows get flushed and plucked.”

Ψ

His Bouffant Speech Tells It slant

Is this politician’s rant
How truth is told slant—
To mesmerize and enchant?

His loquacious cant dazzles.
I’ll only grant, he speaks
superb surprise: truth told scant.

Crevasse Cleansing

Perps stockpile toilet paper.
Sell them steel wool, greedy rapers—

Selfish hoarders, all for themselves.
Shoppers chagrined at empty shelves.

A cardboard tube mimics in place.
(Save napkins and wipes, just in case.)

So now we search for cleansing bidets
To squirt our rumps with chilling sprays.

From my backyard I mounted a hose—
It blew out streams through my ears and nose.

The moral of this hygiene chore,
I should have thought sometime before:

A better way, which never depletes—
Roll after roll of shopping receipts!

Square by Square

Those who bank on despicable capers
Of buying truckloads of toilet paper:
Make it Law: sell them either fly paper
Or they can pay for sheets of sandpaper.

Immune Summer 2020

Seems caution has died in the past.
“It’s a free country”—front page news!
Pure impertinence! wear a mask?
Too bothersome and demeaning task.

Two feet, drink from a keg or flask
On a beach, a park, or a cruise.
Obviously, too much to ask.
See how you’ll wear an oxygen mask.

Dissent From A Vent

America grumbles about “a mask”
And packs the streets and malls in brash dissent!
Blanket the shores, smear on sunscreen, and bask!
Stand neck to neck in ignorant contempt—
Then wave a flag from your ICU tent.

ERRONEROUS EROTICA II

Mutual Bond

He complained about her frigidity;

She grumbled at his limp rigidity.
He bought her long-lasting lubricant;
Four ED pills: he rose jubilant
And trading closed into liquidity.

Ψ

Nocturnal Ambition

With creaking joints and countless pills,
Shapely girls cause no ignitions.
At night he kissed his C-PAP's lips—
Goodbye, nocturnal emissions.

In the backyard he built two tubs,
Old-spiced and combed with Vitalis.
He trolled on-line with youthful bait
And stocked Viagra, Cialis.

The evening came for her to come!
The recommended dose? Ignored.
She stood him up and never came.
Four hours swollen like a gourd.

The cause of death: "Priapism
Induced by overdose of bliss."

His epitaph, duely noted:

TOO MUCH RIGOR
TOO SOON MORTIS

Revelation, On Deck

When he was but a wee little nipper,
He fancied loving a disco stripper.

Summer nights, looking at the Big Dipper—
On my yacht, I'll be her mate and skipper.

At 21 he entered her club (quite chipper.)
Plaster her with drinks. She'll love a lavish tipper.

He bought Zacapa rum, proposed to strip her,
But she yawned—being a dried-out, soda sipper.

Downing his bottle, he rose. I best skip her.

. . .

Under the stars, he watched the Big Dipper...

Passed out. Dreamt he gave her a golden slipper,
But she hung him with an oversized zipper.

He awoke on an upper parking deck...
I'll never find my love at a discotheque.

Feline Proxy

To use an archaic word, I opined
As I finished my bottle of port wine,
In an apartment parking lot, so still,
That autumn evening, south of Chapel Hill.

I sat on a curb, washed in neon light,
Watching the sky darken from dusk to night
And at empty beer cans set in a row.
A shadow approached with eyes amber aglow—

I almost stroked “What in the hell is that?”
I caught my breath. “It’s only a black cat.”
It rubbed my leg, looked up with pleading head—
Did it want to be caressed or be fed?

I laid back and looked at the Pleiades,
Quelled an urge to buy and drink antifreeze,
Chagrined at being, once more, second best.
I placed the cat upon my pining breast.

I stroked its back and rubbed behind its ears.
It purred so loud my eyes welled up with tears—
The girl I saw before in Chapel Hill:
She had a dude and gave me the Big Chill.

Betty And Me

She’s faithful, cute, and forever young.
She cuddles my face and fastens on tight.
Her panting breath fills my mouth and lungs.
We cuddle and clinch throughout the night.

Sleep became easy—we clasp and snooze,
Good enough for Betty C-PAP and me.
As she wails out her rhythm and blues,
We spend every night in fidelity

When we get up and stagger to pee,
There's no time to waste and unstrap, untwine—
The six-foot tube hangs below my knees,
And it sways back and forth, elephantine.

That night the bladder was drained and quelled,
So in the dark hall we snuck to the bed.
My wife jumped up to the ceiling and yelled
Such a shriek! a ghost or ghoul would drop dead.

