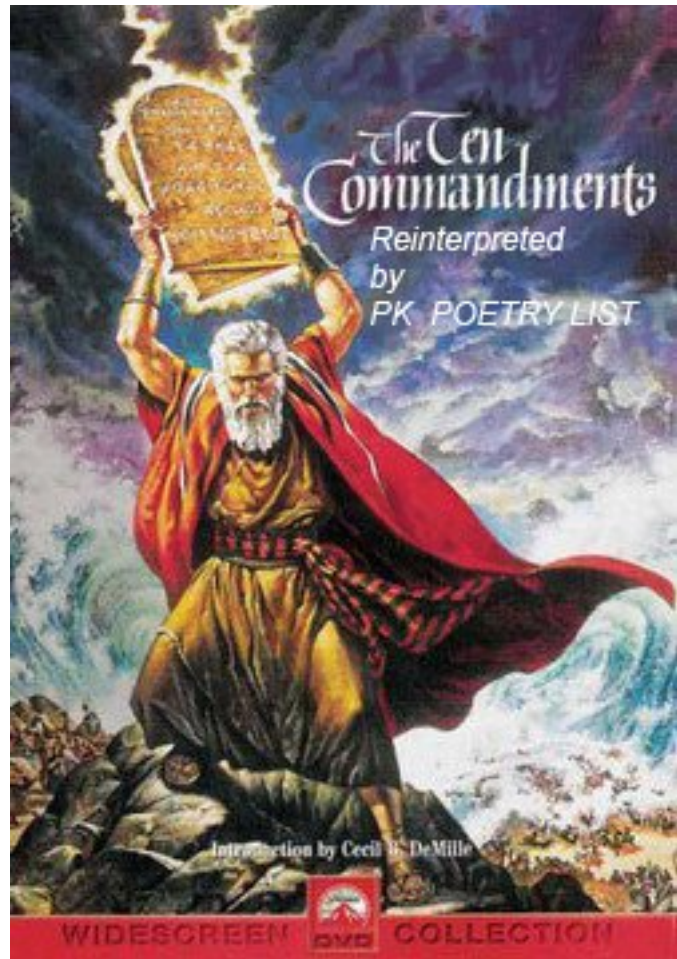


THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
PK POETRY LIST
REINTERPRETATION CHALLENGE



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REINTERPRETATION CHALLENGE**

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THE TEN COMANDMENTS

by Irene Hossack

Sanctify yourself before these words become flesh
and understand the enormous appeal made
to humanity hearing the sacred texts, hidden
in the Book of Exodus. Moses took notes.
He hammered each letter into the stone, so
that we might remember them millions
of decades later, but we have ten fingers
to prompt us, lest we forget. The notes all begin
with imperatives, leaving no room for doubt.

Moses walked down from the mountain, with his weighty
tome's list of the don'ts. Thou shall not do these ten things
otherwise there will be trouble, he said to the gathered
Sinai massive, who stayed well away from the mountain and its edge,
for Moses had warned them, do that and you are a dead man (only
he could see god you see). For a start, we are no longer in the house
of bondage, but we are free to worship just one god under heaven,
which he made. Any kind of art is a no-no, statues, works in oil,
water-colours, these graven images are banned. Television isn't listed,
but it could be in the amended text along with that movie by
Cecile B Demille. Don't buy these works of art, for god's
sake, your love of them would make the big guy jealous. No
worshipping them in the National Portrait Museum, especially
on Sundays, or in your neighbour's living room, and stay away from
their life-partner too. Take out the garbage for your mum and dad,
without swearing under your breath; no killing, no stealing,
and no false witnessing as that would be a lie.

Some lesser known commandments are now defunct,
we have no need to know that we can't make our altars
out of hewn stone as our tools would defile its essence,
and a big list of heresies too numerous to list.

