

**TROISIEME PARTIE
PART THREE**

**POESY
LA POESIE**

From Professor William McCausland Stewart, M.A., D. Litt.
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16 November 1976.

Telephone:
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To Professor Bernard Fonlon,
Department of African Literature,
The University BP 755
Yaounde, Cameroon,
West Africa.

Dear Colleague and Friend,

I was much touched by your response to my "Staggering on to the year Two Thousand", and should be very glad if you cared to print it, as you said you intended. But indeed I don't suppose it has been easy for you even to go ahead with ABBIA since your subsequent serious bout of fatigue and exhaustion. However if you do, I think this would be fitting - since it is central to the inspiration of this poem that if Europe can't combine, how can we offer effective and full-hearted cooperation to the "teeming Third-World sister nations" evoked at the bottom of page 2 of my poem. . . moving on to "one world of people, free and steadfast, geared and engaged against Armageddon". You might, however, prefer to print the main title: "Paraclesis" (meaning Exhortation, Message or Behest, to distinguish it from the Prelude). At all events I enclose a further copy of the whole text, since it contains, in ink, the correction of a misprint (a comma omitted!) and three changes of word which are of a type which Yeats was never ashamed to make and which aesthetically and semantically explain themselves.

Once more, dear Bernard Fonlon, please forgive this delay and may this find you well and perhaps still planning your America and English visits.

With warm remembrance

Yours ever,

William McCausland Stewart.

STAGGERING ON THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND

STAGGERING ON TO THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND
(Alcaics - proreptic)

by the author of *Tokens in Time*

Professor William McCausland Stewart, M.A., D. Litt.

PROEMION

When once we've rightly grasped our inheritance,
Wrung richest rhythms from long-hidden centuries -
O measured music moving back to
All that the earlier ages gave us!

All hail, Alcaeus, Horace and Hölderlin,
Each holding firm to lyrical absolutes,
Through whom the themes of noblest content
Throb with a passionate exaltation!

And you who spread your wings from the very first,
Sang out their songs for Cædmon, for Coleridge -
Who shipped on board the Norman Conquest:
Eager resilient English language,

Take up your task, affirm all you were and are
Against computered chaos - and may your strains
Weft words astrid with full-fledged meaning
On to the hungriest generations!

PARACLESIS

Engulfed in all the gloom of our day and age,
Intent alone on make-do and brinkmanship,
What glours appear, dear fellow-human,
Now we've embarked for the Year Two Thousand?

Not Two? Five Thousand? Five thousand million years?
More five-and-twenty? Time-space continuum?
Millennial end? Crude Christian era
Awkwardly forcing your facts upon us!

What need of portents? Terror, catastrophes,
Men-made, pile up as blindly we stagger on -
Till someone, sometime, somehow, somewhere
Faces the challenge and meets the madness!

How dare we hope that lead will be given us
As on we drift in stibid complacency,
While flouting Heaven's and Nature's teachings
Everything's set for the last surrenders!

"Escape (we're told) the meshes of history!
Fly out of Earth - its woes and malignancies!"
In vain we'll flee to other planets:
God and our follies will track us thither.

Recover rather roots of identity,
Restore and claim the world we were born into :
If once we've set Life's House in order
We'll be the worthier not to perish.

O Hearth and Home, true father- and motherland,
O Kith and Kin, O family ties and tilth,
O Little Clan and Sacred Precinct—
Cradles of freedom that cry "defend us !"

O fellow-delvers, back to your husbandry :
Dig deep, explore your soil and its harvesting,
Re-learn Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter,
Saved from pollution and dereliction !

Respect the life that rises around us all
From least of leaves to loftiest blossoming ;
Make sure each humblest fellow-creature
Has its due place in the world we're sharing.

That world will spring again to our consciousness,
Its soaring splendours shining for each anew !
With wits restored we'll rediscover
All the uncommonest commonplaces !

Hark back to norms and forms that we found the first
(Long lost through years of rancour and recklessness)—
And then with fellow-freemen forward
Into a juster and stronger compact !

Transcending empire, leaving old hates behind,
From out our Western Islands' sodalities
Can Celt and Saxon bring to Europe
Wider awareness and will to match it ?

See French and Germans sink their hegemonies,
Join hands with neighbours, friends and confederates
From that grim European jungle
Mark what's emerged and is still emerging !

There dawn for all a truer fraternity—
Basques, Bretons, Flemings, Catalans, Corsicans—
While East and South whole tribes and races
Rise to recover their faith and purpose.

At every point endemic alliances
Conjure our doom's inevitability,
Engaging deep in Europe's heartland
Slavic, Germanic, Romanic peoples !

With common labours kindling our lives afresh,
Each partner pledged and playing his rightful role,
While teaming Third-World sister-nations !
Share in our know-how, our joys and duties !

Then, only then we'll rise to our potencies
In this brief spell of grace that is granted us :
One world of peoples, free and steadfast,
Gared and engaged against Armageddon !

Arrest the drift to roaring Niagara,
Cry "halt" athwart the nuclear holocaust—
True leaders, called to con and conquer
Totalitarian confrontation !

Informed by judgment, craft and lucidity,
With tempered will transmuting elected power,
Now, now's the need for Prudence, Justice,
Fortitude, Temperance, basic Virtues—

Oft lost, but man's from time immemorial,
Preparing all for dearer and deeper truths :
Through mountain-moving Faith to healing
Hope and the Love that endureth all things—

Avowed co-heirs of blessings we never earned,
Our need confessed for luck and enlightenment,
Alert within our re-discovered
Forceful but fallible human nature,

True comrades, linked in care and community,
Conjoined against the demons of despotism,
We'll move with slightly calmer conscience
Quietly on to the Third Millennium.

Professor William McCausland Stewart is an alumnus of Trinity College Dublin and of the renowned Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris. He was Professor of French in Bristol University for many years. I had the honour of having him as Chairman both of my M.A. and Ph.D. juries.

Dr. Bernard FONLON.

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