

Twittering the Dead: Advice From Oracles

Contributed by Oracles et Inquisitors

Without dying, the closest anyone will ever get to death is life. Life is the first and most important step towards not-life. Too much time has been devoted to learning what's waiting at the end of this corporeal period. Instead, we've reached out to those at the end of the road for guidance in the what about here and how about now of our days. These, our mother poets, birthed us with their songs and even now they have little time, much more work to do. Brilliance in brevity, in walking heavy, packing light: we twitter and they twitter back. This is the digital age for us all.

Poets, with their subversive temperament and low tolerance for the mundane, don't believe questions need answers. Answers are uncertain absolutes, shaky verbs demanding to be nouns. The Inquisitors have stuck their fingers into the Poet Oracles' afterlife pie. Many pointers, the old printer's friend, were lost searching for good-boy plums, many fresh cherries popped scalding those nearby. Poet Oracles say what they mean to say with the words like breadcrumbs they left behind. Insatiably we set out to devour, to leave no morsel or way back (carb-free=zero guilt).

Gods have been known to tear out one of their eyes for wisdom. Here the pupil has reached into the warm face of a poem and torn out the line. Though the body is dead, the head survives. We are the furthest from death in the breath/breadth of poetry. Life is not the end; and even if it were we'd burn it into a new bird, a brighter only child.

(Some of these poets are at a very much alive stage of Oraclehood. This is fine, of course. An American like Steven Spielberg can be knighted by the Queen of England. A poet like Mark Doty need not be a ghost to give wisdom.)

For a list Oracles and Inquisitors, [click here](#)

A TWITTERING OF POETS

Â Why do some words make me feel uncomfortable?

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"Rub her coke."

Â Â What should I write about right now?

"The silence"Â Â Why didn't I talk to my father?

"I suffocate and I write I write/I write to please them"Â I need an image for a story. Can you give me one?

"Meaningless. The main thing is you're going to get married."

Should I marry for money?

"To the investigation of the Mercure de France, the Journal des gens de Maison replies with a counter-investigation of employers, and we are told some fine tales!"Â Â What is the worst part about being a woman?

"Because it is foolish.Â It is very foolish to be wrong."Â Â What is addiction?

"We shall not all sleep / But we shall be changed"Â Â Do we need both ears?

"It's easy to wear yourself out when you have central heating."Â When will the Palestinians have their own State?

"Incontinent the void.Â The zenith.Â Everything again.Â When not night it will / be evening.Â Death again of deathless day.Â On the one hand embers.Â On / the other ashes.Â Day without end won and lost.Â Unseen."

Â Â When will the Palestinians have their own State?

"Yes, but what about us?"Â I'm afraid I have terrible problems. I can't say them in public. What should I do?

"Don't wake the clown / Or he may knock you down."Â Â How do you start a holiday?

Â "The immaculate / conception/of the inaudible bird / occurs / in gorgeous reticence"Â Â What is there to celebrate?

"for some reason I recollect some tune/a tune like the chain gang sings in the winter a slow blues"

Â Where does a poem begin?

"I dreamed that the other one was in the heavens / it was Pluto and I dreamed it before the planet was discovered"Â Â What is the enemy of poetry?

"if you do not carry them within your soul, / if your soul does not raise them up before you."Â Â When should I give up writing poetry?

"Arise then and go the manifest unanswerable--
Groans"Â Â How do I experience everything?

"Bob Dylan Bob Creeley Bob Rosenthal Bob on Sesame Street. / Oh I can't think of any other Bobs right now.
garbage."Â Â How were you able to masturbate after losing your favored arm?

"To me, this gesture excused nothing, and I did not bother to question him about it, for I could not understand this strange moral courage that had made him act in this perverse way..."Â Â Do suicidal people want something other than simply to die?

"We prayed that we would never have / to pray again."Â Â Why do poets visit me in my dreams?

