

NOTE:

These poems were written in the 1970's, after I was asked by my friend Dennis Hurrell to speak to an English class as part of a course on "Form and Function in Literature". I was to provide a contrast by giving a lecture on "Form and Function in the Biosphere", which I did. I then proceeded to read a few poems I knew that had an ecological context.

This gave me the impetus to try writing such poems myself, based on my own ecological and biogeochemical research interests, and also to link such interests to my agnosticism.

The varied (and variable) results are as follows.

Eville Gorham

October 5, 2011

FALL

Seeming uncertain of their way the leaves descend
Drawn to the forest floor in quiet flight.

We also fall, and falling turn the wheel of Nature round.
Her creatures, one with us, our dying flesh devour
And turn to air, seeming to set us free.

Yet freedom's span is short, and air is soon enchained
In leafy labyrinths wherein life's fetters once again are forged.
Bonds such as once bound us now bind anew
The unfolding leaves, destined – like us – to fall.

Eville Gorham

OCTOBER

The aspen leaves glow golden
In the cooling air,
As leaves of oak,
Incarnadined by natural alchemy,
Flame in the paling sky,

The wind rises as night falls,
And the birds gather,
Restless for the south.

Eville Gorham

RAIN

Autumn,
And the rain falls,
Melting from pristine snowflakes
Crystallized at the cloud's top,
Splinters or patterned hexagons,
Their form a function of the eternal cold
Encroaching from the poles.

And centered at each crystal's icy core
Perhaps a fleck of dust whirled from the land,
Or yet a speck of salt flung from the sea,
Bubbled from out the swash of breaking wave,
Or the dead ash of some bright meteor's flare
Vanished but for the showers it sets in train.

All these may serve to bring to earth again
Vapor distilled under the summer sun
From land and wave-worn sea
Since time began.

Eville Gorham

CEDAR SWAMP

Ten thousand years ago the glacier waned,
And in the pitted outwash left behind
Randomly scattered ice blocks in its wake,
Melting slowly under the summer sun.

Yet, as new lakes were born, the harbingers
Of death began to creep across each shining face
Mirroring daily blue or cloudy sky,
For lakes – like us – are surely born to die.

Pale lily, cattail, sedge and grass, and moss
Obliteration brought as, from its edge,
Each basin filled to the brim with debris
Strewn by a steady rain of death above.

In their green wake pale tamarack shimmered;
Then dark, long-living cedar took their place,
Enveloping in cool and quiet shade
All that once joined the sunlit sky to earth.

And so ensues the end foretold at birth.

Eville Gorham

AN AGNOSTIC'S REDEMPTION

In the end is the beginning; the pattern of life dissolves.
Atoms and molecules go their separate ways
As they have done since first the earth began;
And we, perforce, must share their journeying.

Breath fleeting on the pinions of the wind,
Tears flowing to the saltness of the sea,
Blood pulsing to the rhythm of the tides,
Flesh kindling anew the flame of life.

So to take part in all the earth's renewing
Sufficient heaven should be for anyone.

Eville Gorham

GO FIGURE NEWTON

How can one root for that guy Newt
Who's grown so fat on "Freddie's" loot?

The often-married big galoot

On family values is a hoot,

Ex-mistress at his side, so cute!

The former Speaker cannot mute

An ethics charge he can't refute.

Though bright, he isn't that astute;

Child-janitors – oh what a beaut!

The guy's as crazy as a coot

Deserving nothing but the boot.

Politically, let's neuter Newt!

Eville Gorham