Three's a crowd in the marital bed—
My wife does not find me much of a hunk,
When I wear Betty strapped to my head
And I snort and snore through my C-PAP trunk.

MUSINGS ON MY FAITH

After Death:

“From dust we came and dust we'll be”
The atheists' mantra—

As worms sing chords
Of jubilee.

The rest: wish immortality
With some jolly Santa,
And hell is for
The devil's devotees—
But never for good folks
Like you or me.

(Veil: Journal of Darker Musings)

Ψ

Ardipithecus or Adam?

From Adam's rib or tree-top branch?
I came from God or Darwin's perch?
I think I'd rather come from mud,
Than swing to earth from some tall birch.

From Eden's fruit? African plains?
Primordial soup or Heaven's hill?
My chimpanzee brain has to choose:
Better wet dust than Monkey Ville.

Ψ

Those Churches

"Churches are filled with hypocrites,"
As if they fill pulpits and warm pews.
I'm glad that those outside, emit
Their words and deeds, impeccably true.

Go Figure

Virgin Birth? As real as Rudolph's glowing red nose.
(Scoffers dub, "Seasonal Delusional Syndrome.")

God made the universe,
so why would common sense oppose,

He implanted a virgin teen
with an Y chromosome?

Ψ

Biblos

The Greek Bible is veiled to me
and Hebrew words enigmatical.
The King James' use of "Thou" and "thee"
is not the text historical.

What is this book of ancient notes?
Billions think "mythological,"
what superstitious people wrote
in fear and made canonical.

So fools believe the Gospel's words
With Bibles raised hysterical,
who rant and pray like lost drunkards
and speak of things delusional.

I am a fool and at a loss
To claim what's most illogical:
That God was once nailed on a cross.
I guess I'm pathological.

Preaching to the Choir

It is a most familiar view,
Sitting in a choir loft's pew.
The preacher's back, and head of hair
Differs from his pulpit's flair.

Though the Word of God declares
Which way to go; which way beware—
I read the anthem, and review
My bass line verse: I wish I knew.

Ψ

A Postmodernism Anachronism

What is this force, theologians name sin?
They say the world winks at it—and grins.
It cuts through the surface, a dorsal fin
But hides underneath, hunting deep within.

My smart phone rings—my identical twin.
I'm a good man and have no stock in sin;
A moral man with no cause for chagrin.
So what is circling under my skin?

Ψ

Not Me

I am insulted—you presume “Repent?”
As if I'm under Sin's dominion?
To resist its evanescent scent,
I wed my couch, dreamily content
And view my shows in oblivion.
A Revelation

Nonsense: Armageddon?
Beating of biblical drums;
Gibberish from quill pens.

Then the biopsy call comes.

Ψ

A Revelation Sticky

The Armageddon of the soul
Is soundless, bloodless, night or day—
Assault, retreat, advance again
As Seraphim and Gog vie and foray.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat
Spreads wide across my office desk.
A yellow sticky pad invites.
Armageddon at stake? Surely you jest.

Ψ

The Mask

Sin wears a cherubic mask
And beams forth paradise.
“Come in, recline, and bask.”
The discerning eye looks twice:
The gate shuts into a vice.

Not Like Them

Really, Lord, you said “Love your enemies”
But I have none I scorn.
So I have no need for such remedies;
No malice I have sworn.

I'm not like them, those bitter, vengeful men—
“Hate to love and love to hate.”
I'm good at heart (not like that Publican.)
My tithe is never late.

There are none who hate, spitefully use me.
I'm glad I'm not like them.
I think I'll sip fruity Hibiscus tea,
And watch the news. Amen.

Ψ

Questions from an Unenlightened Westerner

Some claim to believe in reincarnation—
The soul's karma determines its rebirth
Over and over in transmigration—
Soaring above or creeping on the earth.

How does a soul, who in previous life,
Lived bad karma and became a cockroach,
Under a sink found his antennae wife—
Raise his soul to become a fitness coach?

Ψ

Dead Atheists Society

Scoff on: Voltaire, Rousseau, and Marx;
Nietzsche, Russell, Hoffer and Rand:
“This god, this one word: I,” Rand said.
Their God is king in fairy-land!

(The Teacher said of human life
“All is a chasing of the wind.”)
There is no God! Hallow the Self.
The Prince of darkness danced and grinned.

In Conclusion

The calendar is the illusion of my delusion
That my life is probable and eludes confusion.

I and my dream of order were in collusion,
Until I plowed into a school bus. Disillusioned,

As bandages covered cracked ribs and contusions,
And after days hospitalized, bills proliferated in profusion.

Now as I see and plan my calendar, in conclusion,
What is predictable is optical illusion.

