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# VISITING MYSELF

*16 poems*

*by David Haden*



2011

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# POETRY

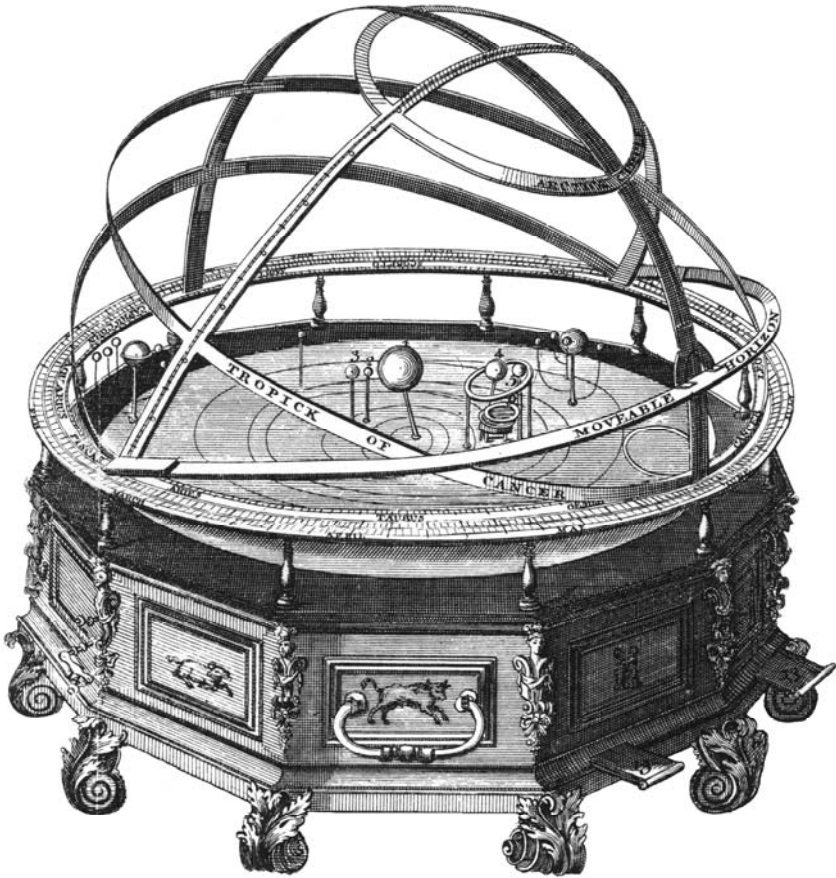
A voice of logic slices up the lie,  
But cannot anchor truth, or guard a throne,  
For logic chooses always to say 'why?'  
And squares the circles set in bone.

A page of poetry tumbles logic's things  
And sets us slantwise into other eyes,  
From which we might look back  
And glimpse  
                    our unbroken wings.



# STORM WARNING

The storm will pass.  
Against black clouds,  
Ravens compose a rainbow.



*An orrery.*

# BOREDOM

Boredom is a horizontal  
Black-soiled field  
On which my mind slides,  
Like a stabbing plough.  
Going too fast,  
Too shallow,  
Slicing through reappraisals, mitigations.  
It shudders onward,  
Lifting up splinters  
Of shattered mirror  
That plot and star my wildest furrow  
— sending my pen, like a bold crow,  
swooping at the turnings.



# LETTER FROM UNCLE'S HOUSE

*for Ivor Cutler*

Dear Daddy,

I am enjoying my stay with Uncle Stephen.

He says I am a lovely laddie

Who ought to be a heathen.

Uncle Stephen wears dark grey

To which he pins bright flowers.

He has big beetle-boxes on display.

I stare at them for hours.

He is a clever man

Who writes me poems (they must be learned).

I gave one to Gran.

Now they are burned.

