

## Why?

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This of all questions, the persistent toddler's,  
the ancient pursuit of the modern mind  
that summons less knowledge than it infers,  
the bewildered cry of the maimed and blind,  
the death rattle stuck in the feeble throat  
when the maker fails to return the call,  
the clicking of catechisms learned by rote:  
this is the most perennial *Why* of all.  
A word too hard for word, number, or sign  
to render redundant, explain away,  
a voice too susceptible to decline,  
a mark to start and end every day.  
I shrug my heart, retaliate with hot  
and cold passion and say to *Why*; "Why not?"

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## Laughter

is radical noise. Its rule is to break  
all rules, with welcome venom if need be.  
It is elastically voice-and-chord strung,  
tone's virtuoso, yet it is not song.  
Laughter is difference and unity;  
it swaps cultures as chickens cross roads,  
yet the joke's not on Colonel Sanders  
who laughs all the way to the Pentagon.  
Laughter punctures megalomania  
but is self-collapsing. In the theatre, its regime  
never fails, but life's its other standard.  
The laughter of evil does not qualify;  
parody of course, but sarcasm not.  
The child is its natural habitat.

## The Best is Yet to Come

*(for Jamie)*

Distressful as it is when time is out  
of joint, and the brash world's a kangaroo  
wilderness, and this petty pace from day  
to day syndrome makes for dubious havoc  
on the awkward stage of self-confidence:  
this, however, is a time to plant, time  
to fruit. Years as good as they get for, in  
Yeats' words "the young in one another's arms."  
This is what I believe for you and us  
and where we go from here, luscious with faith  
and commitments: love's get-together of  
past and present – like the tides, thresholds,  
that embraced in first and last places long  
ago, reincarnated in our song.

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