

# New Poems

Robert G. Brown

December 14, 2005

**Copyright December 14, 2005 by Robert G. Brown**

This document is made available under a modified Open Publication License.  
It is freely available for non-commercial use and non-profit publication at:

<http://www.phy.duke.edu/rgb/poetry>

The specific terms of the license are in Appendix A of this document. The author may be contacted at:

Robert G. Brown  
Duke University Physics Department  
Durham, NC 27708-0305

email: [rgb@phy.duke.edu](mailto:rgb@phy.duke.edu)  
phone: 919-660-2567  
web: <http://www.phy.duke.edu/rgb>

# Contents

<b>Short Poems</b> . . . . .	2
Fire . . . . .	3
Logic . . . . .	3
The Lady in Black . . . . .	3
Unnamed Fragment (unfinished) . . . . .	4
<b>Longer Poems</b> . . . . .	5
The Old Dog . . . . .	5
Let Us Go . . . . .	6
Bedtime . . . . .	9
Reason and the Will to Fight . . . . .	10
In Bethelehem . . . . .	11
<b>License Terms for “New Poems”</b> . . . . .	12
General Terms . . . . .	12
The “Beverage” Modification to the OPL . . . . .	12
OPEN PUBLICATION LICENSE Draft v0.4, 8 June 1999 . . . . .	12

**Short Poems**

## **Fire**

The center of self is like fire  
Turns hours into ashes with flame  
Its spark is the heart of desire  
It gives to the shadows a name.

## **Logic**

Ergo, therefore, and quod erat D  
All this logic just stupifies me...

## **The Lady in Black**

Evil visions often repel the eye  
Inner spirit trying to cast out dark  
Although the light thus grasped is but a lie  
Filled with shadows thrown where they leave no mark.

Each eye has its blind spot where they gather  
A hole in space and time it cannot see  
Where they lurk to tease the blinded caster  
With wakeful dreams of horror yet to be.

The Lady in Black glides through the room  
My eyes almost catch her, but slide to the side  
Her presence presages the advent of doom  
The Lady in Black glides down the hall

**Unnamed Fragment (unfinished)**

Across the quiet meadow comes the sound of tinkling bells  
Where the cows are plodding home  
And wander through the swaying swells  
Of hay gone golden in the sun  
So bright that all the colors run.

The darkling sky goes blue to black  
But rimmed with ruddy fire bright  
Off to the west, the distant west  
Where sun last slipped away from sight.

## Longer Poems

### The Old Dog

The old dog is dead.  
Laid down its burden  
Along with its head  
And died.

I cried, for I loved her  
For all of her barking,  
Her messes, her nose thrust  
Upward into my waiting hand.

How grand she was as a pup,  
Rolling in filth to stink;  
Tireless she ran to fetch  
The next thing she would chew.

She grew to fat and placid,  
Slow and full of love  
Faithful and true she would lie  
Close by my side as I worked.

Now I work, digging her grave  
Her body close beside me  
For the last time.

The old dog is buried now  
Deep within the loam  
Just beneath her favorite spot  
Where the winter sun warmed  
And the trees shaded in summer.

Perhaps a new tree will one day grow  
From some acorn dropped  
By squirrel once chased, roots twisting  
Through ribs, skull filled with dust.

She would like that.

**Let Us Go**

“Blue bugs, blue bugs! Help me,  
 Kill the blue bugs! They are  
 All around me, on the floor,  
 Up the wall, on the door!  
 Blue bugs!” cried  
 My eighty-nine year old grandmother

To a scared twelve year old me  
 Who’d come to her cries  
 And just couldn’t see  
 Blue bugs anywhere . . .

In panic she looked with watery eyes,  
 Old legs a-tremble with fear  
 At the clean walls, bare floor of her room  
 Her thin legs swathed in cotton against the chill.

Later, my mother, Christine cried  
 When grandmother, confined in bed,  
 Called her by dead Dess’s name  
 And rambled through the past,  
 Jumbled images cast inside  
 A swiftly fading frame.