He showed me his rusty shed

Where wicked words are chained,

Each one sealed in lead

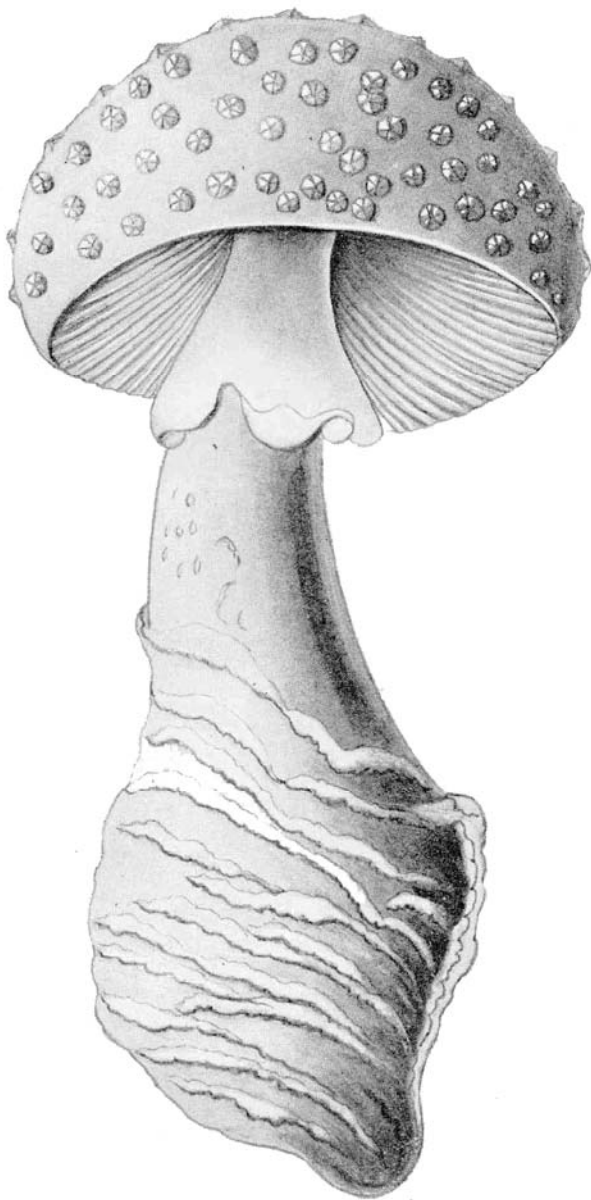
To stop it getting stained.

We shall eat dinner soon

Since he is at the stove,

Streaming a giant mushroom

We found growing in the grove.



# OVER THE BORDER AND BACK

Hollow October sinks  
Gone round and rotten

The keen snout of November snuffles  
Around burnt-out bonfires

Frost beads and winks around  
The sharp eyes of pumpkin lamps

With black-cat tread the hallowed dead  
Have slipped away

I step out beyond the alluring lights  
And range the dark

A clutch of waxy acorns incubating  
In each hand

Treading a crooked ring  
Around unearthed fears, I jump

As the moon rears her horns  
Between the bare ribs

Of an old oak — long since eroded  
To a tributary of the dark

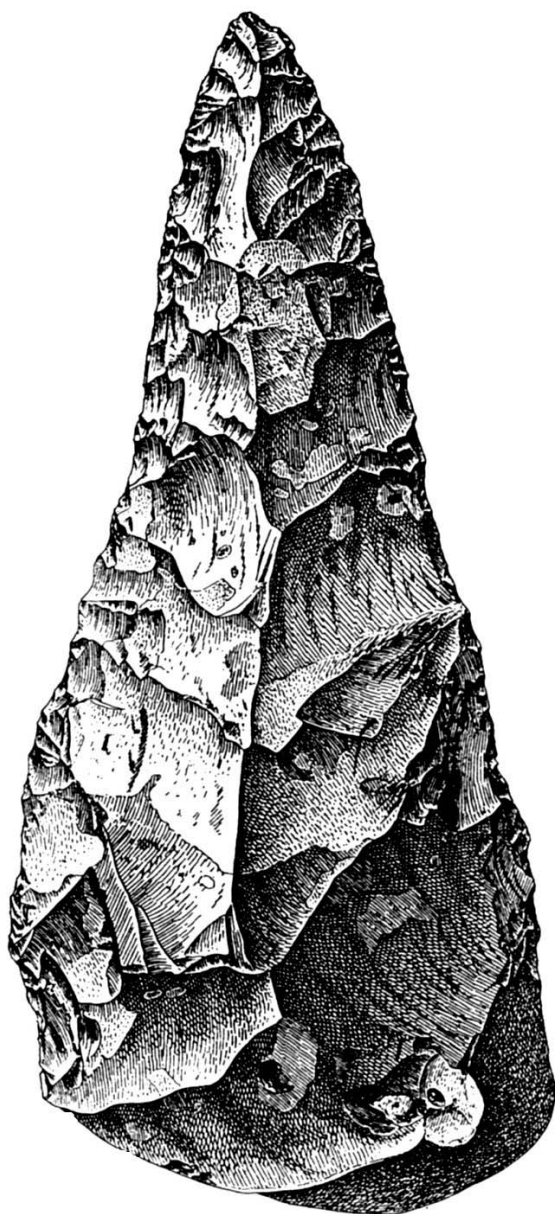
Down which black energies bristle, branch  
And coil into the calcareous ground  
Leaving knots of inky spoor  
Whorled in bark

