

Murphy's Bedtime Poems

A Baker's Dozen of Near-Classic
Poems on the Management of
Projects over the Ages

J. Davidson Frame

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Softback I S B N : 0-9726729-6-6

FIRST EDITION

HB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface: An Amazing Bequest

I have been singularly blessed these past twenty years to have as a neighbor a fine old man. He passed away just recently, and I now feel a hole in my life - a sense that a piece of me has been removed.

No one is quite sure how old he was at the time of his death. One thing we do know is that he was very old. If he had a family, this was lost on us, since during the twenty years I befriended him I encountered neither kith nor kin. It is strange that in all the hours of chats I had with him, he told me almost nothing definitive of his past. I could deduce some facts by examining the bric-a-brac he had in his parlor and bedroom. For example, I believe he may have served in the military, since on a bureau there was a yellowing photo of a young Air Force captain, who I presume was him. As a joke, I would call him captain, and he never corrected me.

He would tell me stories from time to time, and insisted that that was all they were: stories. I often wondered whether they were fiction or fact. Perhaps he

was revealing to me in an indirect way his autobiography. I don't know. But if they were fact, then what a woe-filled life he lived. The stories told of countless ventures, building this and that, and they all ended in the same fashion: despite the best efforts of the protagonists, things would fall apart. And the old man would cap his stories in an identical fashion. He would say: "Listen to me, young man, because what I am about to tell you is an eternal truth: If something can go wrong, it will."

Each day, at day's end, I would visit him and bring him his mail. We would chat a while about the weather, my family, or his ruminations, and then I would leave, only to return again the next evening. And so it went for twenty years.

In the end, it was clear that his days were numbered. On my last visit to his place, the doctor was preparing to take him to a hospice. My old neighbor asked the doctor if he could have a moment alone with me, and the doctor complied and left the room. Then with shaky, mottled hands, the old man removed a large envelope from beneath his bedcovers. The envelope was of the old manila kind that was common so many years ago, but is

rarely encountered today. Around it was wrapped a frayed cord.

“Take this, young man,” my old neighbor said. “Inside you will find a life’s work of collection. It is a veritable treasure trove of wisdom and insights from some of the world’s great artists. I will soon be gone. But I need to know before I leave, that the works inside this envelope will be shared with the world. Promise me you will do what you can to disseminate them.”

I was not certain what I was getting myself into, but I could not deny this old man his last request. I answered: “I will do as you want.”

He died that afternoon in the ambulance, on his way to the hospice. When I learned of his death, I took the envelope and carefully untied the cord. I opened the envelope and found it contained thirteen works of poetry by some of the world’s greatest bards. To the best of my knowledge, none has been published before. Although they express views in different styles – some having strong meter, some employing rhyme, others blank verse, others free verse – they have in common one universal feature: each is about *getting the job done*, on time,

within budget, and according to specifications. What nobler sentiment, so fit for poetic expression, than a passion for getting things done!

And so, dear reader, as you review these works, think upon the reflections of generations of writers and thinkers on humankind's noble projects. May you receive the inspiration from them that I have.

In conclusion, I dedicate this collection of poems to my old neighbor and friend: Captain Edward Murphy.

The Editor

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From Emily Dickinson, "I Never Saw a Pylon"

I never saw a Gantt chart
And never made a plan
Yet know I how consultants work
I saw one, then I ran

From Edgar Allan Poe, "The Maven"

The maven's words caused me to panic
The audit's started, this was clear
In his dark corner, he looked satanic
I wish I had a cold draft beer
And then the churning, the acid burning
my stomach turning in abject fear
I asked the maven: "How long the audit?"
Quoth the maven: "Forevermore"

From William Blake's, "The Project"

Project, project running late
missing crucial deadline dates
What will ever come of me
if I can't earn my fixed fee?

From William Shakespeare, "To Bid or Not to Bid?"

To bid or not to bid: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous audits,
Or to hide our troubles in buried books ...