Grandma was long since gone  
 Beyond where we can know,  
 And while we took care  
 Of her body for years  
 When it failed, we let it go.

Father chose to die at home, of cancer slow  
 And painful through the end.  
 But brave was he, the fires of his mind  
 Burning clear and low, even as his last breath  
 Sighed from his blued and shrunken lips.

His life–love, Mother, lingers still,  
 Diminished and aging,  
 Waiting for his call. In dreams he tells her,  
 “I’ll be back for you. I will!  
 Fear nothing, nothing at all.”

Her instructions to us are strict:  
 “When nothing remains but the guttering glow  
 Of Self, when my body’s a husk bearing ashes  
 — For God’s sake, let me go!”

My wife’s a Doctor now, you see,  
 She cares often for the elderly.



She brings home many a tale, weeping  
For her job is full of woe.

She tells of reviving ancient ladies  
Filling them again with life and breath.  
Full of cancer, demented and frail  
Eager to pass beyond this pale  
They are held helpless by those who do not know  
Life from Death.

She jolts their weakened, failing hearts,  
With electricity  
Intubates them, starts a drip to fix  
Their body chemistry  
Hot wires old motors to one more start  
Full of agony.

She used her tools  
In a million dollar medi-tech show  
All because a "loved" one stood close by  
And would not let them go.

To fear death is to fear life;  
Our culture denies  
Death its place, until life itself  
Is made mockery. Consider

The truth. A religion that still bears scars  
From the loss of political franchise,  
That loudly claims in writings revered  
That life is a spirit, and flesh  
But a treefall in forest  
Sustained by the Mind of God,  
*Insists* that the breath  
Be maintained in the flesh  
Long after that spirit has fled  
And God has turned his Mind elsewhere.

This is called "Respect for life."

Count the cost.  
To sustain the machine,  
Riddled with cancer, assaulted by stroke  
Demented and in pain,  
While the rooms of the soul  
Are emptied by nightmares  
And the only sounds therein  
Are distorted echos from the past,  
We spend the wealth that would enrich  
The life of a child.

Yes, we are a culture of Ghouls,  
Worshippers of Death, not Life  
For men always worship that which they fear.  
We pay penance for our sins  
Repairing the heart and lungs  
Rebuilding the kidneys ruined  
Nurturing the scrap of liver left  
All but destroyed by decades of drink,  
Smoke,  
Food,  
And even love and laughter.  
It seems that Life is a deadly sin  
And painful Death the atonement.  
Other cultures, rich with wisdom,  
Don't fear Death.  
"I have lived a life,"  
Say the Hopi, the Navajo  
As they embrace Death as a friend.  
"Life is the Art of Dying"  
Says the East.

## **Bedtime**

Can she hear my thoughts, I wonder  
As we nestle like spoons, me tucked up behind  
Our soft breath in repose belies  
The burning flame that glows in my mind.

My hands on her back caress her spine  
While she reads her book with happy sighs  
Our legs beneath the sheets entwine  
Her curves all pressed up to my thighs.

Our children home and safe in bed  
The dogs lie sprawled upon the floor  
And all that's evil in the world  
For now abides outside our door.

The calmness of the scene conceals  
The raging storm, the furnace fire,  
A silken sheath for piercing light  
A rising tide of hearts' desire.

Our passion mounts along a road  
Well trod, but still no garden flight  
With trails that twist to craggy peaks  
Where secret blossoms scent the night.

We climb together the perilous path  
Pass the panther, elude the snake  
Dance along the delicate edge  
Soar above the canyon and lake

We reach the top still hand in hand  
Our face alit by falling star  
And sleep together on the sand  
Of time, revealed for who we are.

## Reason and the Will to Fight

The issue is simple, so don't get confused  
 We don't fight for God; it's not a "Crusade"  
 We fight for sweet reason and won't be refused  
 By those that fear reason still more than a blade.

It's reason that tells us that women are free  
 To choose for themselves how to dress, what to learn  
 Who to marry (or not), when to worship, how to *be*  
 Not chattel to purchase, to beat or to burn.

