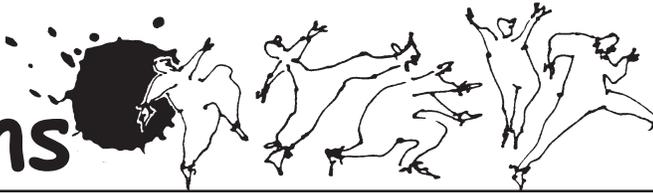


Deanotations



Issue 101

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Hello.

And I mean that quite literally.

I need to come up with a sentence long enough to wrap around (there!) so you'll know where the REAL margin is.

Back to hello. It seems a natural greeting, but it caught on as a greeting, rather than as a cry to urge on the fox hounds, only after telephones became popular. Hopeful voices called "Hello! Hello!" (urging their voices like hounds) over those first unreliable wires, people not quite persuaded that real people's real voices could travel so far over such skinny wires (skinny sounding voices too), trying to persuade others that they were real: "HELLO! HELLO! I'm really someone, so won't you please pick up and be someone too?"

Hello, from Ho! plus La, says one of my dictionaries, "ho!" the exclamation or demand for attention or cry that you whom I address should halt, stop, desist, pay attention; "la" the French for "there". Thus "Holla" (and hallo, hello, halloa, hullo, etc.) means "Hey, there, you, stop, pay attention."

It's an argument as much as a greeting: When Des Cartes wanted to reason about all things considered, he decided to begin with proving that he, himself, existed and came up with "I think, therefore I exist" — way too complicated. "Hello" is a much more persuasive proof. Just walk up to someone and say "Hello", and he/she will be persuaded. Say "Cogito, ergo sum", and see where it gets you. "Hello" says, "Here I am and there you are, and we both know it, so now what?" Unanswerable logic. Or rather, ANSWERABLE, which is even better.

Hello, therefore what?

Arguing one is because one thinks is like arguing the dog exists because it has fleas. "Hello" is nearer than thinking to who we are, to the fact THAT we are. Proving that we are (or thinking we need to) is unconditional surrender.

Surrender? What has been surrendered? Well, you being here. The best academic thinking says that you and I ceased to exist sometime in the 18th or 19th century. I know this sounds radical, but it's old hat to the philosophers, shrinks and other exotic non-existent folk who, for example, write textbooks and essays in the *New York Review of Books*.

Surrender, Hell! (O) Decade by decade our hallowed Hello grows hollower. (You can hear the howling winds of "H" blowing through the "O" sounds.) I hope here to make Hello whole again.

Dean Dekker

Yesterday gray, today blue — the Civil War goes on.

Commuting: The repetitive motion, daily, by carpool or subway — resulting in carpool tunnel syndrome.

Why be famous? For ego...or forego it.

I used to be a late Twentieth Century American Poet. Now I specialize in poetry of the very early 21st Century. I'm so up to date!



Those people on the TV News aren't talking to each other, much less to me.

Going by the newspapers, now of all times is the best time to have been young 200 years ago.

You think you have a good life, until one day you realize it's all been... or vice versa: You think you've had a miserable life until one day you realize... How do we do that — remake the past? Is the past never safe, solid, beyond amendment? No, this is the story of our lives: Boldly we venture forth into the unexplored past.

Why all this guilt, regret, penance? The Founding Fathers of this universe, coming off a bad trip, resolved henceforth we'd have a firm, stable time continuum. To this end they required a laborious process to amend the past.



Cheating

When we were little, we'd make Dad play War with us, the dumbest card game ever invented: Cards are divided up among the players, each player puts out one card, high card always wins or if there's a tie ("Fight!"), each of the tied players puts out four more cards and high card (the fourth) wins the lot — and this goes on and on and on until someone has all the cards.

Dull, but that's War.

He'd grimace and play. Soon one of us would shriek, "Daddy! You're cheating!"

We'd always find out eventually. Maybe after he'd won a big fight (ace versus ace), I'd say "Oh no!" and he'd say, "That's OK, I'll let you win the next one" and I'd shriek, "Daddy! You're cheating!"

"Sure," he'd say, grinning, "This stupid game is no fun if you don't cheat."

We'd protest, but we always wanted him to play, as if his cheating made the game more real.

If I must play this game, breathing the foul air, exchanging paper for green paper and saying little to people on elevators, the street, across the dinner table — then here, in my poems, I insist (it's disreputable, but less likely to get me into trouble than fondling other passengers in crowded subways, dropping water balloons from rooftops or burning money) — I insist, stranger, my dear, on cheating.

Don't take candy from strangers, and if a poem starts to get overly familiar, close the book.

Poetry is a self-bitterment activity.

Public Library: Hard to write here where so much has already been written.

Poetry is my lot. What do YOU have a lot of?

What an effort we make not to know what others are thinking. No wonder we have splitting headaches.

A splitting headache has me, poor thing.

This horrible feeling is just a mask on my face, but I can't get it off.

"No hard feelings?" she said. Just that stone in my chest.

Some men marry for money, some for sex, caught up in her net...or gross.

When you greet him, he grimaces, as if "hello" were a 4 letter word. It must be "hell" for him.

Outside In

Laughter is inside-out sobbing. We're outside looking in, shedding tears as what's outside cracks up at us inside. You and I is laughter, since together we are outside of just me and just you, those old teary laughing stocks. When the belly's laughter has exhausted our tears, joy can well up — the cool smooth ripples after laughter's splash.