THE TEN COMANDMENTS
by Sally King

I am top poet. Therefore:

- 1 There isnt any better poet than me.
- 2 No one gets to take my photograph.
- 3 No one slags me off.
- 4 Always attend my poetry readings.
- 5 Kow tow to the arts council and the university.
- 6 Do not destroy other poets work by bad reviews.
- 7 Dont read any other poets' books
- 8 Dont recite my poems without permission.
- 9 Do not pretend you wrote anyone else's poems.
- 10 Dont envy any other poets' grants, publications, freebies, or asse(t)s

In other words you are going to have a pretty crummy time.

Do you think I care?

1

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me... .."

by Arthur Seeley

Aristide
under a hot Grecian sun
leaves his flock
to billow
safely around him
in the scant scrub.

Beside the wayside shrine
he genuflects
bends his head
murmurs his supplications
makes the cross humbly
places flowers.

Enriched
he gathers his flock
turns their obedient heads
towards the silent blue
and ragged hills.

Arthur
under the bank's imperious front
parks his car
on double yellows
leaves his hazard lights
blinking - just in case.

Before the cash machine
he inserts his card
bends his head
curses roundly
bangs the pale screen
that defines his pecuniary plight.

Despairing
he returns to his car
u-turns into the havoc
of hurtling traffic
rejoins the teatime rush.

1

by Stuart Nunn

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Or me,
or me,
or me -
the heavenly gang set up their wail,
jealous and spiteful,
every last one of them.
Got an elephant's head,
born of a virgin,
changed into a bull/swan/eagle/shower of gold,
live in the sky,
make the crops grow,
will strike you down with boils
if you ask any questions.

I take for my god
the raped drug addict,
the starving child, dissected rat,
the drunken lout in the gutter,
the runaway daughter who never
did anything wrong,
the schizophrenic who forgets
her medication -
anything other than the serial malcontents
we're saddled with just now.

Commandment I
by Gary Blankenship

You shall have no other gods before Me.

On the cover of People magazine,
teenagers scream in ecstasy
over the latest Idol heartthrob.

In a bank in Beverly Hills,
a well-groomed executive counts
the dollars in his account in Grenada.

On a cable channel owned by billionaires,
heads of hair rail against the blasphemy
of one mother who has lost her son in war.

a president would be king,
a king would be a prophet,
a prophet proclaims he is god

and we scream
on Sunday afternoon
when our team scores
a touchdown
to secure a win

the playoffs
and our devotion
in the team store

Commandment One – Jam Jar Trump
by Barbara Phillips

volcano erupts
tsunami wildly rises
jam jar trumps my man

AN EXPLICATION BY BIRDS
by John Grove-Stephensen

Islam: fleshly Paradise, Houris;
I might buy that - normal man.
But women
 as not domestic fowl;
 as not birds-of-paradise
 as not to be swooped on
 - observe the eye of the falcon.
One god, but for half the people,
though the Imams say otherwise:
a parrot repeats what it hears.

An albatross in a glass case
that overlooks the sea moulders
as it recalls the soul's navigations,
its visits to many countries.
Its feathers have cloaked many
shamans - white, shell and yolk of religion.
See them, hear, smell; they nest
 in churches, temples, mosques;
 Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, Orissa,
 Kansas. Gods' guns, lambeg drums,
droppings.

Man the Measure: his Parlement.
But angry preening in far places;
the crows are a-coming; coming:
from the skull-racks of Mongolia,
from the holy places of Qum,
from the graveyards of Texas.
The sects of India are sending their flocks.
With cawing they will deafen debate;
by the overlapping of wings
deny the light:
 a multitude of beaks
 will demand worship.

2

TRISKEL **by James Bell**

This image must be graven and accord to the second commandment
though it twirls on my finger like the wind

wires round my mind at times when I look and contemplate
what it represents beyond its pattern

beyond its link of silver bought with that very intention
so that others could see and maybe ask

what it meant - and there's the basis that can be brought
to bear in this ancient command I have

apparently broken - maybe rendered impotent - though there too is the fear
that sits in the back of my mind

what I wear is a form of rebellion against heaven though the image
represents earth, air and fire

its three swirls are a form of three in one - a pulpit unique selling point
they cannot seem to live within -

the triskel stops me feeling alone when alone wanting to be somewhere else
provides the transportation

* a triskel is an old Celtic symbol that now represents that part of Breton culture
in France.