Rooted there, I stoop to thumb  
My acorns under fleshy leafmold  
Each a future  
Nibbled husk or twisting tip  
Delvers of sediments, drifts,  
Inhumed echoes — divining  
Their own force and form

I stand, cast the circle with  
White poppy seed

And tear away  
Not a look behind

Through mist-cowled woods  
I tread  
Toward the sound of bells keening  
Into a windless night



# THE GREEN MAN

In a crackle  
Of first frost  
Nettle strewn god  
Steps from tree  
Hard as tree  
Heavy as tree

Dandelion eyes  
Spider blood  
Burr brain  
Moss tongue  
Bark bones  
Dung breath  
Bramble hair  
Oak tusks

An old god  
His thunder songs  
Are turned to hollow sticks  
Tapped on walls

The stone asleep  
The water asleep

The air unknown  
Yet he knows the stars  
Will never finish falling

By the banks of a river  
He remembers the young trees  
And the stones  
Rising to meet him

He searches for a spell  
Earth ropes his hands  
Dry leaves dance in his head  
Until he sucks and spits  
A wild hissing boil of amber  
That spins like a hare  
Running in its shyness away  
Over river's breath

His body stands by the river  
Beyond years  
It molds and curls  
Until he is just a low puck  
Of moist earth  
That even the moon  
Ignores

## SEA SHELL

The world, coiled  
Back into itself,  
Imagines a shell.

The shell's spiral winds  
Around brimming air,  
Tightens on the glass-lipped  
Bell of some chambered sea.

The shell, growing  
Into its own perfection,  
Traces the world.



## BOOK

The world, folded  
Back into itself,  
Imagines a book.

Sediment papers slit  
A common husk,  
Offer the moth-blown  
Stain of some cursive mind.

The book, pressing  
Into its own language,  
Binds the world.



# DEAD FACTORY

A carbolic rot rankles  
Around the well  
Of abandoned back-stairs.

I climb a salt-laced spiral  
Of blue brick  
To the roof gallery.

Some skylight wind recalls  
The cogged roar of lathes

Oils and old metals  
Slump from iron lips

Wall-slits reveal  
An open scar  
Where chimneys stilt the sky  
Foundries glop and spatter  
Into scrap yards,  
Canals cut out  
To a smear of green.



## POET POWER

People become wary  
about poets. They  
worry we will  
stake their soul  
with sharp pens,

inscribe them with  
blood and carbon  
across bleached woodpulp,  
scalpel them into  
tiny snot-rag squares,

to be offered around  
on a silver tray  
at wild parties,  
saying; “Here, try *this*  
Juicy Poem.

It dishes the dirt  
On that scandalous boy  
At the Goat & Garter.

Yes – *everything!*”

## ‘AND WHAT DOES THE CHILD WANT TO BE?’

The girl wants to dive,  
Sleeks as a long fish,  
Below gubbling water, to emerge...  
As an immense full-tailed peacock,  
Bejeweled and astounding,  
Filling the swimming-pool to the roof.