Emily Dickinson

I Never Saw a Pylon

I never saw a pylon
I never saw a truss
Yet know I how a building looks
When it is built cost-plus

I never saw a Gantt chart
And never made a plan
Yet know I how consultants work
I saw one, then I ran

Commentary

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was one of America's great poets. Her poems are short and filled with wonderful allusions to death and things unseen, mostly weird. While many experts view her as "the pithy poet,"

her friends (to the best of our knowledge, she had three) jokingly called her the "anomic ace of Amherst," because her works, though pleasant and sympathetic, display a certain detachment from the real world..

Dickinson is well-known for being a recluse. In her twenties, she began to withdraw from the world and after the age of forty, she refused to leave her house. So it is not surprising that she never saw a pylon or truss. For all we know, she never saw a street lamp, fire plug, buggy, or Golden Retriever.

Still, although there were many things she did not personally experience, her ability to visualize and project what happens in the real world is remarkable. In the poem presented here, for example, her treatment of the significance of cost-plus contracts is handled more effectively than by any other poet in literature - even though she never personally worked with a cost-plus contract!

Edgar Allan Poe

The Maven

Once when I was feeling lowly
as I ate my sandwich slowly
mulling over what need be done
while tasting salt on seeded bun
I heard a grumbling, something tumbling,
something fumbling in my room
"Tis a passing truck," I thought
Only this and nothing more

In my office, in darkest shadows,
in a corner where light is dim
I saw a specter, just a shadow
and felt the rumble deep within
This scary rumble, a trembling tumble,
my fingers fumbled with a pen
"Tis just an airplane flying lowly"
Only this and nothing more

The darkened specter came not from heaven
but from Accounting just down the floor
This dark-eyed devil, bean-counting maven
had passed unnoticed through open door
But still the rumble, this lowly jumble
I now felt humble at my desk
Then spoke the maven: "Forevermore"

The maven's words caused me to panic
The audit's started, this was clear
In his dark corner, he looked satanic
I wish I had a cold draft beer
And then the churning, the acid burning
my stomach turning in abject fear
I asked the maven: "How long the audit?"
Quoth the maven: "Forevermore"

It's then I knew the source of rumble
It came I knew from inside me
My aching stomach was all a-jumble
caused by fear and anxiety
I took a Maalox to soothe the sharp pain
and felt relief and calm again
"You will find nothing. My books are spotless."
The rumble passed ... forevermore

Commentary

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) will always be known as the premier writer of gloom and doom. He is the originator of the gothic novel. His 'The Fall of the House of Usher' oozes an ambience of decrepitude, cobwebs, and creepy characters. His tale 'Murder in the Rue Morgue' is widely acknowledged to be the world's first modern detective story. His short tales, such as 'The Pit and the Pendulum' and 'The Telltale Heart' cause even the most cynical and tough teenagers to look under their beds before turning in at night.

In 'The Maelstrom,' we see Poe at his best. His mastery of rhyme, meter, and alliteration as illustrated in this work are unparalleled. Also, it is impossible to read this piece and not wonder at his clever employment of symbolism. Who is the Maelstrom? Is he a symbol of the great forces of the universe that, while themselves ordered, represent disorder? And just what is this mysterious 'rumbling' that the poem addresses over and over? Does it reflect life's uncertainty and the volcanic forces that can disrupt even the most stable life? Is it a prescient forecast of the Krakatoa cataclysm? Finally, why "forevermore"? A literary critic could spend a lifetime addressing this last question. Indeed, why

*"forevermore"? Why not, for example, "Nevermore"?
Something to ponder!*

*One of the most interesting features of 'The
Maven' is its demonstrated insight into the role of audits
in business operations. Pity the poor project manager or
operations manager who ignores the impact of audits!
Poe, better than any other poet – past or present –
expresses an understanding of audits that is astonishing.
Could this be an explanation of his obsession with the
macabre? When a young man, did he actually experience
an audit, and did this in some fashion lead to post
traumatic stress syndrome?*

*One final comment: Several literary critics who
have been shown an advanced copy of this poem have
noted that it was unlikely that Poe, a noted alcoholic and
drug addict, "solved" the crisis described in the poem
with a mere dose of Maalox. It is more likely that he
"fixed" his anxiety with opium. But there is no "smoking
gun" proving this point. It is unlikely we will ever know for
certain what it was that the protagonist of 'The Maven'
really took.*

William Shakespeare

To Bid or Not to Bid

To bid or not to bid: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous audits,
Or to hide our troubles in buried books,
And through denial end them. To lie, to cheat.
No more; to cheat perchance to win: aye, there's the rub;
For with the cheating and the lies what gains may come
May trigger ungodly checks; a scrutiny
By which our books and actions may be revealed
For what they are; a sham. Before providence,
The deception withers, a boon to some,
Whose prospects hang on our misfortune.
But if we win, we could bear the whips and scorns of time.
Let us then bid and gain the name of action.