Ψ

Withering Heights

Last night I wore glasses in the shower;
How did shaving cream appeared in my ear?
I missed my colonoscopy by an hour.

At least I know I am always here.

I spent a day hunting for car keys;
I found them downstairs inside a shoe...
Then mixed blueberries and Cheerios

For tonight's Brunswick stew.

I live in bliss and perpetual Zen.
Who cares where I mislaid shampoo?
I found a travel agent in Nigeria,
And booked a river cruise

Around Katmandu.

REQUIEM ON POESY

Camena Interrupta

The measured words of poetry
Rise round the mystic sphere,

Sift through the dirt or sing divine
In strains that soothe or sear.

But now the stanzas halt and freeze:
Eternity is stilled—
The dog looks guilty at the door
The poet's muse is chilled.

Goodbye “the crescent in the sky
Reaping a horde of crows,”
Holding his breath, he scoops the mess.
The muse must hold her nose.

(Lighten Up Online)

Ψ

When Words Become Fluid

When words become fluid,
the way wetness wells
between us so slippery,
under full moon
luminosity,

they flow on every page—
torrents of passion
to droplets of pause—
having just the right
viscosity.

A Poem Should not be but Mean

My poem is who I was.
Let's name it—linguistic fuzz.

“A poem should be wordless”—what?
Its words should sprinkle, not glut.

Close the screen or shut the page:
What matters is what it does.

Ψ

Poetical Dissent

“Vanity,” he confessed, “not avarice, is my ruling passion.”
—A. E. Housman

I protest! Who dares claim poets are vain?
Such effrontery, we justly disdain!
As we hone each poetical shape and phrase,
Our egos shrug editorial praise.

We politely attend at open mikes
(Never muse about sex or mountain hikes)
And suppress the urge to show envious looks
For poets who read from glossy chapbooks.

Every Poet Is Narcissus

When the poem is finally filled
with image, and metaphor frilled,

we gaze and bask at perfected reflection
(dazzled by texture and glittery complexion)

and glance at it over and over—
it grows on us like a four-leafed white clover
then we hit SUBMIT.

. . .

Nemesis, squirming and saddle sore
from reading pages of submissions,
squinting at the screen's pitiless glare,
eyes stinging from amateur emissions,

e-mails the polite rejection,
imagining Echo's question

“Who's there?”

Pygmalion's Statuesque Bust

From a mammoth tusk
he saws, chisels, carves,
grooves, engraves, and
fashions a woman his height
of snow-white ivory.

Sanding and polishing done,
He gazes at her faultless form,
consumed and smitten by her
pouting smile and open arms.
He strokes her naked form
and his heart pulses quicker.
He pictures her made of flesh
as fingertips stroke her sides,
trace her forehead and cheeks,
touch her virgin breast—yet
blushes as if the slight pressure
might bruise her fair contour—
glances around, then stares musing
at her bashful eyes. Tenderly
he leans, embraces, kisses her
cold white lips, soon warming.
Breath quickens. Pygmalion
shows it to sculptors who point
a few flaws and imperfections,
which he finishes late into the night.

Next morning he lights incense
at the table altar and sends
his offering to Venus and her council,
who judge from ivory towers in the clouds,
waits until the moon's horns
nine times meet at the full.

At long last, along with Orpheus,
Venus and masthead sang
“No pulse throbbing under your thumb.”
Pygmalion dried a tear, draped
and stored his mute ivory statue
with hundreds of other busts.

Dipsomaniac Versification

He fancied himself as a sonneteer—
Absorbing Milton, Spencer and Shakespeare.
The backyard porch was his screen-shaped scope:
There a Mantis preyed on a railing slope.

A fly landed, a few inches away.
It stroked bulbous eyes, and primmed winged array.
The Mantis arched near, raptorial legs sheer
And lunged to clamp—but the fly sprung clear.

What Colossus, Universal Truth is gleaned
As the Mantis' mandibles are scraped, preened...
The fly slurps on a fish head at Crystal Pier...
When autumn frosts both—towards the end of the year?

The end of this moral should be blatantly clear:
Sonneteering is not refined by quaffing beer.

Ψ

Sagacity Rebuked

He thought his poems buoyant and zephyrous.
The editor's note was obstreperous:
"Your zealous hyperbole,
Disportional,ity,
Has made your consistency leprous."

Ψ

Here Lies One Witless

What would I want hewed as my epitaph?
An engraved rhyme? On bronze plaque?
On wooden cross, lettered black
"A momentary setback"?

The viewer, in a somber mood, likes wit.
A poetry critic was grave:
"Stubbled verse rated a shave.
For once he's learned to behave."