The boy wants to leap  
In red-satin shorts, head the ball  
To the net and soar up, transformed...  
As a pterodactyl, immune and astounding  
Above the hush of the crowd.

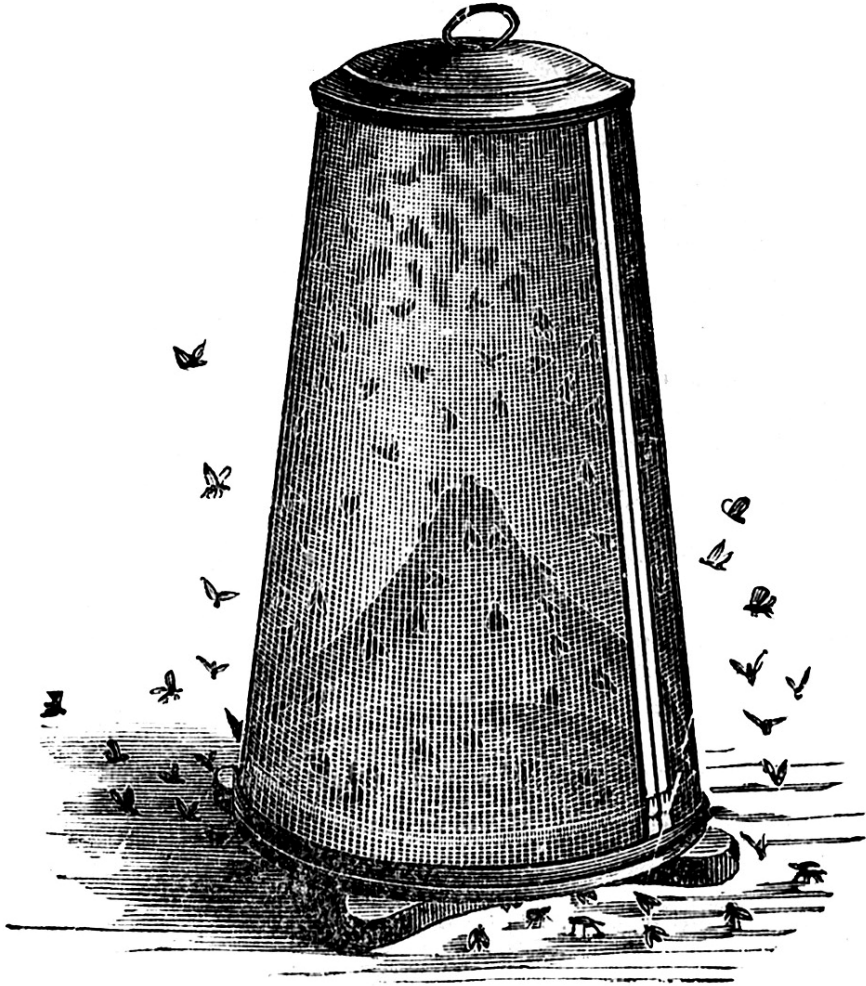
Please; don't tell them that  
Pterodactyls are extinct, or that  
Pea-hens are small and brown.

# KINDERTRANSPORT

Sham cities of light wake  
Outwards and shiver into grey.  
The bleak deck blasts me awake  
To salt-stung truth; as émigré

I stand below a pale sky. Behind,  
Gulls tear at the dark grip of Poland.  
Ahead, slim as a bone, the moon shines  
From a dark coffin of cloud. My hand

Reaches for yours, pale and small.  
A guide-rail. On the oil-bitter dock we decline  
To convict ourselves with detail.  
We pass through the gates.  
You are nine and you are mine.



# MOTH HUNTING

*A poem for voices: an old man and boy*

In the lamplit net  
A thin waltz  
Of tiny wings spin  
Against my mitten.

Beyond, wolves slink around  
My midnight imagination.  
“Wolves are dead and gone.”

Then, they come.  
A solitary fatty  
Lumbers from the dark,  
Thwacks against white net,  
Followed by a tumble of grey  
Feather-things  
That bumble around the beam.

