

The Toxic Sublime ::: 10 December 2017 ::: Nuclear Inversion

*Life is not going Anywhere ~ There is Nothing to be Attained ~
All striving and grasping is so much Smoke
in the clutch of a dissolving Hand ~*

~ Alan Watts

How it Looks :::



How it Feels :::



What it Foretells ::: a Vision of our already Present Apocalyptic Future :::



Every night the news is like a Nature Hike through The Book of Revelation ~

~ Al Gore

Sunday, it was, the sweet angel Camie and I climbing high on the
Bonneville Trail, escaping smog below, inversion, cold air trapped beneath
warm, the miracle of wild blue sky above—

In the Valley of the Shadow of Death, unroiled air thick with toxins :

Carbon Monoxide, arsenic, lead, nitrogen dioxide—tropospheric ozone
catalyzed by sunlight, a photochemical haze to irritate the throat and eyes,
inflamm the mind, scar the lungs—sulfur dioxide, formaldehyde, methane,
acetone—volatile, ubiquitous, everywhere and all at once—choking
stomata, blighting leaves, weakening stem and root, scorching petals—

Peroxyacyl nitrates sublimating into air—*the easier to seep through skin,
breathe down deep, the easier to penetrate every one of your 700 million
soft pink alveoli, fill the clouds with acid rain, the easier to taste, my dear—I
am who I am—ammonia inside and out, a love so vast—water, dirt, air—I
enter every molecule of every being—*

I fear no evil :

No, not even from you, persistent free radicals, sparking mutations, skin
and bowel, *every pore, every vessel*, reimagining your mercurial atomic
selves through our microbiota—*I am every one of your symbiotic,*

*sympathetic beings—multitudes you cannot contain—I recreate myself in
their image—*

No evil :

No, not even from you, most deadly particulates suspended in smog—
coarse but not too coarse to quietly inhale, fine and ultrafine, soot to surge
unfiltered through our blood streams—to seep, to slip, to spill—
transubstantiating your infinitely miraculous self through the secret code of
every cell in every body, flipping switches in our DNA, triggering heart
attacks, strokes, emphysema, asthma—cancers of the liver and the lung,
the thyroid, the marrow—epigenetic gifts we hold in ourselves, numinous
transfigurations we pass generation to generation—diabetes, autism, spina
bifida—lesions in the ovary, the soul, the esophagus, the kidney—the
mouth, the tongue, the pancreas, the larynx—*how dare you speak to me
this way—you who know nothing*—depression, despair, schizophrenia,
anencephaly—

Behold, a child born this day missing all but the stem of the brain :::

You think you can scare me?

I am always afraid, seeing as I do magnetic nanoparticles inside myself
pulsing bright with radiation—they fizz through bone, leave me porous and
permeable—they sizzle down every nerve, illuminate the path, spark a
blaze in my spinal cord—

Luminous Toxins, Thou art with me :

Offering annihilating migraines, fatal insomnia, fire and the fear of fire—
strange blessings—dementia, sclerosis, ataxia, atrophy of the muscle or
the mind—a love supreme, sublime, subliminal—neurosarcoidosis—

impotence, incontinence, infertility—I stand mute before you, dust and ashes—what human being dare ask or answer where and how—why you who sees, who loves, who enters all without measure—who rises in dark plumes, as smoke, as flame, as conflagration—you who erupts from volcanoes, spews ash, spits sulfur—who speaks in a still, small voice or roars impossible questions from the whirlwind, remembering as you do how it was in the beginning—stars singing, angels shouting, divine light, joy too bright, too vast, too holy to be contained—you who are the deepest darkness, a wall of sediment swirling across the desert, one hundred kilometers wide, billowing wet or dry, traveling ninety-nine kilometers per hour—lightning, mud, thunder, hail—torrents of rain, you who cannot be known or named, nothing and no one, who oh so quietly breathes from ficus and weeping fig, white lilies here in my living room—everything is good, even you who are volatile, spraying up in spumes of salt from the ocean—yes, my ears have heard but now I see you—you flood the earth, you are the cosmos—I withhold no thought from you—let the mind be filled, let the soul be emptied—you from whom all blessings flow break yourself on stone to become the space between every quantum particle—*dark energy*—you are and ever shall be—let me not ask why you (whom I seek, whom I wish to love even now in your desolating, disfiguring grace) have chosen me to crush, to bear this cross, this particular grief, this rapture—why you offer now the glorious impact of your kiss—peace and pain—silence, surrender—

Hush beloved—

Be not afraid—

How many times must I tell you :

As the fish is in the sea and the sea is in the fish,

I am all around and I am in you :



Notes ::

I have transformed and interpolated numerous lines and phrases from the Bible, primarily from The Book of Job, The 23rd Psalm, The Book of Genesis, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, The Gospel According to Saint Luke, The Book of Exodus, and The First Book of the Kings. Permutations of the line “Be Not Afraid” appear hundreds of times throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Other lines echoing hymns of praise come from “The Gloria Patri” and “The Common Doxology.”

“As the fish is the sea and the sea is in the fish” is an inversion of a line attributed Saint Catherine of Siena.

The phrases “the easier to seep . . . the easier to taste, my dear” echo language lifted from “Little Red Riding Hood.”

I consulted over one hundred online and print sources for information on climate change, the components of pollutants in our air, water, and soil, and the effects of these toxins on living beings. The sources I found most illuminating include: *ScienceDaily*, WHO (The World Health Organization), *Science News*, *National Geographic*, *Wikipedia*, *Scientific American*, *The Guardian*, NCBI (The National Center for Biotechnology Information), and *The Huffington Post*.

“You think you can scare me? // I am always afraid . . .” echo “They think that they can scare me. // I am always scared” from Franz Wright’s poem “Entry in an Unknown Hand”:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47557/entry-in-an-unknown-hand>

The Al Gore quotation comes from comments he made during a Q & A before an advance screening of his latest documentary *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*.

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/al-gore-calls-media-coverage-climate-change-a-nature-hike-book-revelation-1000884>

“ . . . [T]he glorious impact of your kiss” echoes “The terrifying needle stick is just a reminder . . . the hideous skin lesion becomes the glorious impact of God's touch,” lines that appear near the end of Rafael Campo's “Like a Prayer”:

<http://www.heartviews.org/article.asp?issn=1995-705X;year=2008;volume=9;issue=2;spage=91;epage=94;aualast=Campo>

A Love Supreme is a 1965 Studio Album by Jazz Saxophonist & Bandleader John Coltrane with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Elvin Jones:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Love_Supreme

Variations of the Alan Watts quotation are available from numerous online sources. The one I use comes from an article on the OZY site.

Images One, Two, and Three (The Bonneville Trail) are collaborations by Camie Schaefer and Melanie Rae Thon.

Image Four is a Photo Fusion combining a manipulated image found online (X-ray of the Spinal Column) and “Infinite Depths” (trees reflected in water), a collaboration by Camie Schaefer and Melanie Rae Thon.