2

by Peter Clack

That spark, the lightning of creation,
leaps from God's fingertips to Adam.
Michelangelo satisfied the Pope's commission
by painting the forbidden image
high on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Commandment II
by Gary Blankenship

You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

I looked in the mirror
and saw a handsome man,
a elderly gentleman whose face held
enough line to show he had experienced
some trouble in his long life,
enough smile to show he lived
without the turmoil souring his outlook,
enough gray to be distinguished,
beard to be casual,
smirk to make you wonder
if he has a secret no one else might know

I looked in the mirror
and saw a man who held his secrets close,
who did not willingly disclose his sins,
whether truly venal
or only minor enough to spend
nearly all of eternity in purgatory,
who slept sound enough,
but did not remember his dreams
even as they nagged him
as he went about his vacant day

I looked in the mirror
and saw a man who held his regrets
for the middle of long nights
when they roamed his rooms in search
of the fame and honor
he knew was his due

I broke the mirror

**Commandment Two – Idol Me Not
by Barbara Phillips**

I know where the god is
whom I can barely touch

craving for contact is not in my mind
except when I see you after absences

which leads me to silent confessions
of a searing carnal nature unfolding

more swiftly than any feared pandemic
discovered anticipated or perceived

of you I make no idol
and beg you idol me not

3

Third Commandment by Grant van Wingerden

four types of prohibited oaths: an oath affirming as true a matter one knows to be false, an oath that affirms the patently obvious, an oath denying the truth of a matter one knows to be true, and an oath to perform an act that is beyond one's capabilities[from Wikipedia].

I swear to God I swear to God
I alter his altar until it's all odd

By Christ I'm loud and abusive
It's as if I put the f'in effusive

As the Lord is my witness
Nobody's questioned my fitness

By all the powers that be
I'll lift you up and set you free

Commandment III
Gary Blankenship

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

when a suicide bomb explodes on a bus on the way to visit the sea

daughter is murdered because she was raped

doctor is shot outside a planned parenthood clinic

medication is withheld from a terminally ill child

rocks are thrown at school kids on their way to learn from the nuns

wife is beaten because a stranger saw beauty that might have been

family dies because their drinking water is polluted

greed is the justification for war

your back is turned on your neighbor's loss

babe screams his veins crying for H

school is burned because girls are taught

enemy is tortured because he might know nothing

as it was

as it is

as it will be

until the last wheel has turned

Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain.
by Arthur Seeley

Kevin , come 'ere.
Mi fuckin' book 'ad better be here else I'm down that fuckin' Social.
How the hell do they think I can manage? Gits!
Kevin come 'ere.
For Christ's sake, get dahn! Yuh'll do yuhself an injury- I wish.
He's doin' my fuckin' head in, our Sarah.
God knows where he gets in from 'cos I fuckin' don't
'ang on, our Sarah. Don't go. If mi buks 'ere yuh can 'av summat.
But yuh'll 'av to 'ang on.
Kevin, get dahn , yuh lirrul pillock.
Ah'm fuckin' fed up wi' 'im, ah can tall yuh.
The lirrul bastud. Ah wish to God ah'd never 'ad 'im.
What are they fuckin' starin' at? Nosey gits. Wind yuh fuckin'neck in.
Kevin , cum 'ere nah, else, I swear to God, ah'll kick yuh fuckin' 'ed in.
Ah'm telling yer. Yer bak at skoil tomorrer.
Koff or no fuckin' koff.
They can fuckin' av yer.
'e does my fuckin' ed in.
God knows what ah've done to deserve a lirrul swine like that.
That buk 'ad berrer be here else ah'm dahn that fuckin' Social.
Kevin yer lirrul bastud, get dahn.
Fuckin' showin' me up.

