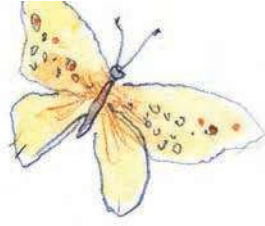


Side trips



*Sunk a bit low this morning,
Hanging haze keeps light at bay.
Just one of those downcast, bummed days
That uninvited come, visit as they may.*

*Need to get a move on, start without delay;
Scheduled for helpful, hurtful, occult phantom ray.
Wouldn't you know then, at the crossroad,
When the trip has just begun,
A stand of bird-sewn chicory,
Blue buttoned head to shoe,
Gift from nowhere, comes in view,
Showing off astride the sterile berm,
Graced by beads of last night's dew.*

*In a blink, I walk the packed earth lane,
See familiar puddle-ruts,
As sparrows preen in bone dry dirt,
Bathe vermin in the dust.
Borders left and right lie filled
With beds of virgin white,
Marred solely by a central mote,
Which perceptive eye may note:
Queen Ann's lace still moist with morning dew.
Chicory abounds (corn flowers here around)
And, hidden in the blue, pink-white trumpets
Of shy morning glory vine
About dry wisps of straw entwine.*

*Off-white and yellow butterflies
Flit about in carefree flight.
Soon, in concert, all alight
To seek sweet nectar where they might.
Then, sated with the saccharine,
Slake thirst at a wet-mud rut
And ease the syrup down,
Send treacle aftertaste away,
While just beyond arm's length
A salad bird's at play.
The air is soft and still,
No thistle down displays.*

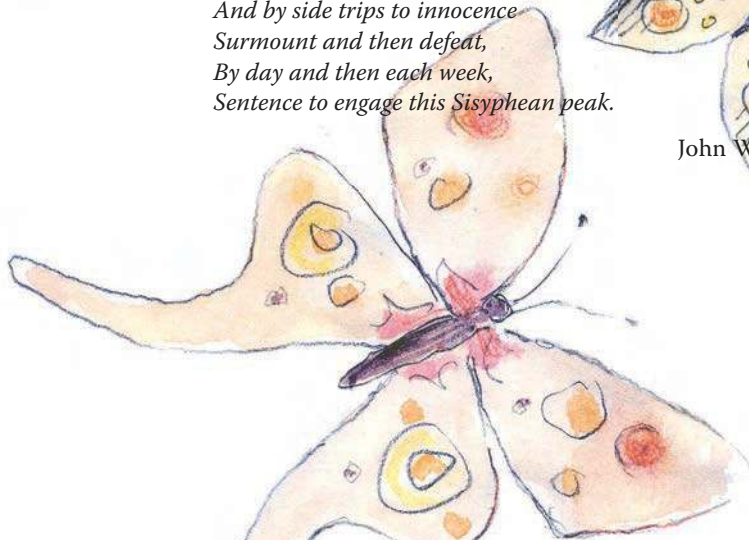
*Looking back through space and time,
Eyes cast and fix upon
The shadowed big red bounty barn
That hints of wasted blood that day
Of brothers Blue and Gray;
And in more recent past contains
The essence of reflected life
That muses in this way.
Haze hangs upon the mountain line,
Yet, in residing there,
Enhances Blue Ridge beauty,
Disconnects from soul's despair,
Pins wings for flight of spirit fair.*

*Best to hang side blinders on
These aged roving eyes.
Now not the time to reminisce,
To trade real life for fancied bliss,
Or the right turn may be missed.
There are times aside to daydream,
But one has to finish this.
Get on the horse and go, boy,
Pay attention to the road.
Gamma rays are rays of hope, lad;
In that context, not so bad.*

*Should the sun beat fierce upon return,
If you find each footstep laden,
And some surcease you would seek,
Walk down the pasture lane once more,
Stowing blinders on the seat.
Track to whispered meadow's song
Of the endless flowing creek.
Walk the smoothed rock bed of shallows,
Though admittedly hard on feet,
To a cool spot in the stream,
That you chance is suitably deep.
Risk a belly flop to enter,
Swim with emperor's clothes unseen;
Skip stones in the quiet water,
With honed skill that can't be beat.*

*And by side trips to innocence
Surmount and then defeat,
By day and then each week,
Sentence to engage this Sisyphian peak.*

John W. Wood, M.D.



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