

Mysteries

of Silence



ANAPHORA PRESS

Port Townsend, WA
anaphorapress.com

Address Correspondence to:
Anaphora Press
3110 San Juan Ave.
Port Townsend, WA 98368
info@anaphorapress.com

First Printing, 2007
All Rights Reserved
Copyright 2007 by Christopher Lewis
Graphic Design: Nina Noble

ISBN: 978-0-9801241-1-1

Printed in the United States of America

Mysteries of Silence

CONTENTS

Wisteria	1
Preparing the Manuscript of a Garden Journal	3
Songbird from the Seasons of Paradise	15
Three Drops of Silence	21
The Ancient Teachings of the Winter Silence	23
Pilgrim	31
<i>Nobilissima Visione</i>	33
The Midnight Sun	41
Dry Season in an Ancient Orchard	43
Daughter	49
Marathon	51
<i>Les Larmes ne Rappelle Point a la Vie</i>	53
Elegy in Autumn Mist	55
Mimesis	59
Harvest	61
Golden Gate Park	65
A New Sketch of the Hidden Season	67
The Palace of Fine Arts	69
Seven Days from Home	71
The Funeral of Father Thomas	73
Notes	75

WISTERIA

*(At St. Michael's Orthodox School, Santa Rosa,
on grounds once owned by the horticulturist Luther Burbank)*

A tapestry of sky woven into your balconies.

Graceful arms stretch the canopy in clustered blooms.
Each is a bell announcing one of the hours.

Under the veil of your perpetual incense,
children learn to listen, sing and play..

The mysterious gardener that planted and pruned you, trained
your branches to embrace and overshadow these buildings...
Flowering during the fast, how many years to grow this large and strong?

Silent witness of the interior secret,
whisper—what is in the seedpod?

“The secret is this: when it falls
safely cradled in its pod,
the pea does not know
it has separated from me.

“When the dried hull shrivels open
and disintegrates into rain,
the seed does not know
the earth that its tiny fingers explore
is not its mother.

“Learns to turn over, learns to crawl;
one day sitting up,
head erect with wonder,
the seedling does not know
that its parent everywhere overhead in bloom
has not always been there.”

And the children in the old house where the master gardener studied
look around at the images and writings of their fathers,
hear the words of creation in the old secret way.

“It only believes,
when the purple towers of thunderstorms
are scattered across the evening distance,
that clouds are full-grown wisteria,
when the tall rain leans down to feed its roots
and splash the hills with rainbows.”

Preparing the Manuscript

of a

Garden Journal



PREPARING THE MANUSCRIPT
OF A GARDEN JOURNAL

I. Invocation

Give me a corner of the Santa Rosa plain
with skies to every horizon
made beautiful by the changing angles of the sun
or slow incoming clouds,
or the splendid vesting and monthly disrobing of the moon
on the high turntable of stars.

Give me a field bordered by a creek
with its trees of nesting birds
embraced by the slender arm of a spring-fed mountain.
I will build my garden hut within reach of the waterfall's voice
and answer with my song,
dawn and dusk, the low flight of chanting geese,
swallows diving through the tall last light,
early shadows invaded by the dove-note
and quail like whispered shadows that run in the grass.
As the sun climbs its vast-wheeled altitudes
they fly into higher branches,
calling one another from hushed distances.
And the coarse statements of crows and jays,
the eloquent mockingbird and full-throated pheasant
in a rush of flight and song and theophany
follow the flight of the sun to its soaring zenith,
then silence. The hawk's high scream.
White falcons hover, flashing in the light.



II. Philosophy and Scholarship in Gardening

While the winter rains took thought
for the preparation of soils,
inside the window of my steep-roofed shed
I studied the topography's ancient poetry
of drained wetlands, the headwaters
of rivers long vanished beneath the earth,
and perused great books:
Hesiod and Virgil, the philosophy of farming,
studies of intensive companion plantings
and my grandfather's notes, scratched into the soil.

Before the earth was broken,
it was fertilized by the flowering silver planets
Jupiter and Saturn in sublime concert all winter.
September, they first rose together
from the silhouetted eastern mountain.
December, high in the fields of Pleiades,
behind the brilliant bull they dug through the stars
while I sat in the plowman's wagon
with my telescope in the outer galaxies,
and aged Bootes cast out the shining seed
that blossoms in constellations.
By the time they went down in the late growing sunsets,
fully open in the rarest blossoms of light,
I had mastered their names and seasons, their trajectories, and moons.



III. The Labors of Adam

The sun comes up hot
as soon as it clears the mountain.
Already through the dawn hours from first light
I've labored, turning the soil while it still holds moisture,
digging in manure, leaf compost, calcium.
Now I retreat to the shade of my garden hut
to listen to the quail's sweet recitations
while I sing the psalms and matins of inspired triodion
that watered the ancient deserts.

In the poet St Walafrid's lenten garden
were gathered the blossoms of solitude
which, when they came to miraculous fruit,
bore sweet fulness indescribably descending
like the breeze that comes over the plain in the cool of evening.
He, too, with his hand pulled stinging nettles
that choked the soil by his cell,
obedient to his monastics' contemplative table.
He, with his hand obedient to the rule,
measured and prepared on sacrificed vellum
the illuminated manuscript of his labors,
leaving in quiet lyrics, written in the sweat
of the fountain of miracles in his radiant brow,
a mist that came out of the earth.

Now I return to the hot field-work,
to the exhaustion of my grandfathers laid in the earth,
and the sun goes down
at a more severe angle
to the trees of the level horizon, farther and farther north,
where its last burning minutes are endless
as the prehistoric speech of standing stones.

From City to Community

The history of cities and the idea city, contrasted to the modern metropolis. Augustine's city of God and city of man.

Epiphany Magazine.

LITERARY ARTICLES (UNPUBLISHED):

Notes on Medieval Manuscript Hands

Origins of our modern lower-case alphabet in the humanistic hand of the Italian Renaissance. The Carolingian miniscule. Medieval manuscript hands. Greek influence, both in early centuries and in the Renaissance. Letter-forms and their evolution in manuscript styles. Ornamental lettering. The alphabet and the evolution of language. 2003.

The River of Calamity

The source of Western thought in patristic writings, presented in the metaphor of the springhead of inspiration at the summit of sacred mountains. The course of Western thought as departure from its sacred origins, presented in the metaphor of Augustine's "river of calamity", his image of the increasing tragedy of history since the Fall of man. 1987.

A Pilgrimage That Leaves the Stars Behind

Examination of astrological allusions in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* reveals the main cosmological theme, identical to the thematic use of allusions to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Framed by astrological parentheses of major symbolic importance, the pilgrimage theme moves from this world to the next. Meanwhile, the astrological references throughout the poems explore the philosophical conflict between fate and free will in the context of individual destiny and choice, along with theological questions of the role of divine providence. 1978.

Thematic Sketches of Spencer's Faerie Queene

A proposed outline of the unfinished poem's thematic unity, assuming that the so-called *Mutability Cantos* reveal a thematic climax. 1978.

History of Education:

Mystery schools in ancient Greece. Hebrew Temple Schools. The teachings of Christ. St. Basil the Great and education. Education in the Roman world. Fall of Rome, and monastic education. Influence of Celtic monasticism. Decline of monasticism, and the rise of Scholasticism. Secularization of learning. Education in America.

Christopher Lewis
Anaphora Press
anaphorapress.com