He's Wagging His Tail — He's Friendly

Snakes — brrrrr! There's no trusting the armless and legless. They can't be tripped up, tied up, caught by the toe, rendered immobile by hamstringing. They can't be hand-cuffed. You can't get answers by yanking fingernails. You can't read their palms. You can't hold or shake hands with them or check for lies by feeling wrist pulse. You can't kick them in the knee. You can't tickle their armpits or stroke their thighs. They leave no fingerprints or footprints. And if they are also chinless, you can't even knock them out. I don't know if a snake is all neck, all tail, all rib cage or just a very long mouth, but the completeness of a snake is scary.

A snake swallowing itself is an ancient symbol for eternity and also, probably, for the Plumber's Union (deep!). To be so complete in so little, such simplicity, is threatening to all our amusing complexities. Look, Ma, no hands!

Cruelty towards those who are unusual is preceded by an embarrassment for them that is too keen to bear.



The First Step

I was four, sitting in the morning light on the single cement step up from the sidewalk in front of our house. A man and a woman (old, I thought), strolling past, looked down at me, smiled and said “Hi there.” How nice. I said “Hi” and smiled back at them. I continued to sit on the step to see who else would say hi to me. Soon a white-haired woman in a violet hat with a veil walked past, pausing to say “Hello” (with a caressing inflection) and smile, to which I replied “Hello” with a big smile. Then another woman, heels aclick (This was 1946, when people still walked — and maybe it was Sunday and they were heading home from church) — younger, like my Mom, and before she noticed me, I said “Hi” and smiled, and she smiled and said “Hello.” Now THAT was power! I helloed lots of people and made them hello me and some of them said “Aren’t you a cutey,” and they all were nice. I don’t know who they were, perhaps never saw them again (not yet), but they seemed then to know me and think I was someone special.

I sat on that step many times. Everyone in the world walked by. They all did it, even the sad faces brightened up and made a smile and said hello or hi or good morning. Then looked sad again, but not quite as sad. They were good people and I was a good person. Not that they were saints, would not do horrible things under the right circumstances, might have been born in Germany and voted for Hitler, might have cheated on taxes, hated Negroes, anything at all, but that’s speculation. What I know is... they smiled, said hello. I think of this when I hear that people are basically good. I think of it when I write poetry. There are so many things I can do in a poem: snarl, make jokes, hate, explain, shock — and I do all this, but mainly I smile and say “Hi!” so that you’ll say “Hi!” back to me, smiling.

New: the Happy Face Diaphragm for Cervix With A Smile!



Riddle of the Trinity

The first person to arrive was I, the second was you and the third was he. Then she arrived, but, oddly, was still only the third person (though none had left). Then ten more arrived, but they, too, were all — still — the third person. And then you arrived — not you, but you three over there — and yet were only the second person. We waited and waited (and in doing so all of us became the first person, a truly religious experience), and many more arrived until there were millions of us, and yet there was no fourth person, only the first, the second and the third, and we three were all, first and last, the first. *[Note: This IS a riddle.]*

Splitting peas from pods — cool taste, crisp as the pod’s POP!

Listening...where will Beethoven’s next note fall? Whoops! It went up and never came down.

Is it sad to be human? Sadder, I think, to be the bathroom mirror or scale in the morning, scrutinized, but never seen for itself, recipient of so few smiles.

Sometimes I feel I’m not much good. If the feeling persists, I begin to feel that goodness isn’t much good.



Humpty Dumpty’s Law

Breakfast.
Fixslow.

Why is Modern Poetry so Depressing?

Because it is often a Prozactivity.

Words are not the air I breathe.
I plunge into them briefly
to emerge with a poem in my talons.



Forty Was Sporty; Fifty Was Nifty; But...

My books and papers everywhere — a pigsty!
 Today I'm sigsty.
 Opinions harden toward a glaring fixity.
 Today I'm sixity.
 "Your name again?" Is this just eccentricity?
 Or am I sicity?
 Behind me and ahead, the years grow misty.
 Can I be sisty?
 "But life begins at..." — Crap! "But sexy sixty..."
 Damned and deep sixed he
 Shall be, dumped head first in the muddy Styx (tee
 Hee!) — he who says "sexy sixtee,"
 And hang him high, transfixed on crucifix tree
 For "life begins at sixtry!"
 I'm balder, fatter...LOOK at this prolixity!
 My God! I'm sixity!

Weather's Hot — Wish You Were Here

You're back home in Virginia
 While I'm still down in Florida —
 A month since I last sinia:
 I miss you. I look forewida
 Your warmth and I withinia,
 A thought that turns me torrida.

"When I say 'jump,' you say 'how high?'"
 At my current weight, I'll just say "how?"

I'm getting so forgetful, even my dictionary
 is losing words.



Falling Asleep Reading

Growing old is like falling asleep while reading,
 noticing that some of the characters are getting
 weird — why does that one (the one in the mirror)
 look exactly like my long dead Dad and how come
 the hero keeps saying...I can't hear what he's
 saying, something about a postcard that needs
 to be crippled? You could follow out that metaphor
 and say that dying is getting lost completely
 in the dream book, no longer even noticing
 how weird and repetitive the story has become,
 but I hope death is more like waking up and
 putting away the book that has fallen open
 against one's chest, laughing at the confusion,
 getting back to a sounder sleep, then
 a clear eyed morning. You'd better be there
 when I wake up: I've used your love to mark my place
 in both books: real and dreamed.

When I can't find you, I'm not sure
 which of us is lost.

Dear friends, do not despair: God loves you, and
 I'm working on it.

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DEAN BLEHERT
 11919 Moss Point Lane
 Reston, VA 20194-1728
<http://www.blehert.com>
dean@blehert.com
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED