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Steven Hill

## The Shape of This Place

Rave on, rave on, Unknown Journey,  
Rave on bends in the road, concealing our Destination,  
fear not what lurks around the dusty corner,  
    pace thyself, for this Journey is a long one.  
Rave on Deep Breath, pausing to reconsider  
    the next step along the unmarked trail,  
where all things are not possible.  
There is a Shape to this Place,  
let us not be foolish and pretend that there isn't,  
    or that the shape may be anything we desire.  
The dew *does* bead up on the spider web,  
    the mist on the windshield,  
the birds *do* fly in formation;  
you sweep from the *top* of the stairs, not the bottom,  
the rain *does* fall on one side of the mountain and flee the other,  
there is light, there is shadow,  
and the light creates the shadow  
    when the light invades the changeless darkness.

The low rumble of history is in our ears  
but we can barely hear it above the daily din,

the rush of molecules rakes the mass of energy  
traveling at the speed of light  
of this human trajectory.  
Solid hisses to vapor, frozen melts to liquid,  
molecules slowed to the point of density  
    know the comfort of place and time;  
and the sorrow of flesh and bone,  
of sickness and suffering,  
raw nerved and scarred  
    foreboding the passage of night swallowing the day,  
and the customs that have so bitterly divided us.  
There is a limit to the bounty of this Universe,  
let us not be rash and say that there isn't.  
Homo sapiens *do* speak in many tongues,  
    we *do* lose things in the hallways of our minds,  
our dual natures create and destroy what we love and hate,  
our tragedies and triumphs etched  
    into the papyrus of history.  
Incited by the march toward  
    the mundane of daily survival,  
we creatures *do* eat food  
we *do* weed a garden that feeds,  
we sweat and grimace to pluck our food from the earth,  
    face to the dirt (we do not photosynthesize).  
We do circulate, inside and out,  
    we inhale, we perspire,  
we migrate and endure,  
our children are born inside a  
    violent push of amniotic ambition,  
we create and destroy which further re-shapes  
    the Shape of this thing.  
The Earth does feed us  
    and it does spew forth destruction,  
and We, being Earth, do the same and pray.  
The Shape of this Place is known, unknown and unknowable,  
surviving the revolutions of this Rotating Home,  
we are along for the ride if we don't destroy ourselves first,  
    our present layered upon layers over a troubled past,  
Janus-faced turned toward an anxious future.

So rave on Civilization, rave on Evolution,  
rave on through the agricultural and industrial revolutions,  
the post-industrial, the computer and global revolutions,  
through the atomic and cyber and AI age,  
Rave on words on printed page,  
    on digital platforms crackling with Gutenberg electrons  
which we pray do not steal from  
    the Purpose of our Souls.  
Rave on blessed oneness of the goal, which is  
to return from our wandering journey and finally

know the Shape of this Place for the first time.  
For the parcel of heat *does* rise over the equator,  
it *does* then migrate  
    in the direction of the poles,  
it cools, it descends, it drops its rain  
    all over unsuspecting creatures below;  
vital waterdrops collect on blades of grass  
    in the shady coolness of the mountain side.  
The water then migrates back to the equator and  
cycles back and back and back again,  
caught in carbon heat traps for struggling seed,  
    unleashed by a hurricane firestorm of violent warning:  
        we are fools if we do not heed.

And onto the open page we bleed, because  
    the life we require is one of Ideas:  
Ideas that are shaped like the Creator's mountains,  
ideas that may *move* mountains,  
    there is philosophy and there is ideology,  
    there is religion and tribal iron,  
there are nation-states and balance of powers  
    and mass society and fragile governance;  
small people living through large times,  
there's the rosary to heaven that we strive to climb,  
there is authoritarianism and there is democracy,  
    tumbled through the coin toss of history.  
So rage on battle of Ideas, rage,  
rage on Civilization, sprung from the brutish Cage,  
rave on for the Shape of what the plant has to teach:  
    that a seed grows up *and* down,  
    into the soil and into the sky,  
we are like that soil, that plant, in time  
of the morrow's sunshine,  
the mystery of the seed pushing up  
    through the soil of our Birth,  
Four Score and Seven somethings ago,  
    When in the Course of Human Events or so,  
we must convince the Head *and* the Heart  
    if we are to transform deed and sprout the seed,  
    and redirect the misdirected trajectory of history.  
The strength of Forgiveness battling  
the form of whatever's trying to eat us,  
    between the idea and the creation,  
    between the ore and the invention,  
        inspired hands overcome the  
        scars of the early wounds;  
    between the hope and the goal,  
    between the belief and the act,  
        may Wisdom reveal its elusive path.  
There is a people trying to bond with