Commentary

*William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is justifiably
acknowledged to be the greatest literary player in the*

English language – perhaps in any language. His skillful use of words and meter are unsurpassed. No writer before or after Shakespeare has demonstrated such mastery of the English tongue. But perhaps his genius really lies in his understanding of the human condition and psychology. He had uncanny insights into what motivates people. He expressed their foibles and aspirations better than any other writer in history.

'To Bid or Not to Bid' shows an astonishing understanding of the choices facing contractors when they must decide whether or not to undertake the time-consuming, painful, and expensive process of bidding on requests for proposals. In reading this poem, one can see the dilemmas faced by Othello, Lear, Hamlet and Macbeth in deciding how to proceed with their lives, in a world where ethics are blurred and nothing is clear.

What contractor can read the words "to cheat perchance to win; aye, there's the rub" without being overwhelmed with emotion? We are not talking about small potatoes here. We are talking about Life's Big Issues. Let's face it: if you can bid with fake data and get away with it, what's the problem? Or in Shakespeare's words, "So what's the rub?"

William Blake

The Project

Project, project running late
missing crucial deadline dates
What will ever come of me
if I can't earn my fixed fee?

Can I help but feel so lost
when reviewing project costs?
I'm growing desperate - what the heck
There is no chance I'll meet the spec

In a dream, here's what I saw:
Grim Reaper wielding Murphy's Law
My feet are numb - I cannot flee
Contract claims are all I see

I wake and find I'm slick with sweat
Acid reflux is what I get
in this thankless job I hold
My bounce is gone - I'm feeling old

Project, project missing dates
Deadlines gone and tasks done late
What will ever come of me
if I can't earn my fixed fee?

Commentary

William Blake (1757-1827) was an outstanding mystical poet and artist. Because he was an engraver by profession, he was able to accompany his poems with colorful, mystical – a bit offbeat – engravings that established a context for the verse. Some of these engravings are downright weird. Among his contemporaries, he earned the name “Spooky.” In fact, after Blake’s death Wordsworth suggested he was a bit nutty, saying: “There was no doubt that this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott.”

Blake’s intensity is obvious in the poem presented here, “Project, Project.” The poem shows him to be bedeviled by foreboding dreams that adumbrate uneasy times and events (“In a dream here’s what I saw: Grim

Reaper wielding Murphy's Law"). His anxieties even lead to a physical response ("Acid reflux is what I get in this thankless job I hold"). Then there is the mystical symbolism that oozes from the text. In particular, the references at the outset and conclusion of the poem to the possibility of not receiving his "fixed fee" reflect a view that life's tumult shakes the earth-heaven-hell superstructure of the Universe to its very foundations! Nutty or not, this is powerful stuff.

Robert Frost

Stopping by the Water Cooler on a Thursday Evening

Whose tasks these are, I think I know
It seems they're going rather slow
The team is nervous, filled with gloom
Overruns just grow and grow

I peek inside the project room
And sense a weight of dismal doom
Paper piles stand everywhere
The tasks won't finish sometime soon

A man is tugging at his hair
His eyes are red, filled with despair
I hear a sob from somewhere near
A woman's groaning in her chair

It's sad, so sad and very clear
this is a place that sees no cheer
The pain is great and weighs a ton
salved only by four pints of beer

This project will go on and on
with kudos given to no one
and miles to go before it's done
and miles to go before it's done

Commentary

Robert Frost (1874-1963) is, perhaps, America's best-loved poet. Because he employed rhyme, clear meter and easy symbolism, and eschewed^a difficult words, he became a poet of the masses, who have limited understanding of words like "probity," "prolix," and ... "eschew^b."