It's reason that tells us that men are free too  
 But not free to end freedom and not free to kill  
 So stand on street corners and preach 'til you're blue  
 But cherish forever the listener's free will.

It's reason that tells us that it's wrong to compel  
 The worship of God by torture or death  
 One man's road to heaven is another's path to hell  
 God gave the right to *choose* along with the breath.

It's reason that tells us they haven't the right  
 To tear down the graceful towers in murderous glee.  
 It's foolish to blame us now for taking the fight  
 To those cowards that began it and now hide and flee.

Do they take us for fools who will stand still to die?  
 Do they think we won't act to defend all we love?  
 Do they think we'll permit them to win with a lie?  
 Don't they know there's a dragon inside of this dove?

We've long since rejected the right to rule of kings,  
 Of old myths and fables, of the wicked and the strong.  
 We've bled to end slavery and equalize all things  
 So all who live may choose, and all who live belong.

God *damn* them for killing in a travesty of blame  
 God *damn* them for claiming to kill in Allah's name  
 God *damn* as well the evil of their medieval cause  
 With its wicked heart of hatred and its tyrannical laws.

So it's off to war to fight for peace  
 To fight for the right to choose  
 To fight for a dream  
 To fight for a cause  
 To fight so that evil will lose.

Yet spare in your prayer a word for the weak  
 A thought for the poor fools we fight  
 And vow that *this* time when we come out on top  
 We'll put a permanent end to the night.

## **In Bethelhem**

In Bethelhem, a brother born  
Was claimed a King on Christmas morn.

But Kings no longer haunt the world  
Their bloody battle flag is furled  
The people of the world all free  
To speak their mind, to disagree  
To recognize reality.

A King of Kings rules only One,  
Himself. Each human thread is spun  
Separate, forseen with God's eyes,  
Naked of words and world's disguise  
To make a self-willed tapestry

Where every thread imparts its hue  
As it is warped the fabric through  
And helps decide the patterned weave  
That its brief span will finally leave  
On the loom of human history.

True wisdom is to see this sight;  
The finished cloth in perfect light  
With vision clear of gauzy thread  
That clings to each and every head.  
Awake! Awake! Humanity.

## License Terms for “New Poems”

### General Terms

License is granted to copy or use this document according to the Open Public License (OPL, enclosed below), which is a Public License which applies to “open source” generic documents developed by the GNU Foundation.

In addition there are three modifications to the OPL:

Distribution of substantively modified versions of this document is prohibited without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. (This is to prevent errors from being introduced which would reflect badly on the author’s professional abilities.)

For-profit distribution of the work or any derivative of the work in any standard book form is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder. (This is so that the author can make at least some money if this work is republished in any form and sold commercially for – somebody’s – profit. The author doesn’t care about copies photocopied or locally printed and distributed free or at cost to students to support a course, except as far as the next clause is concerned.)

The “Beverage” modification listed below applies to all other usage of this work in any form (online or in a paper publication). Note that this modification is probably not legally defensible and can be followed really pretty much according to the honor rule.

As to my personal preferences in beverages, red wine is great, beer is delightful, and Coca Cola or coffee or tea or even milk acceptable to those who for religious or personal reasons wish to avoid stressing my liver.

### The “Beverage” Modification to the OPL

Any regular user of this OPL work (who, we will presume, gets some pleasure or enjoyment from its use) shall, upon meeting the primary author(s) of this OPL material for the first time under the appropriate circumstances, offer to buy him or her or them a beverage. This beverage may or may not be alcoholic, depending on the personal ethical and moral views of the offerer(s) and receiver(s). The beverage cost need not exceed one U.S. dollar (although it certainly may at the whim of the offerer;-) and may be accepted or declined with no further obligation on the part of the offerer. It is not necessary to repeat the offer after the first meeting, but it can’t hurt...