the purple bruises of their broken dreams,  
    trying to understand what it all means,  
        daring to find some reason to believe,  
            to recognize that there is something at stake here,  
                something fragile and sacred,  
                    at the black-eye of this storm.

There is a Shape to this place, let us not be reckless and  
fantasize that there isn't,  
the apple fell *down* on Newton's head, not up,  
the apples *do* rot and melt to mineral,  
the mineral then *does* get absorbed by newborn bones,  
    which grow and thrive and live and love, and  
    eventually grow old, cold, ashen and grey.  
So rave on edifice, rave on dialectic,  
Rave on Holy Shape before us,  
    time is galloping past, it is later than we think.  
*I* can see a northern light on the distant horizon  
*I* can hear a beautiful song, of a day not far away,  
    singing acts of love that are  
acts of Bravery in a warring world,  
with a purity of heart and drawn to the light,  
    we may yet come to know the Shape of this Place,  
but we have to want it as much as Life itself,  
for it *is* life,  
the Holy Shape of this Place before us is Life,  
    *we* are the Potential and Kinetic Deed,  
and *we* are the germinating Seed,  
thought and intention transformed into action,  
so rave on, rave on, rave on!

(*"Liquid Words"* appears on the next page.)

## Liquid Words

It's all different now, was it  
ever the same?  
Liquid words flow out,  
lending shape to the space, and move  
on.

In Grand Central Station,  
a rare puff-cheeked Bird blows  
his golden horn into the great hall,  
the sound starts somewhere down in

his Triple Warmer Spot,  
rises up his pipe

and expands into bubbles that float  
away. Some commuters  
tap their foot  
some read the *Post*  
others briefly glimpse the shape of  
their interiors.

A dozen of them wait side by side  
like a giant jigsaw  
straining for assembly,

there are dimes in his hat  
reflecting lamplight,  
catches my eye  
catching eyes in the line

with the belltone Santas  
and the passing hamburgs and  
bandanas,  
mouths, the horns, the countless interiors  
stuffed with,  
hurrying to,  
their endless pieties  
and anxieties

the great stream of humanity  
rushes past.

The Bird's liquid words  
fill the great hall,  
convection sixteenth-notes rising among  
skyscrapers squinting  
into the sun, like giant periscopes

curious to look  
this way and that,  
scanning backward down  
the island spine  
of a distant 24 buck shore.

About then he stops blowing because  
he suddenly realizes:  
it's a hard choir out there:  
amidst the clatter and the clutter:  
not enough coin for  
a crust of bread  
or the battered overhead,

the lofty notes leave his lips and  
aspire to heaven,  
but instead turn to stone and

fall with a  
crash  
and a  
clatter,  
smashing to  
bits

all over the  
glittering stone floor,  
and finally he realizes:

If you want something to stay the same,  
love it unconditionally.

If you want something to change --

-- smash it --

indiscriminately --

and then wait and wait and wait

, for the coin in the cup  
and then he resumes  
blowing again

, strong  
Like a super hero  
trying to hold back the  
meteors raining down,  
toes tapping on the basilica floor.

Steven Hill ([www.Steven-Hill.com](http://www.Steven-Hill.com)) is a contributing writer and principal of *Caveat Lector* and the author of seven books of political nonfiction. He is the editor and chief contributor to the online publication [DemocracySOS](http://DemocracySOS) and has published poems and short fiction in a number of publications, including *Columbia Journal*, *Minnesota Review*, *San Fernando Poetry Journal*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *Struggle*, *Prophetic Voices*, and the anthologies *Sparkle and Blink*, *Grasp the Rainbow*, and *Poets for a Livable Planet*. His plays have been produced in New York City (Off-Off Broadway), Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. His website can be found at [www.Steven-Hill.com](http://www.Steven-Hill.com)