Literary critics who examined "Stopping by the Water Cooler on a Thursday Evening" have discovered many interesting nuggets in this work. Perhaps the most intriguing are tied to the last quatrain:

This project will go on and on
with kudos given to no one
and miles to go before it's done
and miles to go before it's done

First, literary critics from Georgia and further south (including Argentina), misread 'kudos' and read, instead, 'kudzu,'^c and this has had an enormous impact on their interpretation of the poem. In their view, the poem reflects the powerful forces we encounter in today's world that - like kudzu - overwhelm all they encounter. One Georgian critic - R. Salacious Gravestone Whitmore III, who lists his address as 'Tara' - wrote a 732 page monologue expounding on this point.

Second, literary critics from New England and California (Editor: "the land of fruits and nuts") focused on the last lines that are presented as a refrain: "and miles to go before it's done." Frost stated this line not once, but twice. Critics emphasize that these lines are a clear reference to death and life's long journey, blah, blah, blah. Anyhow, a careful literary analysis conducted by the Editor of this volume suggests the Georgians have, in all likelihood, got it right. In the Editor's opinion, 'kudos' is indeed a typographical error and Frost intended to write 'kudzu.'

Notes

^a *In English, eschew means 'avoids'*

^b *See footnote a*

^c *A climbing leguminous plant from Asia, pueraria lobata, which was introduced into the American South to deal with soil erosion. A rapacious floral bully, it soon will become the only plant in America.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, IV

The Whine of the Ancient Programmer

Some friends and I were entering
the Comdex show one day
when a geeky guy stood in our path
intent to block our way

"Come here young man and pay me heed
and hear what I shall say
For when you hear the tale I tell
you won't forget this day

"Some years ago when I was young
and master of Fortran
I knew Cobol, assembler too -
the best in all the land

"Then one day my life grew dark
They made me manager
which gave me grief and grievous pain
I hardly could endure

"Meetings, meetings all the time
I could not work or think
Paper, paper everywhere
This life drove me to drink

"I whined a lot and fussed and fumed
and complained to my boss:
'I feel as though around my neck
I wear an albatross'

"And then at night I saw in bed
the ghosts of colleagues past
'Drop this job,' they said to me
'and flee your workplace fast.'

"I fled my job, not to return
and wandered here and there
I program this and design that,
but cautious, I'm aware

that if I am a bit too good
in doing what I do,
I will become a manager
then horror will ensue."

When the geek had told his tale
his eyes turned dull and dim
My friends and I smiled nervously
then slipped away from him

Commentary

Sadly, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, IV (born 1947) is a nobody. He has spent most of his life as a software developer of modest capability. Interestingly, in this era of advanced software languages, he still programs in Fortran II (last supported in 1971), and by all accounts does a reasonably good job of it! His greatest distinction is his name, which reminds everyone that his great grandfather was the famous English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, IV has asked his friends and acquaintances to call him The Fourth. Unfortunately, he inherited his great grandfather's addiction gene, and developed a dependence on alcohol, which led his friends to call him The Fifth, since he always carries a fifth of bourbon^s with him wherever he travels. He keeps it in a paper sack

In "The Whine of the Ancient Programmer," The Fourth has attempted to bring his great granddad's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" up to date. It is said that in preparation for the writing effort, he consumed a fifth of bourbon in one hour. Then the visions began, which resulted in the poem contained in this volume.

Clearly, The Fourth lacks some of the mystical vision of his great granddad. This is possibly explained by the fact that he achieved his insights by consuming bourbon excessively, while great granddad's drug of choice was opium. An interesting speculation.

Still, in reviewing The Fourth's work, one is forced to say: "Not bad." The narrative is engaging. The meter and rhyme are competent. Most important, after completing the poem, readers have been so affected by the tale that they feel a little creepy. This is the sign of effective poetry.

Note

^aBefore the USA began its slow process of conversion to the metric system (which is still not complete), alcoholic spirits were usually purchased in one of two volumes: a pint (which had the advantage of fitting into a coat pocket, therefore being hard to detect by the guardians of public morals) and the fifth (which stands for a fifth of a gallon). Today, the old fifth is roughly equivalent to a 750 ml bottle of spirits. Back in the 1960s, a seventeen year old would go into a liquor store and boldly ask the retailer for, say, a

fifth of vodka. The retailer might ask to see some official ID to prove the young person was old enough to purchase liquor. At this point, the seventeen year old - whose only ID is a pass to the high school gym - might say: "Okay, then give me a pint," to which the confused clerk would respond, "Okay."

