

Poem - Iowa Fields

Post by "Joshua" of July 10, 2019 at 2:30 PM

Iowa Fields

to Epicurus

I saw Ilium gleam

As her walls, in a dream,

Watched her sons return home on their shields--

Saw the marching Greek host

In the corn, and the coast

Of Asia in

Iowa fields.

The philosophers spoke

In the shade of the oak

As the willows and cottonwoods reeled

In an October gale

Blowing hearty and hale,

Pages flipping in

Iowa fields

And I wrote out your name

On the face of the stream,

Writ in water but never repealed--

Made your garden to bloom

Like the yucca, festooned;

Flowering lonely in

Iowa fields.
And your precepts I pressed
Like a stamp to my chest--
And a ring on my finger revealed
Where your likeness was cast
And a voice from the past
Rose up godlike in
Iowa fields.
I hoped to see thee again
By the feld or the fen
When the bells of the Twentieth pealed.
But--alas! lies my ring
At the end of all things
In a grave beneath
Iowa fields.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2019 at 2:34 PM

Very nice!

Post by "Joshua" of July 10, 2019 at 6:49 PM

Thank you;

I did up the last stanza first, and wrote the rest as prelude. What I am beginning to understand is that so much of my thinking about Hellenism, philosophy, Epicurus, art, poetry, love,

literature etc. is shadowed--I do not say *overshadowed*--by the hue of mortality. Some will, no doubt, find something morbid in this. A sickness of the soul--the sigh of Ecclesiastes, who has made the diagnosis (that life flows quickly, and leaves very little behind), but did not, *could not*, know the cure. (A god-shaped hole?)

But there is no sickness. No diagnosis to be made. I am not diseased. Not a god-shaped hole, but a whole, atomic in its unity, that needs no gods. I am merely, *complete-ly*, human. *Nothing human is alien to me*, said Terence. *No man is an island*, said Donne. Perhaps the old priest knew as much as the pagan poet after all.

I was 29 years old when I learned that the flower of the yucca was edible. Every lakota boy would have learned that by the age of 4. How many yuccas went untasted by me? The pleasures that salve us are all around; will we see them? We will learn of them in time; those natural palliatives? Not a cure, for we need and want no cure, but a sweetness, the scent of which lifts our heads to ever-higher glories. A light that shines on us in the dark; not like the copper's torch, to catch us slinking in fear; but like the stars, shining into a dim close wood, and finding us rising, rising to their shining!

-josh

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2019 at 7:43 PM

Joshua I think all my life I too have been particularly struck by mortality and the knowledge that life is short. As I have gotten older and had a succession of pets come into my life and pass away, parents, friends, etc., that awareness has just sharpened.