The Dial
Dalliances with False Surmise
Volume I: January 2017

Featured Poets

Christopher Bacavis
Chris is a writer, editor, and researcher living in Colorado Springs. His works have been featured in Empirical Magazine, The Penwood Review, and Riverrun. He has an abiding interest in religion and free markets, and more of his work can be found on his personal blog, Poemunition.

Morgan A. Brown
Morgan is the editor of The Dial and the voice of The Culture & Anarchy Podcast. He lives in Dallas, GA, and enjoys a life of philosophical contemplation, historical analysis, and literary criticism outside of the academy.

Troy E. Camplin
Camplin is a prolific poet and the author of Diaphysics, an interdisciplinary work on systems philosophy. He is steeped in the theories of spontaneous order from the Austrian Economist, Friedrich A. Hayek, and his most recent poetry can be found on his blogs Thyme and Time Again and Interdisciplinary World.

A.A. Learmont
Learmont is a native of Georgia who seeks to recover the wit and wisdom of traditional poetic forms.

Meister Nereus
Hailing from Cardiff in Wales, Nereus is a modern transcendentalist and experimentalist with English verse forms.

The Dial is produced by The Culture & Anarchy Podcast, which brings you the best in libertarian, anarchist, and freethinking criticism on a weekly basis.

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Ed. Morgan A. Brown
The Dial

A Magazine

For

Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion

Volume I,

Dalliances with False Surmise

“DA FACILEM CURSUM ATQUE AUDACIBUS ANNUE CÆPTIS”

ED. MORGAN A. BROWN

JANUARY 2017
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2017

Printed by Lulu.com


Inscription source:

Someone desired you once, which makes me know
it is permissible to long for you.

Though we may discard our search of old,
it is like the mountain with its veins hiding gold
yet where no one wants to dig anymore,
and where one day the river will wash it forth,
the one mining deep
amidst silent stones.

Though we may not like it,
God grows.

--RANIER MARIA RILKE, 1875-1926

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PROEM

The bloodstain’d muses turned and long forsook
The poet’s pen; Chapman’s old Grecian books
By leaden cantos since have been replaced.
Daun Maro, Milton, Chaucer, and Dante
Were melt for trinkets and for gleaming kine,
As rhapsodes pawned the prophaned art divine.
Swift on their heels Ferrara’s courtly bards
Obeisance made at Duke Alfonso’s charge
And fenced their papers for the learned jake
Whose blest Republick, knelt to Pluto blake;
Thence Spenser, Pope, and Dryden in their deaths
Revitalized blind Homer’s choice of breadth;
And yet more cantos spun by Ezra Pound
Did far less entertain than did confound.
The epic by the commonplace usurped—
The death of classics moored the darker berth
Of Self-Romance, where sanctimony mills
Betwixt each morpheme and each syllable.
Th’oral formulaic, passé composed,
Was serfed to Poesie’s infundated prose;
The highbrow wits of both disgruntled mills
Now set their stores in worsted words and frills,
For e’en a Fleckno’s crowned a king of state,
Where sots are bayes billed at the highest rate.
Poesie is mute, now bound and shelved in piles;
Moth-eaten rags shroud Poesie’s couture style,
Dressed down to fashions of the mendicant;
And wit, the erstwhile fop, is frapped and whipped.
Confessions found their place; the world was charged
With blessing oafish rhapsodes, by and large,
Who proffered to the altars of their Liege
Huge mounds of compost, de/composed with ease.
The Ancients and high Moderns shake their heads.
Quoth they: “Why did we toil? Was it for this?”
The bold Confessors squint their drowsy eyes;
Conscious in Class, they just can’t recognize
Their forebears for their toils, but they confess
Their sins and tribulations nonetheless.
A war is struck for nothing less than Fate,
And Poesie’s at the heart of the debate.
The spears are cast over the vacant grounds
Of mulish Eliot’s mythic compound.
As such, outmoded verses (young and old)
Hurrah the greatest romance ever told.
I have read of the marcescent blossom, which clings to the autumn twig
Ever after it flowers and withers, and how desperately it persists.
How it withers without falling; in a sense, collapsing back upon its calyces
To find itself in shadow of a shade, cast in the darkness of its parent tree.

The Heavens declared the glory of war, and History showed its handiwork,
Day unto day while Senators uttered speech, and night to night volleyed knowledge.
Hence, the Heavens parted with a curtain of fire while the brimstone pastors preached,
And rained with an almost visible hatred upon the hapless tenants of foreign sod
In an Age where wars are fought high in the heavens,
No more by gods.

Never again the old man’s pslams sung each-to-each;
No more a buckler burnished by the Sun;
No more vague visions explained to the disbelief of Chaldean ministers.
Never again the Sibylline prophecy
And the horn of our salvation on a Cumæn papyrus leaf,
Or a visionary Tower leaning towards the stars;

    Never again the glory of War.

King David’s lyre is stilled, as is blind Homer’s chord.
Lichens creep around the bole where Absalom is hanging;
And his upstart glory, a pall, now passes as a sort of transcendent shadow
Dragged around an ageless wall, circumscribing the present.

A kinder Age was s’posed to come to bear for each extinct.
But Miseries seize the golden spokes and churn Dame Fortune’s wheel.
I see, coming over its hump, our Age; I see walls falling,
    and chaos in the streets.
Yesterday: the mending of threads on an Abyssinian tapestry.
    And now a cluster bomb is falling.
Ploughshares lie encrusted in rust, abandoned,
And the tillage untended by its usual Master
In a blasted farmhouse near Diyala.
Never again a triumphal procession, ambling through the arches of Byzantium.

But there are nightly prayers which are whispered over the corpses of the dead
Who are yet unaware that they are dying, withering beneath these skies of fire
    and lead
    Which are falling.
And the blood still fresh on these commended bones declare as ours:
The consortiums of folly that were Greece and the travesties of Rome.

Before us goeth the grim-faced tribesmen, battle-hardened,
Bearing the black acacia box on tanned shoulders, two cubits long,
    Inlaid with rings and gilded all without.
They sway lazily to the left and to the right, and sing their tribe’s sonorous song,
Jostling the sacred contents of their ark, still gasping from the recent rout.
Onward they march toward the unknown destination,
Hidden from them in the darkening mirk;
And before them lies a world in Desolation,
Where the Shadow of their own Souls bristles and smirks.

I beg of you, now sing for me, you ballad-spinsters,
A happy psalm to mark this Age of ours.

Point out to me the glory:
How the hiemal months pandered and passed,
And the chidden leaves slept where they willed,
Still cleaving to the vestiges of headstrong youth;

Perched, as it were, upon a deathly sill.

Or sing how the threshing breeze benumbed the roots
Of every blossom still clutching to the twig.
Sing of this and sing no more the dirge of war
For we are withering on a renewed sprig—

Withering, but not falling.
The Culture of Children

Troy E. Camplin

I’ve tried to find adults, but they all fled
From college, work, and high schools – they’re all dead,
Much like the gods of old –
I find but puppy days, demands, and dread –
There’s no one left who’s bold.

We need to take our sons at age thirteen
Into the terror forests where we’ll wean
Them from the sweated milk
And drum them into men with virtue’s mean,
Away from vice’s silk.

A ritual for daughters, too, to bring
Them into womanhood – we need to sing
Of love and due respect,
Responsibility that brings the Spring
Of wisdom to reflect.

And once we’ve brought adulthood back, we’ll find
Behavior problems fade like mist, the mind
Now cosmopolitan
No longer child-deaf and child-blind
Our lives can now begin.