Commandment Three – Détente
by Barbara Phillips

so many names distract and amuse
so why bully one who is Divine

there is no better place to tease
than on my own dirt patch

when you tire of my names for you
pretend to chase after me

until we reach a détente
sealed with hands and limbs

4

4

by **Stuart Nunn**

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

Old Mrs Lidstone's was the pew
in front of ours. Always came late,
never sang the hymns, except at Easter.
"Christ the Lord is risen today"
in rumbling bass.
Worse than her marble eye
or mothball holiness, the fox
she wore across her bibles coat
whose head hung down behind
and winked to keep me in my place,
in case I thought of breaking out
in atheistical riot,
say, by swinging my feet
or looking through the hymnbook
for the dirty word that Charlie Johns
swore he scribbled there.

Commandment IV
by Gary Blankenship

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Combine and thresher continue to harvest,
regardless of which Sabbath is kept -
corn, wheat, alfalfa need to be taken
from the dry fields before they burn
or September's thunderstorm's begin.

Pickers enter the truck gardens –
tomato, watermelon, peaches
must be gathered before they rot
on vine and limb - value lost,
too meager to continue the farm.

The hunter in the forest,
fisherman on the sea,
logger in the mountains,
housewife in the kitchen

secure in the belief
God loves the laborer,
hates waste

time enough for holy days
during winter's dark months

Commandment Four – Sabbath Carillon
By Barbara Phillips

morning carillon
coffee, oranges, and you
lovers hold world's reins

5

honor my parents by Sherry Pasquarello

with silence and long sleeves
covering bruises and longer days
sleepless nights with covers over my head
breathing in stale ragged breath
i prayed to the lord
"my god, PLEASE!"
and no one answered.

Honour Your Father & Mother... by Bob Cooper

Honour your father and mother, separately,
all their lives, with flowers and chocolates
every year, phone them from far away places
and, when they're no more, look in the mirror
at your nose, your hair, the wrinkles round your eyes
in case they re-appear.

**Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land
which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
by Stuart Nunn**

The old girl sits in doiled dark,
remembering what it was she wanted
long ago. He comes on Thursdays,
sometimes, after squash.
And sometimes she remembers
who he used to be.
The half-warmed cottage pie
she partly ate two days ago
squats beside the armchair
where she never sits.
It's enough, she thinks, to know
he's happy and remembers,
sometimes, the important dates:
his children's birthdays
and her husband's liberating death.

**Commandment Five – Too Deep Even For Songs
By Barbara Phillips**

in the sacrifice there was honour

when food was given only to children
because there was nothing to be had

when washing was meant to mask patches
to cover holes too deep even for songs

that could not fill emptiness so bountiful
it defeated yeast raising thin loaves

in the indulgence where is the honour

along lines of cocaine and methadone
down birdfoot traces on the skin

in the darkness of the night
through glasses' slivered glances

peacock prances, gamely preens
to black branches crows swoop and scream

6

Sixth Commandment by Sally James

Number six, pick up sticks
Sticks and stones can break my bones
My knee bone is connected to my thighbone
And here is the word of the Lord
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
Want to kill, to possess to over power
Power to the people
People who need people are the luckiest people in the world
World peace
Peace in our time
Time we learned
Learned the sixth commandment
We should not kill
That is the word of the Lord.

Six
by Arthur Seeley

homicide, fratricide,
matricide, patricide,
infanticide, filicide,
regicide
genocide,
suicide -

-Thou shalt not kill-

We strangle, hue and hack,
mutilate with rock and rocket,
club and cudgel,
bomb and Bren and broken bottle.

In the name of the Lord
Saul has slain his thousands
David his tens of thousands
we have slain our hundreds of thousands
our millions
at the hot springs
in desert places
in the mud of Flanders
the snows of Stalingrad
on the bleak high seas
or deep in the gloomy tropic forests,
silently in the alleys and streets of night
with blade and flick-knife,
the thin kiss of steel.

We invent ways of killing.
bigger, better, faster, more,
blunderbuss and rifle, derringer and cannon,
musket and brown bess, pistol and revolver,
thompson and browning
dynamite, donner und blitzkrieg,
and the derisive contrition of peace prizes.

Systematic extermination
with gas and the head shot,
ovens and lime pits,
Belsen and Dachau,
Enola Gay
Eatherly's agony of guilt,
- 'Drop it! Drop it!' -
locked away from memories.