Geoffrey Chaucer

The Builder's Tale: A Sonnet

When April's showers bringeth^a May flowers
The water table riseth^b to my vexation
My travail proceedeth^c throughout the hours
Yet still I be stymied in the excavation
I find so poor the site conditions
The earth be filled with dross and boulders
I feel the weight of earth's perdition^d
As though the world sits on my shoulders
My mouth be filled with gall^e and bile^f
As earth resists my spade's intrusion
I labour^g with sweat on brow and all the while
My poor head be filled with great confusion
For on this spot I strive to build a structure grand
and fair
If I canst not complete these early steps, there will
be
nothing there

Notes:

^a Old English for *brings*

- ^b Old English for *rises*
- ^c Old English for *proceeds*
- ^d A condition referenced heavily in the old days that refers to something really bad
- ^e Old English for *bile*
- ^f Old English for *gall*
- ^g A quaint way that *labor* was spelled in Old English, and that - amazingly - is still used in the United Kingdom today

Commentary

Geoffrey Chaucer (1347-1400) is recognized, by many literary critics, to be the first major author employing what had over the centuries evolved into the English language. The Big Problem with Chaucer is that hardly anyone - especially high school seniors and college freshman - has any idea of what he is writing about. Consider the opening lines of his 'Canterbury Tales':

Whan that Aprill with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour

In today's vernacular: "Huh?"

Fortunately, in the sixteenth century, a writer with substantial free time on his hands – Sir Wallace of Filemignon – translated Chaucer's original 'The Builder's Tale' into contemporary English, which is presented here. Unfortunately, contemporary English in the sixteenth century is seriously off-target in today's vernacular. Consequently, the Editor has included helpful explanatory notes to deal with some of the more obscure words contained in the poem. The Editor believes that to translate the original Chaucer into modern English would obscure its original 'look and feel.' Wallace seems to have got it mostly right, so the version of 'The Builder's Tale' presented here employs Wallace's translation.

Regarding the content of the poem, it is clear that Chaucer had only primitive knowledge of what it takes to build a castle. If ditches filled with ground water presented an unsurpassable obstacle to him in building castles ... well, he should have studied civil engineering more assiduously.

William Wordsworth

My Heart Leaps Up

My heart leaps up when I behold
a project that's on time
So it is when we break ground
So it is when costs are down
So it is when design is bold
Now this is fine

The project's father of the plan
And I shall wish my days to be
free from budget variance
and without undue penalty

Commentary

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was one of the most successful English poets of the nineteenth century. Indeed, toward the end of his life (in 1843) he was named Poet Laureate of England by Queen Victoria, reflecting

his great popularity among both the upper reaches of English aristocracy and the common rabble (chiefly indentured servants, slum dwellers and yeomen).

Wordsworth's poems were completely accessible. His "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" employs straightforward rhyme and flawless meter, and is understood even by those unfortunate people who do not excel at any activity more complex than mowing a lawn.

Many Wordsworth authorities were surprised upon reading the recently discovered poem offered here that he had such strong insights into the effective management of projects. One stated: "I always thought he was a bit of an effete sissy. You know, what kind of a real man would write 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'?" Yet this work shows that Wordsworth was in touch with the real world, you know ... breaking ground, cost control, contract penalties, and such."

Walt Whitman

I Hear the Project Team Singing

I hear the project team singing, crisp voices
reaching skyward I hear
Those of schedulers, singing loud and strong as
they nail down the project milestones
The budgeters singing as they lay out the pennies
that will pay the bills
The singing programmers, whose nimble fingers
over the keyboards go, clicking the music of
the spheres
The clerks singing the praises of ink and paper, the
vendors of selling wares
The leader, with baton, bringing harmony to all out
of discord, and boosting volume 'til it
reaches orchestral proportions
Each singing a part that is in the score, a piece
each owns and which marks the project
terrain
They burst forth with their open mouths, singing
melodious song as day turns to night, and
night to dawn