*“Where do they come from?”*

“They fall from the moon  
on cloudy nights.”

He stands. They reel around him.

*“Where do they go to?”*

“At sunrise they sleep  
On the eyes of the dead.”

His shadow stoops  
Through a wicker of wings.  
Old fingers sharply flick  
Down the catch-net.

Trapped, sickle-horned bits  
Of owl-eyes, tree-bark, flint-heads  
Crawl and clack.

An escapee knocks into  
The guttering gas lamp,  
Flutters, bursts in a  
Powdery pop of black air.

*“Why do they fly to our light?”*

“They wish to sleep.”



# THE STORY OF ENGLISH

*English words used in order of their appearance in the language.*

Brock roed to the lea and loafed out there, merry with mead. What a noggin of English riddles he had dreamed up in his bone-house under the oak. One about a bridegroom, his swain and an arse... Then Dame Pork the dun pig passed by with all her chattels, being taken away to jail. The wicked cunty cuckoo lifted her skirts and laid an egg on the Dame's head. Far off in the men's town, a taffetta music of royal money ran through the gaggle of new streets. Everything was now a doable matrix of information. But in the back streets lay rotting potatoes, debt, and bloody shibboleths. Fopdoodles made billions in sugar and tea, and boasted of it in the *Gazette*. Of course, the ink-horn scribbling of bodgers undermined them. The confusable public, disinterested and polite, ignored them all and instead dilly-dallied with modish Americanisms, the classification of the Species, and hurrahed the great treks of the pioneer dudes who shouted "Hello Progress!" three times before lunch. Or brunch, or whatever they called it in America. Brock dozed and time rolled on, and the speech-craft of men developed new Ologies. Ologies were OK, but only if you knew who to shmooze with them. Then some eccentric cooked up DNA and electrons in a garage, and all of a sudden there were robots and UFOs. It all seemed mere doobry and blurb to Brock. But the suits made grand mega money out of the new tech with elevator pitches, and PC users and webzines cherry-picked the LOL-ing winners. Ordinary muggles ignored them all, and played ambient jazz and suduko and admired their friends' chillax. Brock got a feeling of information-overload in all that electrosmog, and unfriended his entire Twittersphere.

A A B B C C D  
D D E E F F G G H H  
I I K L L M M N  
N N O O P P Q Q  
R R S S T T U U  
V V W W X X Y Y Z Z

## A DOUBLE RIDDLE

Dawn sky-shadows dim Orion.

The hawk rises in its wind-stiff temper.

I ride cold ways that lengthen, a lone-one,  
encased in armour

— to raise a treasure that rests under embers.

I have a seat in heaven.

Bands of spirits sing my victory song.

The soft waves of earth tremble and are riven,

As if a dark hour of battle has come.

My blade is greedy above the new-blown earth.

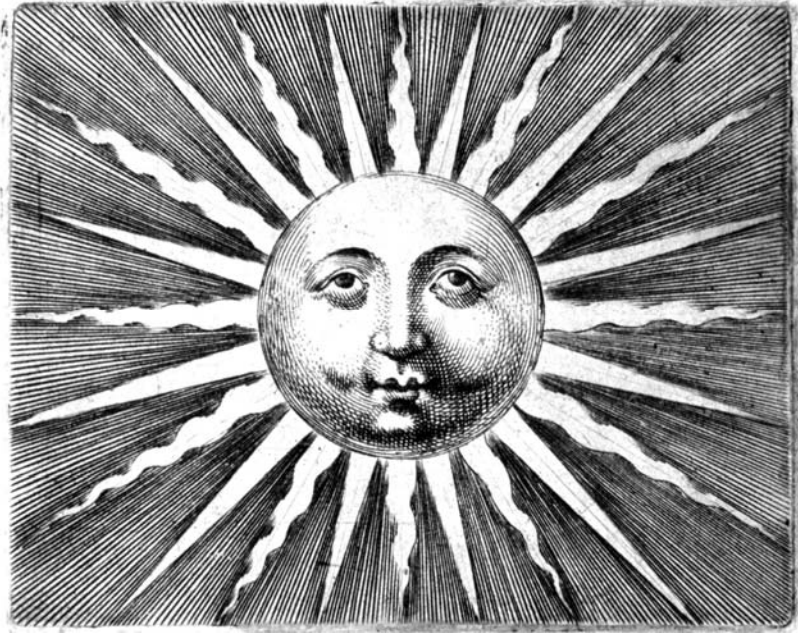
From victory I will carve a deep green-folded country,

And take princely bags of gold

to feed my people.