Numbers, numbers, numbers,
1066, 1815, 1776, 1914-18, 1939-45
9/11, 7/7, U 235, B-25,
E equals M C squared,
A-bomb, H-Bomb,
ICBM, MAD, WMD,
We hide behind the cynical mask of language
debate in mega-deaths and collateral damage.

Hammer, mallet and pillow,
drunken clout, blind fist and bumper,
flick knife and serrated edge,
razor and the scour of acid
back pack and baby food,
holy books and belts of death,
eeeees, coke, horse, and weed,
we choke and destroy

Listen!
-Thou shalt not kill-
echoes mockingly
from the flattened walls of Jericho
and the cities of the plain.

6th Commandment
by Jim Bennett

Thou shalt not kill;

except where it can be deemed to be the smiting of ones enemies. This is only allowed were the smiter is clearly one of the cherished of the Lord and the smitee is a non believer or better still belongs to some weird sect that clearly is not of the communion of the Lord, or if it is, is not part of the General Synod. The bombing of buildings from a great height (beyond where people can be seen, or by use of targeting missiles, or giving weapons to your enemies enemies) will not be deemed unlawful killing unless CNN is close enough to get pictures of bodies. Five more pages of exclusions follow.

Bush and Blair
prayed hard to the Lord
and they think they got
their Just reward
it came with a rule six
dispensation
to war against
any oil rich nation
and others that
harbour a terrorist
could also go on their
growing killing list

but don't call it killing
it isn't the same
when a war is just
and done in God's name

God gave them a tip
from days long before
don't call it murder
call it shock and awe
that's like what Bill said
to get over rule seven
sucking off isn't sex
he could still get to go heaven

but don't call it killing
it isn't the same
when a war is just
and done in God's name

even though its the same
to those that die
to those that fight
and those that lie
under the weight of history
killed and forgotten
by democracy

but don't call it killing
it isn't the same
when a war is just
and done in God's name

Commandment Six – Fabulous Fecundity
by Barbara Phillips

do not kill the babe
dressed in common rags
who walks in my Eden vision

s/he carries secrets gestating
like black seeds in birds of paradise

red embers fanning the inconceivable
on the brim of fabulous fecundity

7

Thou shalt not commit adultery.
by Arthur Seeley

nice piece of arse that

he browses the top shelf
in the newsagent's
turns occasionally
to watch askance
as some good looking filly passes
the shop window

*could do her a favour
bit young though*

she turned
so long ago
buttoned her night
-dress to the chin
her back impenetrable
a wall in the dark
inviolable

*no shenanigans
no sir no siree
none of that filth*

Hustler
Silwa
Colour Climax
Busty Slags

he browses
eyes and fingers riffle
the glossy show
the bright welcoming
parades of flesh

*nice legs
give her one and no mistake
clipclopclipclopclipclop
just a walkin' down the street*

distracted awareness of tumescence pervades

*mind you I love her
of course I do
never once unfaithful
respected her wishes
not one to force
attentions on anyone
a long time
to be married
a long time
to be married
to my right hand*

*nice pair of tits just passing
must be jelly
'cos jam don't shake like that*

“I'll have these two, please.”

**Commandment Mystic Seven
by Barbara Philips**

you are not mine to have
but there is no mystery
while your green eyes smoulder within me

& I feel heat rising from beneath
when your voice breaks as you
tell me about your heart condition

pills your doctor gave you leave
you powerless as Eve's snake
after the punishment and banishment

we walk away from each other
ensnared in circles of deceptions
shackled by tortuous needfulness

Thou shall not commit adultery.....
by Jazz

oh, c'mon
are you kidding
this Adonis stood before me
nothing but a fig leaf
and I'm expected
to think about rules
I don't think so!