The Flight of Western Youth

A.A. Learmont

I

My child! My child!
You cannot rise,
You’ve yet to eat your greens.
Why have you that abhorrèd gleam
Within your morbid eye?
You cannot rise,
You’ve yet to eat your greens.
And you have so much more to view
Within a world tailored for you—
Suited to your apt mind:
My child! My child!
You cannot leave—
You’ve yet to eat your greens!

II

I’ve had my fill with all these greens:
Ethics and philosophy,
Metaphysics and ontology,
Linguistics and etymology,
And all those vapid greens.
Politics and sexuality,
Skepticism and doxologies,
Factories and universities,
And all these soggy greens—
I’ve had my fill to eat.

III

The child rises without mam’s say
And skips the path away.
He bounds over the city streets
And gamin tap the savage beat
To pound throughout the midnight streets,
Each seedling shedding green.
Yont the ashen walls and butcheries,
Past the Law and Civil Liberties—
Beyond the graying burghs they teem
And howl for their release
From all these vapid greens.
The Thrush

Meister Nereus

A spotted Thrush renews its swarthy wings
And stirs the azure heavens; there, the Wind
Assumes the load.

She scurries through the foam
That fills the earth with drink and quaffs the loam.

The Gourmand:

A Farewell Redress (20 January 2017)

A.A. Learmont

He made his toast to world peace
Before indulging deep in drink,
Then prayed for world hunger’s sake;
Meanwhile, he filled his dinner plate
And sucked the marrows of public weal,
Discoursing o’er his loathsome meal;
Thought I, how much better we all would eat
If we, like he, could dine on human suffering.

Dear Uncle

Chris Bacavis

To begin with,
I woke up thinking
man, this has got to be my lucky day,
even though I was in prison
for my birthday.

And sure enough,
my parole went through.

It's got a stipulation on it, though:
can’t drink no alcohol,
so I’ll have to stop drinking altogether
because they can make me take
a piss test (I am pretty sure, anyway).

I think I’m going to stop drinking anyways
because all it does
is get me into trouble.

Going to see if I can get some government aid in becoming an underwater welder, a highly paid skill that has always been my dream.

Man, I can’t wait to get out and start going fishing and swimming and things.

I plan on stopping smoking; my asthma can’t take it.

And, besides, I ain’t getting any younger.

The Man with the Flag Tattoo

A.A. Learmont

The tag on his big left toe declared his name in full: 

SAM. As in, Sam I Am. Green eggs and Ham.

And it left a blank space for his age.

Height: 6 feet. He had a single tattoo
of a star-spangled banner flapping across his breast,
white thickets of hair in strange little patterns to demarcate his
fuzzy man-tits.

Wife: unknown. Children: The information
does not compute. Religion?

Most likely he was a Presbyterian, for a little gold cross
of cubic zirconium inlays, and a circle around,
rests atop the star-spangled flag flapping across his saggy
breasts.

Pete said he was old. Pete spoke of SAM in the police report
like they’d known each other (he guessed) for something like
years,
with a certain measure of awe and respect.

As if when Pete spoke of SAM, he spoke not of someone
dead.

But SAM didn’t move if he could hear what Pete said.

Pete confirmed that they were fine. Successful.

Not at all inclined to these fatal devices.

Ralph says that SAM didn’t move
even when Pete talked about him over his corpse
and awaited the information from the pale-faced Coroner.

And Ralph knows better than John what it is that he now
needs to do:
to siphon out all of the red and replace everything inside with
embalming fluid.

enlarged fishing hooks
to pull your brain out through your nose.” John laughs,
reading the short police report.

“The Old man,” John chuckles, “named SAM. ‘As in Sam I am, or green eggs and ham.’ They actually wrote that in the police report. And right here it says: ‘Old man found dead.’”

“No shit,” Ralph cuts in. “I can see that for myself.”

“Found dead…” John echoes.

“Boy, are ya mocking me?” Ralph’s sarcasm drips.

“You shouldn’t swear before the dead,” John says.

“Fuck you…” Ralph mutters under his breath.