"An unusually handsome lad, a tailor's employee / (on Sundays an amateur athlete) / stood holding a parcel."Â Â Why does love play games with geography?

"my pussy / is no wussy / or a sissy / don't you kiss me / on my mouth"

Â Â How can I channel the voice of Frank O'Hara this week?

"Nothing remains after all /Â but this ash on the lips / this taste of ash in the mouth / forever"Â Â How can I channel the voice of Frank O'Hara this weekend?

"Bleed on the windows OK? I need some sleep."Â Â When have you come closest to meeting the devil?

"A man can only live by absolutely / Forgetting he's a man like other folk"Â Â What is addiction?

"A riot among friends"Â Â What is Opiate?

"Death & the Arkansas River"Â Â Will I ever finish that long poem about Iraq and Palestine?

"The goddess stands in front of her cave."Â
When can I go home?

"There goes another geese on his way home / to death / blam blam"

Â Â What is the problem with mankind?

"a succession of catastrophes caused by the all too lively participation of the lower classes."Â Â Why do some of your poems turn toward ugliness right at the peak of their lyricism?

"Inside every Rimbaud was a ready-made dead-letter officer. Who really mailed the letter? Who stole the signs?"Â Â Why bother to write poetry?

"Eventually the birds must land."

Â TWITTERING CONTINUES

I'm having trouble placing a couple of details about the leprosarium--where should I put them?

"There, upon the clay of stones / Memory has deposited / like a shipwreck reddish with pinks / Like an ossuary of loves."
Â Â How will the day end?

"I don't know, any more than then, when I used to say, from within, or from without, from the coming night or from under the ground"Â Â How will the day end?

"A woman's love / is like / the morning dew / it's just as apt / to fall on / a radiant horseturd / as on a rose."Â Â How healthy will I be in the next four months?

"Madame, I think Monsieur Nijinsky is ill, or perhaps very drunk, for he acts so queerly. His voice is hoarse and his eyes all hazy. I am frightened."Â Â Would it have made any difference?

"The bad smell he smelt was the smell of himself."Â Â Why did you choose Surrealism over Dadaism?

"I will walk naked and carry a cane."

Â How's the afterlife?

"If your heart says so / we'll turn on the streetlights / we'll chit-chat / loving's not everything / We've still got to hang ourselves"Â How should I begin writing about silence?

"Let's say God in his High Heaven is hungry and has decided to make himself some tuna fish sandwiches. He's already finished making two of them, on sourdough, before he realizes that the fish is bad. What is he going to do with these sandwiches? They're already made, but he doesn't want to eat them."Â Â What was it died in my oven?

"It was like a public execution! Everyone there to witness the slaughter of art and happiness."Â Â You think I should get a tattoo?

"and we were already, / in her lyric, contained. / This is what imagination / must do, isn't it, find a form?"Â Â What should America do with the Guantanamo bay detainees?

"However, is there anything human without imperfection? / And, after all, look, we are going forward."Â Â Did my father ever love my mother?

"And so always, then the impossibility of my knowing"Â Â Did my father ever love my mother?

"I live there with you"Â Â Should I open that pack of cigarettes I have hidden in the back of the drawer?

"I find it difficult to imagine you / in bed, making love to a woman..."Â Â Will I ever feel well rested again?

"Morrow of a caterpillar in evening dress means: butterfly. / Breast of the crystal means: a decanter."Â Â Is there intelligent life other than us people?

"I see a narrow strip of darkness there and a little love. And then I see a large T, which means the treachery of a woman."Â How do we live together? Can we?

"A countryman, who was a witness of the encounter, came to the assistance of the eagle, and succeeded in freeing him from the Serpent and enabling him to escape. In revenge, the Serpent spat some of his poison into the man's drinking-horn."

Â Where do babies really come from?

"THE SHE-GOATS having obtained a beard by request to Jupiter"Â Â Where do babies really come from?

"the sofa behind the table."Â Tell me what you like.