and this Health and Safety stuff
what's all that crap
I'm fully charged
haven't got time
to think about H&S
it's not as if
I'm going to be jumping
from wardrobes
or swinging
from chandeliers
just a quickie
behind the sofa
will suffice

for now

8

"Thou shalt not steal." by Arthur Seeley

Empire Day 1942
beside the blackboard
a glossy political map of the world shone
reflecting the late May sunlight
a Mercator projection of the globe
where great pink blots glowed gloriously
where we had endowed them
with our leadership
governance
bestowed democracy
taught them our games
imposed a language
gifted our literature
paraded our gunboats

blackened with burnt cork
and head betowelled
I was India
jewel in a crown that ringed the world
with words to learn and mouth
innocent and beguiled
I wondered why other parts
chose to stay green and yellow or a fading puce
rather than stand with us
holding hands in jubilant brotherhood
to have their pockets picked
their lives in thrall
resources raped

Now ?
Well, things change,
sins of the father and all that....
old names re-emerge and colours alter
new maps proliferate
quicker than wars
Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Lesotho, Zambia
where has Rhodesia gone?
even Australia beats us at cricket

everyone has stolen our football
and where once I doggedly defended
a dustbin from the world
and the spitting wiles of a tennis ball
kicked a can
flicked a taw
or scored a goal
blooms a green domed mosque.

Commandment Eight – Stealth
by Barbara Philips

be wary of stealth
to steal what is not for you
snakes in guilt cages

Just A Steal
by James Bell

from something else -
maybe beg is better than steal
stronger
more like steel

if you are hungry
there are benefits in fasting
to the tightest rib

maybe borrow is a better expression
with the intention of return
has less of a hint of sorrow or
sadness at the need

or maybe a steal is divided
into what is needed and desired
with different outcomes
in front of St Peter

though shall not steal
by Carol Sircoulomb

though shall not steal

they ran to the stores
broke the doors down
these people were frightened
the thought of no food or water
a city in chaos
ghetto store owners
with jacked up prices
their theft always rampant

9

'Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor' by Grant van Wingerden

Uh, did I say hilly hellhole
It's a vista to behold

Did I impugn his house design
Can I come in from the cold

His nature and his industry
Are telling I am told

His hirelings get fair recompense
They're kept in spacious surrounds

His ass and his ox are both handsome
They rightly pour on the pounds

I'll say not a word against him
For the fortune and favour he's found

Commandment Nine – Paint Peeling by Barbara Phillips

it lies shrouded beneath denial
plain as paint peeling on the barn
tempted into falling to fields
green with forgiveness
for fatal words, ripping blows
servants of flown faith
the betrayal seeping far
slinking into a core molten
with what must be said and written

to that I will not bear false witness

10

The tenth commandment by Sally James

I do not covet my neighbour or her husband
I don't know how she puts up with him and
I certainly don't know how he puts up with her.
I have to put with them both.
They don't have a manservant or even a maidservant
because they both like to do it themselves
usually on a Sunday and every Bank Holiday
when I want a bit of peace and quiet.
They haven't got an ass or even an ox
but they once had a cat called Molly which went bald.
One day it disappeared.
I have two dogs.

10 by Peter Clack

Georgina
Ophelia
Rebecca
Geraldine
Eleanor
Olivia
Ulrike
Selina
...

I covet all
my neighbours'
beautiful daughters.

a covenant on covert coveting
by Grant van Wingerden

'Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or
field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or
anything that belongs to your neighbor'

I don't desire my neighbour's ox
The slaves he keeps in the basement
In a box

I do not ask that he yield
One sod of his sodden field
The hilly hellhole holds no
Appeal

And as for other animals
I get quite enough of their
Sounds and sickening
smells

His jerry built digs
Are fit for pigs
He thinks he's the man
But he's not so
big

I covet nought of his
I've priced and counted the lot
Is that all the stuff that he's got
I've barely thought of this
This much before

**Commandment Ten –Dredge Your Soul
by Barbara Phillips**

dredge your soul to find
reasonless dedication
mindless attachment
pain in the bone stretched
nailed to sinews wired
around what is said to be
the organ which floods
breath to my hand reaching
to delay you here to the last beat
until then do not covet my love for you

**first and last commandment
by Philip Johnson**

the only commandment that matters

make all royalties out to me
worship what is writ

or not

last line to be laid
before they nail the lid down

poetry is hell

welcome to hell and the infernal pink slip
Jesus didn't warn about that now

did he

damn (the editor)