“Found dead along the Vegas strip with five thousand dollars in his back right pocket.”

“Just his luck. He came to gamble away a wad of cash and ransomed his life away instead.”

Ralph takes up a knife and pumps the I.V. like he’s going to carve and glaze a Thanksgiving turkey.

“Kind of ironic, ain’t it?”

“That’s not the half of it,” John continues.

“Casino said he’d won the money playing at roulette.”

“Which casino?”

“Says here: ‘The Apache Heights.’”

“I know the place. Big Indian muther owns the joint. I knew him way back when in grade school.”

“Yah. Police report says old SAM here got hisself into a fight, swearin’ to God and Heaven above and all the like… anyway, the cops threw him outta the casino for conduct unbecoming a grown American man like SAM.”

“That’s weird. Was he drunk?”

“Says here: no trace of ALC found.”
“Hmmph…I wunner what chapped his flabby ass…”
“Old people are funny like that,” John says. “They snap.”

Hair color: **White**. Volume displaced when placed into a vat of heavy water:

**Results inconclusive.** “I had a senile dog that went crazy like that.

Name of Patches…”

“What else does the report say?”

Still had his wallet on him. Not a dollar missing.
A smile on his face, like he’d played a game of hide-and-go-seek and he’d won.”

Ralph gives John a queer look.

“There ain’t no place to run in a world of mechanized streets.”

“That is, perhaps, why he was hiding.”

“Ain’t nowhere to hide in a city of lights.”

John frowns seriously. “Anyway, it’s a sad tale to tell.”

“Crazy ole fucker found dead—that ain’t sad. It’s simple.
We’d all be so lucky to meet simplistic deaths.
And I tell you what: I’da found him, he ain’t have a cent in his pockets.”

“It’s complicated, man,” John said. “He done shot hessimself.”

“Suicide?” “I suppose.”

Ralph filed SAM’s nails and applied the rouge
Until the dead man looked flush and neat as a drag queen.

“I had a near-death experience myself, John, not long ago.”

“Really? Care to tell it?”
Ralph puts down his scalpel and gives his work a look.

“One night I took me three swigs of embalming fluid.”

“Seems like a stupid thing to go and do. That stuff could kill a bull with less than what you drank.”

“Thought if the stuff could preserve a dead man for a hundred years, it could at least get me through my tomorrows. Sides. My diddy drank worse stuff, damn near paint thinner.”

“Did it work?”

“I’m still here, ain’t I? But at the same time, I had to call the Poison Control Center and have my stomach pumped. Nearly died drinking a preservative. And anyway, I was high as a kite when I done it. Wasn’t thinking straight. Stupidest thing I ever done.”

“At least you lived. Poor SAM here didn’t. Found him with a loaded six-shooter, one in the head.”

“Sounds like a game of Russian roulette.”

“The other five chambers were loaded.”

“Odds wasn’t in his favor this time. House wins.”

Ralph knew the tale and likely the man.

“You finished yet?” asks John.

“Just,” answers Ralph. The litter screeched on its tracks. The man, worn down like a book in the rain, was filed away in the unmarked human cabinet.

“The service is on Sunday,” Ralph says. “Think anyone’ll attend?”

“Not likely—SAM prolly diddin’ have a lot of friends.”

“He had money…” “But no time to spend it in.”
“You’re right. I reckon it really don’t matter none anyways.”

SAM passed into a dark and foreign land,
filed by name in an unmarked human cabinet
with the tattoo of a star-spangled flag stilled by SAM’s loss of
breath:
just one more drawer on a shut-up Wall of the Dead.

Ends and Means

Troy E. Camplin

The time of flames has come to make us burn –
The poet speaks, we understand. We turn
Our words to ends, we must philosophize
We know their meanings when they’re means – we’re wise
Until we seek to know beyond the time
The wood is used, reduced to beat or rhyme
From which arise the means to mean, a song
Upon the score to satisfy the throng.
And thus we speak the truth and safely shock –
We reap rewards and rarely taste hemlock.
This morning,
on a platform on the sands of the city
procession thrown open:
police hands, carriages,
white gloves in robes
who were kneeling
in a most impressive prayer.