"A temptation any temptation is an exclamation if there are misdeeds and little bones."Â Â Where should I start?

"It is sometimes possible to put the fallen petal back / On the flower. You can make something be all right again, though / Men, realists, & pessimists may deny this, experience affirms it."

Â How do I talk about her?

"An unreconstructed something or other. If you're shaking a little / again it's the kind / Of shaking that keeps you steady."Â Â What about over illness or age?

"TO your blushing we shout the obscenities, we scream the blasphemies that you, being weak, whisper alone in the dark."Â I am writing about death.Â Frank help.

"You have to remember these are the memories / Of a survivor, you have to remember."Â Â How do you vision people?

"How long will my mind remain in this wasteland. / Wherever I turn my eyes, wherever I may look / I see black ruins of life here"Â What should I write about today?

"Monkeys and judges prefer to keep silent."Â Â How can I channel O'Hara's voice?

"I don't really blame you for being dead but you can't have your sweater back"Â Â When?

"a touch of reason:Â â€"Why do you ask me? Is it that the level way through the desert is closed?"Â Â Do we need a revolution

"She will say that you are abusing her house, she will chase you out, and you will have to go once more and drink alone on the terraces of the cafes"Â Â What is addiction?

"As if wish Evolution, / some esoteric union / of Mission and gin-mill / must breed eventually / someones more amenable / to ecstasy"

What is Opiate?

"Women in uniform"Â Â What is Opiate?

"I measure out my life with a steamshovel. / Come dusk I hang 10"Â Â What Cure?

"The Home Movie Of Those Who Are Dead Now"Â Â Poem?Â Â Will it be about the leprosarium?

"The hermit does not expect the Land to emerge from its well without surprise at the appointed / hour of dawn / No.Â Â One day at noon, it will come!"Â Â Poem?Â Â Will it be about the leprosarium?

"The public city's / ledgered and locked, but the secret city's boundless; / from which do these tumbling towers arise?"Â Â What is DeWitt's greatest ambition?

"I mean to drift down a river, / sans shirt or shame! To start / fires, count the seconds between / thunder claps!"Â Â Will an MFA kill the poet in me?

"From this it will perhaps be suspected: / that the inversion affected, not the order of the sentences, / but that of words only;"

Â Â How long will Chowder live a happy dog life?

"it seems advisable that the little that is known, on this subject, should be said."

Â Â Will I have children?

"her married life was one long drawsheet"Â Â How can we all get famous?

"You saw Courageous Caesar next / You know what he became. / They defied him in his life / Then had him murdered just the same."Â Â How do I know if I'm not doing it right?

"if I ever want to part from myself, the exit is on this side and, I add mischievously, the entrance, the re-entrance is on the other."

Â Â The shape or the hole?

"The elusive angle of a curtain"Â Â What is great about mankind?

"I am in search of, not the Lion himself"Â Â What is great about mankind?

"In becoming a soldier, her son has not been lost, he is merely in danger."Â Â What's good about contracts?

"The desire for imaginary benefits often involves the loss of present blessings."Â Â Tell me what I long to hear.

"I love you as a sheriff searches for a walnut / That will solve a murder case unsolved for years."Â Â Why do you write?

"Your book on a hook dangling off the roof / attracted a white horse to the door."

Â Â Is it better to take care of myself?

"Alone, I rush across / raining sidewalks with no umbrella"Â Â What do you have to say about the 2012 prophesies?

Â Â "I saw the red moon too"Â Â What do you have to say about the 2012 prophesies?

Â Â "I've got no time to unscrew points, / I'll just be there Tuesday, that's all, / and from which direction is anybody's guess"Â Â What does Christmas mean to you?

"I got good and drunk in the dark"

Â What is left to give?

"What kind of knife are you needing she asked / I'm needing one that'll touch bottom"Â Â What is left to give?

"the obscene hole people dig when they die."

If you could fly anywhere, where would you go?