Commentary

One of the chief characteristics of poems is their employment of metaphor, as when poets talk of a beauty's ruby lips, or of dawn's outstretched fingers. You might think, when reading "I Hear the Project Team Singing," that Whitman is talking metaphorically, where the act of people singing together as they do a job symbolizes a harmonious disposition toward teamwork and a job well done. However, it turns out that Whitman was being quite literal in this poem. He wrote it during the Civil War, while he lived in Washington, DC. During this time, he served as a volunteer at a local hospital, where he would care for wounded soldiers brought back from the front. He was asked by the hospital officials whether he could help organize an effort to keep better records of the patients and their physical condition. He agreed and led a project to do this. One of his first acts was to gather the team members together and organize them as a choir. For the most part, the tenor section was comprised of clerks, the bass section of budgeters and bookkeepers, the contraltos of vendors, and the sopranos (several of whom were actually men singing falsetto) of schedulers.

Alas, the very success of Whitman's work choir led to its undoing. Apparently, as Whitman's team toiled they created such a noisy ruckus that recuperating soldiers complained that they could not rest and recuperate. Ultimately, the hospital administrator asked Whitman to have his people "button their lips." The chorus stopped. At this point, Whitman could no longer hear his project team singing.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Go the Many, Go the Few

“Half a month, half a month
half a month longer
is all it will take,”
we tell the client
“Forward the designers!
Move on able testers!”
 Into the design review
 go the many, go the few

Forward brave teammates
to meet your meant fate
Whatever you face
keep your path straight
Yours is not to question why
or to issue plaintiff sighs
or when sad, to weep and cry
 Yours is to march and to renew
 Go the many, go the few

Vendors to the right of us
Clients to the left of us
Bosses found in front of us
Each purportedly omniscient
but in truth deficient
We press and lurch forward
yes, and we struggle toward
the customer review
Go the many, go the few

We may drop by the wayside, one by one
but we do not give up, we do not succumb
We do what we must do
and stand together
once so many, and now so few

Commentary

"Go the Many, Go the Few" is a classic example of narrative verse. Like Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," it is designed to stir the passions and inspire great effort to achieve some noble goal. It is said that Tennyson (1809-1892) wrote this work after experiencing problems with the building of an elaborate

gazebo on his estate. He could see that the local workers were not seriously engaged in the work effort, and would tend to drift off and nap among the haystacks. Tennyson wanted the men to put their backs to the job, but he knew his limitations. He realized that he was not a leader of work crews, so he did not attempt to meet with his men and charge them to work harder. Rather, he did what he knew best: he penned this inspiring poem, and posted it at the work site for the men to review when they arrived at the job. Unfortunately, none of them could read, so the poem was posted unread until a rain shower washed away the stirring words. The gazebo was finally finished five months behind schedule.

e. e. cummings

project close-out

in the waning days(done days done)
when what's done is done and little fun
remains, just paperwork and double check
to cross the tees and dot the eyes - heck

in the waning days i post-implement
whetherweather is sunny or inclement
like watching autumn's autumn leaves

fall
down
from
grand
oak
trees

i watch and look for variance
and hold to notone nottwo notthree
notfour norfive
but six sigma as my standard

as project is done
and
comes
to
an
ordered
end

Commentary

Without question, e. e. cummings (1894-1962) is best known for writing poems using only lower case letters. What is not recognized, however, is that this was caused by the malfunctioning of the shift keys on both the left and right side of his typewriter. According to one of his acolytes, who would visit him weekly and bring him a bag of fresh lychees - which he adored - the two shift keys did not break simultaneously. First the left shift key failed, then three months later the right. This led to an interesting effect on his writing, as the following poem makes clear. We are fortunate that cummings wrote three drafts of this poem over a five

month period, because it enables us to witness the evolution of his typography. The first draft was crafted one week before the breakdown of the left shift key and reads:

On a brisk winter day in New York City
Leaves swirl in whirling fashion
Going up then down, in syncopation
With my heart - I felt pity

He wrote this first draft for his own purposes. When his editor asked for a copy of the poem, Cummings typed it anew - just after the left shift key failed - resulting in the following outcome:

on a brisk winter day in new york City
leaves swirl in whirling fashion
Going up then down, in syncopation
With my heart - i felt pity

Then when a final draft was submitted to the publisher - this after both left and right shift keys failed to work - the poem appeared as follows:

on a brisk winter day in new york city
leaves swirl in whirling fashion
going up then down, in syncopation
with my heart - i felt pity

Many of cummings's friends noted that the absence of capitals in his poems was distracting, and asked him why he didn't employ them. He described the malfunctioning of his typewriter. Some of his friends inquired: "Then why not buy a new typewriter?" To this he responded: "are you kidding/ i've used this machine my whole adult life. i won't abandon it now."