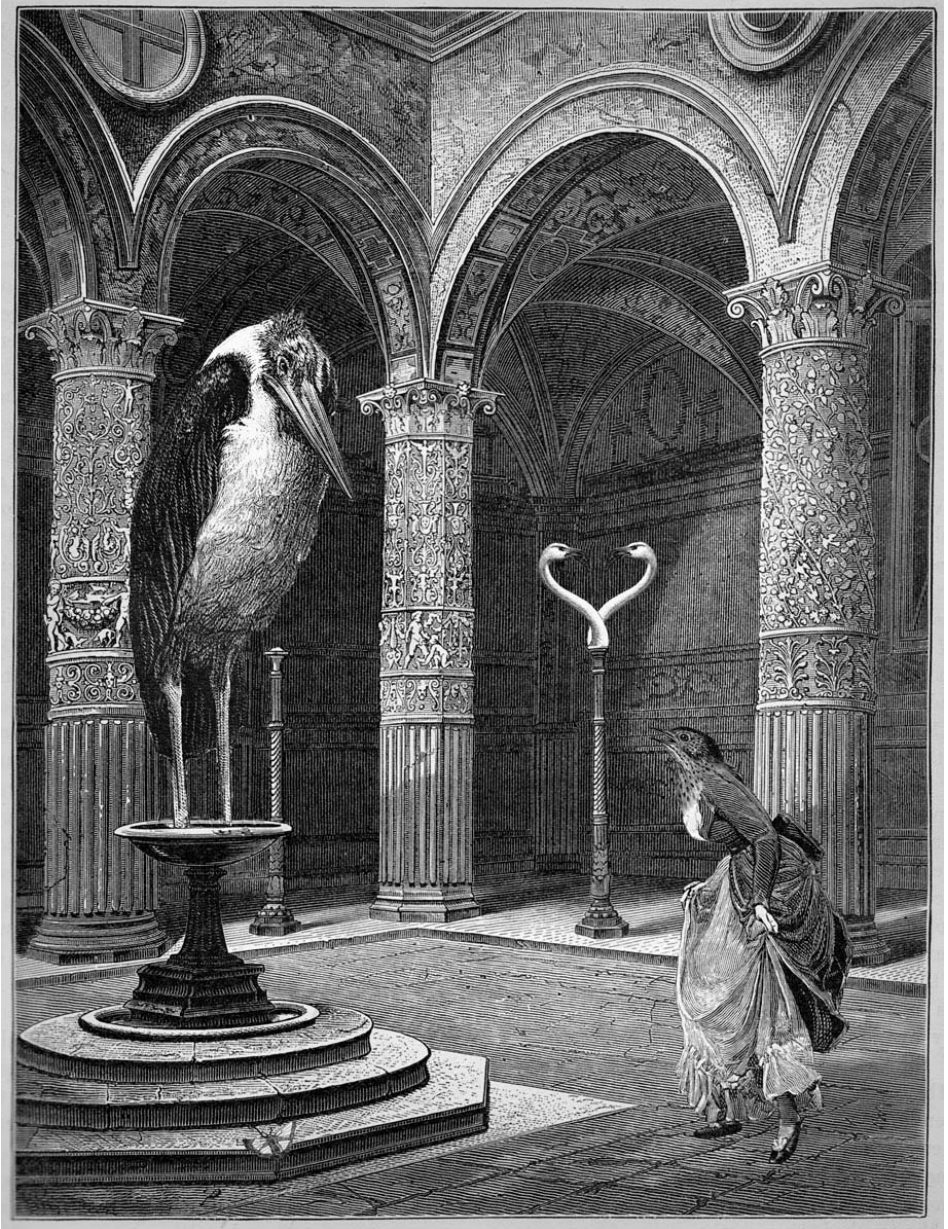
Answer one: *A modern farmer, ploughing/seeding a field with corn, in a high-tech tractor with his radio tuned to music.*