The others decent,
dressed in white trousers
and brown coats,
lunched into eternity
with different lanes and windows,
an escort of the arts and parts,
the indictment being read.

Once tried before
The High Court of Prisoners,
all the coarse men board the schooner,
walking across its calfskin platform.

Lodged in due time
by the arms of the vessel,
the cabinet maker and ironmonger,
the remaining fifteen who were called up
and the prisoners being asked
if they had any concealment,
any clerks from the collectors
of peace for the districts and counties.

A haven outside the jurisdiction of the court
that was set upon, hoarded, broken
in the war of possession.

Four barrels the value of twenty dollars,
gold watches with goods,
their chattels now in custody.

The negotiations purchased and paid for,
some doubts on the manner of conspiracy.
Cargo liner filled by numerous shippers,
delivered and painted over silver waters.

Counsel for the prisoner
informed of his right to object
authorities ancient and unenlightened;
the circumstances enacted here.
Vaticinations of Berosus:
Preface to *The Book of Caesar*

*Morgan A. Brown*

Oft was the hour his upright hand was raised
As if to say: “The gods alone make sense
Of what unfolds in what they have ordained.”
But Aristotle questioned Plato’s stance:
“Then why debate the logic of the soul?”
Easy was Plato’s smile, but strained his voice:
“As slaves to Reason, have we any choice?”
Plato supplied his pupil’s answer—”No…”
Soon by, they tread the lanes adorned with whores,
But occupied with souls, Truths, and such bores,
Did not regard the rouged-up belle that sighed,
Hearing herself volleyed betwixt their minds:
Now bandied ‘tween an argument; now proof;
Now cast away to tease unmannered youth.

The love of Wisdom and its famed amours
Have filled out fantasies for every Age
Till Wisdom’s pimped and pandered like a whore
With little love to give; what’s got is stain’d
By youths uncounted; how many’s the streets she’s walked?
I think of Aristotle’s hot debate
With Alexander on the Grecian State,
But what’s to say but that two peddlers talked?
And what’s to praise but that two tongues were twined,
And stretched the belle, betwixt two lustful minds?
“All those outside the sovereign state of Greece
Are slaves by birth,” the elder philo preached.
A greater truth the Macedon would find:
The self-styled sage is Wisdom’s bitter rind.

When Alexander campaigned through the East,
Through Xerxes’ realm, where Persian dreamsters scried,
Doubt thrust his mentor’s quip from its high seat:
For what brash slave would “Nay!” a tyrant’s “Aye!”—
Was Aristotle better than a slave?
Was not the “Aye!” the tyrant’s best defense?
Could blind Injustice graft a mindful man,
Or was the slave the patron of the State?
How wished young Alexander for his youth,
Much better spent in Plato’s mystic group
Than Aristotle’s “slave or Greek” untruth;
And thus the general swore a different sooth,
Taking a Persian wife; forged Persian bonds,
Whilst Aristotle frowned with folded arms.
Legends resurge; the heroes only change:
One year a youth; the next, senescent men;
The only difference being in the name—
A paltry thing; and still the poet’s hand
Whirls like a dervish to unfold the tale;
To learned eyes, each Age invokes the last,
And every step mucks back into the Past.
History repeats itself; to what avail?
It was the riddle Alexander spent
On every sage that to his grandeur bent,
Till Aristotle once again found grace
In Alexander’s eyes; and yet the taste
Of Wisdom’s physic soured his nightly mead,
Now poisoned by the selfsame hand that feeds.

