

As If

*Once, when I did hear two youths profess
Through florid verse their adolescent love,
In which the word "forever" did appear,
Then I, so sickened with life's maladies,
In wisdom, so I thought, did feel contempt
That seeming every gangly pimply face
Does utter word "forever", clutter rhyme
With declarations only suit to youth
Which consecrate the common to sublime,
As if forever did exist in truth.*

*Ashleigh was her name, or Claire; and Nate
Was his, let's say--whatever baby names
That generation held in precious bent.
Then I dismissed their love to plain desire,
To glands awry within pubescent curls,
His head insanely over heels in love,
In love so called, her waving heels in air,
Bedazzled by sensations bright and free
And shiny pink in beam-struck eyes,
Not much unlike beneath a yuletide tree.*

*In later year dilemma now I face,
That she, of generation past, and I,
Have found in each a shelter from life's storm.
We throw ourselves once more upon
A door, a century, uncertain and unsure,
When time and age does beckon at our doors,
And wonder, drawn by gravity and time
To hill both dreadful steep and yet mundane,
Where life, alone or paired, careens towards death
And fearsome mystery obtain.*

*Experienced, betrayed, we deem us wise,
And guarded strive to hold our past at bay,
While arms and eyes we seek for warmth to fill
The void of cold and lonely nights abed.
We reach, yet hesitate, and yet desire,
As if for browned and blackened kettles on
Gaseous fires, do long for warmth and yet
We fear it burn and faltering we alight,
And wary of the new in worlds unbrave*

That our close pairing be not finally right.

*Danger in our cautions I perceive,
That love with cushions stifle in our bed,
Though justified by wounds and unhealed scars.
Love we keep in deep reserve, hold close
To vest until in failing to be bold
Mayhaps we fold, misplay our hands
Into our final closed and timely graves.
By fears of future loss both we enthrall,
Our soft shields held at long arm's length.
But in withholding some, do we lose all?*

*But out upon Damascus Road I've come
To realize that both in youth and we
Within our autumn's twilight age, we seek
The microcosmos here on earth at large
Through coupled love, community or with child.
Both in these ways, the tender green of youth,
Or us of weathered face and temples gray,
In either, neither perfect nor ever wrong
In their entire, humility be apropos
To us of harsh belief and judgment strong.*

*Thus I resolve this year to mock no more.
For all be tainted we upon the shore
Perchance of no return, perhaps again
To suffer still the grinding of a wheel.
We, like they, who as we were,
Just reaching out to fill the void, that's all.
And each in our own ways mature or green,
No matter short or long the time we grope,
Do gain in measured part we did not know
But theories and as shadows and of hope.*

*In declaration answer this I make,
In resolution fast that I shall give
And freely give without a second care
Of recompense, for giving gives rewards
Unasked, to share in simple faint assay,
My life, which may in instant short be cut.
For there are knowings in her smile to know,
And passions not unseemly to partake,
Which to forsake for doubt would be perverse
As stroll with working lamp in darkness make.*

*So shall I love as if our lives be threads
Upon a fabric tracing history in chains,
Parallel at once in life and time, and then
Enchained as intimates of flesh and mind,
To love as if forever did exist,
That word I did in childish mouth deride.
To love as if there was no word for loss
Until our paths diverge by our incline,
Or end of life to meet again in time,
I'll love as if she were the One, or mine.*