Robert Browning

The Project's Now Done, All's Right on This Earth

We worked through the night
Amidst angst and cries
The project's now done
A job of real worth

We relish the sight
Seen by tired eyes
Of the rising sun
All's right on this earth!

Commentary

What distinguishes Robert Browning (1812-1889) from most of the other poets in this volume is that he appears to be an amazingly normal individual. He had no drug dependencies. He was not sexually conflicted. He did

not suffer bouts of melancholy. He did not feel compelled to write in lower case letters. He was not a recluse.

No, Browning appears to be a normal guy. After he married Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861), the two became a famous husband-wife poem-writing team. Over their fourteen year marriage (they married late and Elizabeth died relatively young), they spent a substantial portion of their time writing love poems to each other. One product of this exchange was Elizabeth's sublime work, "How Do I Love Thee, Let Me Count the Ways." In this current age when marriages sour so quickly, the Brownings' devotion to each other is touching.

When not writing love poems for Elizabeth, Robert turned his attention to more standard topics. "The Project's Now Done, All's Right with the World" shows him to be someone with a positive attitude. In this work, he captures the exhilaration experienced by project teams that do a good job. While Murphy's Law looms over all projects, Robert Browning shows us that project life need not be all gloom and doom.

Imhotep

The Anubis Prayer for Guidance on Building Pyramids

Praise ye Anubis, and know ye that he delighteth in the works of man which are delivered under his instructions.

The wise man planneth his labour with deliberation before he setteth spade to earth or layeth brick upon brick or placeth a beam of cedar athwart upright pillars.

And he gathereth an assembly of labourers in right numbers and each according to his abilities; and by right direction, he instructeth them on the ways of their travail.

And as they labour, he measureth their efforts; the depth and breath of their earthworks and the abundance of articles stored in their appointed chambers. And for their labour, each is recompensed in accordance with his contribution as measured; and the recompense shall not be greater than what the travail truly earneth.

And it shall be done in its appointed time, so that praise and glory will be earned when the tasks are achieved according to their appointed time, and in accordance with the abundance of silver established for the effort, and to the satisfaction of the task master.

Praise and glory are the fruits of travail well done. So be it.

Commentary

It is appropriate that this collection of poems finish with the oldest – a work written at the dawn of civilization.

The prayer to Anubis cited here was inscribed on the bottom side of a large block of stone found at the pyramid of Cheops in Cairo's suburb of Heliopolis. It was unearthed in the late 1990s. Although it is impossible to determine with certainty who the author of the prayer is, there is inscribed at the end of the statement a mark that appears to be the seal of Imhotep. Imhotep (ca 2500 BC) was the builder of the first pyramid. If this prayer did indeed originate with Imhotep, then this is truly a great discovery, since it shows that this

accomplished builder was a proponent of good project management practice 4,500 years ago!

Consider that this prayer calls for the measurement of work results. Even today, few project organizations have systems in place to measure project performance (“And as they labor, he measureth their efforts); yet Imhotep employed this practice 2,500 years before Julius Ceasar was born.

Equally astonishing, it appears that Imhotep employed performance based contracting, a methodology that is just gaining currency in the so-called “modern” world (“And for their labour, each is recompensed in accordance with his contribution as measured; and the recompense shall not be greater than what the travail truly deserveth”).

Finally, it seems almost certain that Imhotep and his crew practiced management by objectives, MBO (“And it shall be done in its appointed time, so that praise and glory will be earned when the tasks are achieved according to their appointed time, and in accordance with the abundance of silver established for the effort, and to the satisfaction of the task master.”) When contacted about this development, Peter Drucker, the father of MBO, could only say: “Vow” in a heavy Austrian accent.