## OPEN PUBLICATION LICENSE Draft v0.4, 8 June 1999

### I. REQUIREMENTS ON BOTH UNMODIFIED AND MODIFIED VERSIONS

The Open Publication works may be reproduced and distributed in whole or in part, in any medium physical or electronic, provided that the terms of this

license are adhered to, and that this license or an incorporation of it by reference (with any options elected by the author(s) and/or publisher) is displayed in the reproduction.

Proper form for an incorporation by reference is as follows:

Copyright (c) <year> by <author's name or designee>. This material may be distributed only subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the Open Publication License, vX.Y or later (the latest version is presently available at <http://www.opencontent.org/openpub/>).

The reference must be immediately followed with any options elected by the author(s) and/or publisher of the document (see section VI).

Commercial redistribution of Open Publication-licensed material is permitted.

Any publication in standard (paper) book form shall require the citation of the original publisher and author. The publisher and author's names shall appear on all outer surfaces of the book. On all outer surfaces of the book the original publisher's name shall be as large as the title of the work and cited as possessive with respect to the title.

## II. COPYRIGHT

The copyright to each Open Publication is owned by its author(s) or designee.

## III. SCOPE OF LICENSE

The following license terms apply to all Open Publication works, unless otherwise explicitly stated in the document.

Mere aggregation of Open Publication works or a portion of an Open Publication work with other works or programs on the same media shall not cause this license to apply to those other works. The aggregate work shall contain a notice specifying the inclusion of the Open Publication material and appropriate copyright notice.

**SEVERABILITY.** If any part of this license is found to be unenforceable in any jurisdiction, the remaining portions of the license remain in force.

**NO WARRANTY.** Open Publication works are licensed and provided "as is" without warranty of any kind, express or implied, including, but not limited to, the implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose or a warranty of non-infringement.

## IV. REQUIREMENTS ON MODIFIED WORKS

All modified versions of documents covered by this license, including translations, anthologies, compilations and partial documents, must meet the following requirements:

1. The modified version must be labeled as such.
2. The person making the modifications must be identified and the modifications dated.
3. Acknowledgement of the original author and publisher if applicable must be retained according to normal academic citation practices.

4. The location of the original unmodified document must be identified.
5. The original author's (or authors') name(s) may not be used to assert or imply endorsement of the resulting document without the original author's (or authors') permission.

## V. GOOD-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the requirements of this license, it is requested from and strongly recommended of redistributors that:

1. If you are distributing Open Publication works on hardcopy or CD-ROM, you provide email notification to the authors of your intent to redistribute at least thirty days before your manuscript or media freeze, to give the authors time to provide updated documents. This notification should describe modifications, if any, made to the document.
2. All substantive modifications (including deletions) be either clearly marked up in the document or else described in an attachment to the document.

Finally, while it is not mandatory under this license, it is considered good form to offer a free copy of any hardcopy and CD-ROM expression of an Open Publication-licensed work to its author(s).

## VI. LICENSE OPTIONS

The author(s) and/or publisher of an Open Publication-licensed document may elect certain options by appending language to the reference to or copy of the license. These options are considered part of the license instance and must be included with the license (or its incorporation by reference) in derived works.

A. To prohibit distribution of substantively modified versions without the explicit permission of the author(s). "Substantive modification" is defined as a change to the semantic content of the document, and excludes mere changes in format or typographical corrections.

To accomplish this, add the phrase 'Distribution of substantively modified versions of this document is prohibited without the explicit permission of the copyright holder.' to the license reference or copy.

B. To prohibit any publication of this work or derivative works in whole or in part in standard (paper) book form for commercial purposes is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder.

To accomplish this, add the phrase 'Distribution of the work or derivative of the work in any standard (paper) book form is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder.' to the license reference or copy.

### OPEN PUBLICATION POLICY APPENDIX:

(This is not considered part of the license.)

Open Publication works are available in source format via the Open Publication home page at <http://works.opencontent.org/>.

Open Publication authors who want to include their own license on Open Publication works may do so, as long as their terms are not more restrictive than the Open Publication license.



If you have questions about the Open Publication License, please contact TBD, and/or the Open Publication Authors' List at [opal@opencontent.org](mailto:opal@opencontent.org), via email.