"home drunk and stoned"Â Â The French Foreign Legion a good option for me after the MFA?

"There we go, bust again"Â Â Should I never have recovered from Mardi Gras?

"you wouldÂ / be jolted / if you ever sawÂ / my dreams"Â Â Should I never have recovered from Mardi Gras?

Â "And all around me the words sneak on tiptoe / and stifle me / when I try to catch them. / I cannot kill them / but they're killing me."Â Â Should I buy a Sailboat?

"You could have had a pocket / of wolfbane, of gold codpieces, of a / pair of peacock-blue stockings worn by H.D."Â Â Where will the bullet come from?

"The Lion himself"Â Â Where is there to hide?

"Alive and stinking, you mean?"Â Â Who was your first kiss?

"lambs from the neighboring flocks"Â Â What is the best way to relieve awkwardness?

"With a cloudless brightness / Surround our absences"Â Â What is the best way to relieve awkwardness?

"imagine the future / sunlight falls on Paris / I am alone there is no / one whose love is perfect / man has been mad man's / love is not perfect I"Â Â How can I open myself up to the ghost transmissions around me?

"We must learn that our lips are not our own. A revolution is a savage education"

Â How can the poet separate between his writing and the rest of his life?

[blank page]Â Â What makes a long poem long?

"A libation"

Where am I right now?

"NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES / PERMITTED IN THIS PARK / Here that? / DONNA'S PUSSY GOES STRIAGHT / What idiot thought of that?"

Â Â And what should I tell people when they ask me about my â€˜plans'?

"A dancing bear left the village square and went to piss against a wall."Â Â Whoever sleeps with me next is going to get a fuck they don't deserve. Jeffrey knows what I am talking about, right, Jeffrey?

Â "you stuck your tongue out / & I felt infinity / filling my ear / like rock & roll."Â Â Why don't I learn?

"The sea cries but the sea soon fades"Â Â How do Dayflies know they're dying?

"And when you reach your peak, Caesar at last, / when you take on the form of a famous man / then above all take heed as you go out on the street"

When am I going to do my taxes cause Cavafy's poem the "Ides of March" just reminded me?

"Naturally you will speak of his poems-- / but speak of his beauty too, / of his delicate beauty that we loved"

Â Â Where will I find comfort?

"When I fought in the war, she fought, when I got up / she got up too, and when I sank / she began to sink with me."Â Â Where will I find comfort?

"As for you, the river / that isn't there is the same one / you could drown in, face down."Â Â Do you think chimpanzees are

manifestations of a supreme creator?

"Yet even then, in that hour of supreme agony, Our Merciful Redeemer had pity for mankind"Â Â Is there any point in sleeping with the girl in the red shirt?

"We have labored for decades for this moment. All it requires now is your co-operation; for sufficient quantities of Tea are not, at this moment in time, available to us"

Â Yes, yes, but will I stumble and fuck her?

"Wittgenstein nodded thoughtfully. It is true, he said, that I have sometimes wished myself to be a member of no nation"... The Poets

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Â THE ORACLES

Aesop
Yehuda Amichai
Margaret Atwood
W. H. Auden
Samuel Beckett
Ted Berrigan
Frank Bidart
Bertolt Brecht
Andre Breton
Ciaran Carson
C. P. Cavafy
Blaise Cendrars
Mark Doty

Allen Ginsberg
Edouard Glissant
Max Jacob
James Joyce
Paul Klee
Jennifer Knox
Kenneth Koch
Mina Loy
Jeffery Miller
Alice Notley
Matthew Rohrer
Jaroslav Seifert
Richard Siken
Philippe Soupault
Jack Spicer
Frank Stanford
Gertrude Stein
Diane Wakoski
Â Â

Â THE INQUISITORS

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Will Burke
James Claffey
Mel Coyle
Karin deGravelles
Susan Kirby-Smith

Ben Lowenkron
Jenn Nunes
Kristin Sanders

Jordan Soyka