Answer two: *An Anglo-Saxon warrior seeking his people's buried treasure.*



### Acknowledgements:

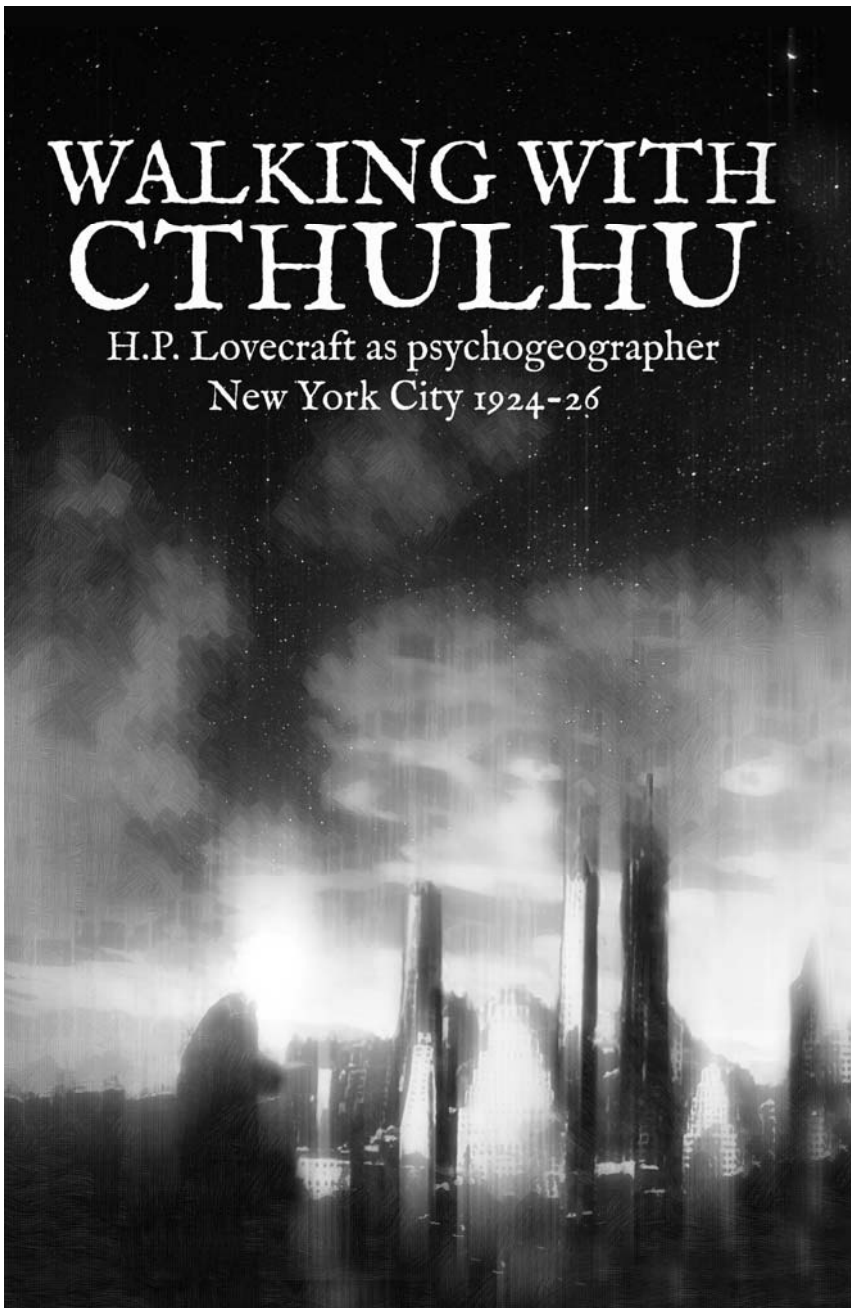
All but one of the poems in this collection were first published in a variety of small magazines and journals, including: *Ore*; *Cascando*; *Purple Patch*; *Resurgence*; West MidlandsArts writing magazine *Raw Edge*; also the Keele University website, and others.



