

Longitudes, Old Habits, & Shu

by [Lawrence Cottrell](#) (August 2022)



Winter, Andrew Wyeth, 1946

Longitudes

We discuss such things now ... what I'd do should she die ...
my days without her by-and-by ...
Almost like speaking of the weather, or when I'll mow
next,

or what ought be on a grocery list.

But still (and mostly), I sigh and move on, unable to bear
the unbearable,
Having found late in life that familiarity, even thirty
years of it,
Doesn't breed scorn perforce but can be a homecoming, a

getting used to another's tale as one's own story ...
Gives-and-takes switched for the worn away wills of early
years together,

like spacklings of holes in plaster.

When magics have undone, each veil's lifted, abatisses
wrecked

(strewn onto time's *tender mercies*),

Love of a whatsoever quiet kind may drift longitudes of
fissuring selves,

Souls that weave discarnate threads 'to pied batistes of
dawn

on fortune's dusking fells...

Old ordinary tells transmuted by our need for heartening
dearlings of the holy-

Old Habits

Swallows gyre beneath the bridge, rote sense ranged north
to rendezvous with June,

Chase fugitive life above a river as new flock of old habits,
pennies for prodigal mind...

To spend when bitter winds pry hasps of autumn, rime's
stormed the last blue bonny inch of asters;

Buy fractions of a once upon a waking, nest airy gambols
of mind with yester's making ...

Corrupt the culprit, death, with undertows to take the
taking,

Visions flitting through green gush of summer in
December...

Memory's hymns forsaking angles, the grim inclemencies

of winter,
Tongues of fire that speak to shadowlands accrued within
the faded vigor of a sun,
cause to blow 'mid snow pink mists of eglantine—

Shu

Shu (imaginary God of the real wind)

Pries

Shingles,

Whips

Signs

Along

The

Avenue,

Is

Treble

Shackled

To

Bass,

Stitched

To

Wail;

Hollo through cracks wild songs

To

The

Bric-a-brac.

I would furl canvas on spars,

Run

No

More

To

Heaven's blow,

Abjure

Earth's toss of mane against the manses and the jakes ...

Denounce

That

Cannonade

Of

Sky

Like

Saint

A

Heresy ...

burrow into hush on some concavity of time ...

Minuet

With

Eddies

Of

The

Easy, ambling gestures

Of

A

Serpentine—

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Lawrence Cottrell has lived in West Virginia, mostly, preferring to dwell among good people, in a place where change is an unloved orphan. He has a BA from West Virginia State University and attended several graduate schools, leaving each finally to walk mist-hewn hollers and prowl wind-blasted ridges, to be where valleys can be spanned by two arms and a broom handle, and noons aren't quite sure of themselves. His poems have appeared in *The Lyric*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Good Foot* and *Grab-a-Nickel*, among others. His work is in the

celebrated anthology *Wild Sweet Notes: Fifty Years of West Virginia Poetry 1950-1999*. He blooms presently at a bend of Elk River's meander.

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