I see an Age; it’s ours (as are the rest);
I see Hellas remade, through different means;
A Grecian heart shall heave its foreign breast
With histories conjoined to fantasies;
I see a youth in priestly garb that dons
The laurel wreathed with common grass, to frame
The grandest being to ever stake his claim
To Fortune’s best—and on that bloody brow
Shall trod the generations; each to grind
The furrow wending round the tyrant’s mind—
I see an Age; it’s ours (as is its Truth);
I sift through ceaseless mobs of prostitutes
To find the one I met last night, and think:
Each one farewells but never takes her leave.

Divine Knowledge

Troy E. Camplin

Where Shelley’s atheism would find faith
Today, no theist verse would find a home
Outside religious magazines – a wraith
Of narrowmindedness erects a dome
To make sure spirit-feeling will not roam.

The nyads, dryads do not have a place
To dwell – we cannot find the spirit’s land –
Our poets, editors would find disgrace
Among their peers if life should not be bland
Upon the page as atheists demand.

Heroic gods could scarcely grace the page
In anything but reference, irony –
To dare be earnest, that would but enraged
The village atheist – he’ll make you flee
From his harangues, his every empty plea.
And God the Father, God the King won’t reign
Much more than human kings or emperors –
And why would any atheist dare deign
To deem a theme on him should open doors
When they have existential verse on whores?

The fuzzy deist God, the cosmos’ voice
That sparked existence just to step aside
Is still too much – in Him you can’t rejoice
Without sly ridicule – they won’t abide
Until you have confessed that God has died.

And that now leaves us with the blankest verse
Of petty observations, with our eyes
Cast down upon the ground to see what’s worse
In life and humankind, that but denies
That we are anything but food for flies.

But if you dare to lift your eyes, the glow
Will blind you right before you see the sun,
And seeing beauty, you will finally know
What virtue needs, and all the damage done
By failing to aim high to reach the one.
Sea Tyrant of Samos:
A Homily on Poesy

Morgan A. Brown

I

There was a child who dreamt he ruled the seas
As Grecian tyrants kept each *polis* penned;
The years would take the child, but not the dream,
And years would lease the seas to his command.
His daughter warned him off his grand designs,
That though the kings of gods should wash his feet,
And though he be anointed by the sun,
Some Gloom would pale the dream’s last quickening.

II

The gloaming disperses with a glowing light
When Dian raises the old man’s sight
And leases to the shade of truant days
A crimson strain of unremitting rays.
He heaves a sigh into the gluttonous night,
Heaves one last sigh, and then sags in his pain
When falls the cankered virgin to the sea,
And baptized midst the currents of the main,
The Dawn first breaks her crimson light again.

III

Zeus did indeed attend upon his Lord
And scour him clean with pelting drops of rain;
As did the Sun anoint that cross-draped form
And parch the hammered corpse on its T-frame.

IV

Two vacant eyes now lord a beach,
Bereft of Thought and Memory,
And gaze upon Time’s shifting sands;
A wave of foam, with arms out-stretched,
Sprints hard upon the tapered shore,
Which drops within a league or so
Into unfathomed shades of black,
Which bid that dauntless wave come back
Into the safety of the deeps;
But it clings fast, unbound and beached.

V

Somewhere amidst these surging tides
There is a place where fancy lies,
Bound up within the echoes of a shell—
The scraps of tales on simpering children’s lips
Which bound desires in spiral ships
And kept prized secrets penned within.
Remembrance, of a voice that called aloud
And threw itself against the rushing waves
As if to loose that self upon the seas,
Curled in its gentle embryonic grave;
A voice that tumbled through the driving sledge,
Persisted through the rolling undertow,
Still carried with the desperate transverse wakes.
These rings return full cycle; voices scream
From out vast nothings, heave beneath the prime,
And haunt the silt beneath retreating tides.
Awash with wares of ancients, luckless sands
New natives pluck from their nomadic sleep,
As memories attend the change of hands:
Which is the conch that Polycrates clutched?
And should I hold that shell to an adolescent ear,
Would the waves yield up the child’s dream,
or the man’s despair?