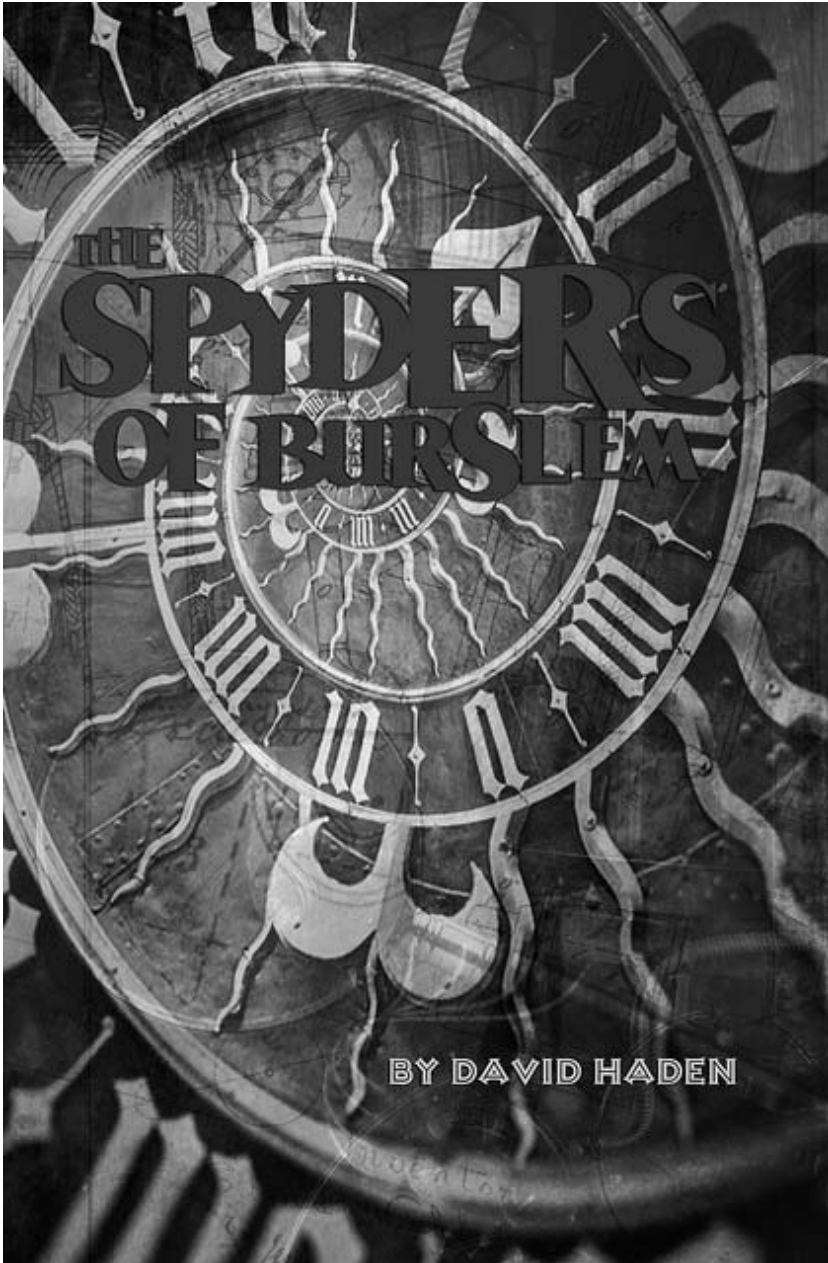
“At the Court of Birds” — montage of Victorian steel engravings, by David Haden.

# WALKING WITH CTHULHU

H.P. Lovecraft as psychogeographer  
New York City 1924-26



Also by David Haden. 55,000, non-fiction. Fully footnoted and referenced.



Also by David Haden. 60,000-word original novel set in North Staffordshire.

