

Interrogations

When I cross the portal
To the veiled unknown,
Flayed of all that's mortal,
Stripped of flesh and bone,
Will there still continue
Something of my mind,
Past the bone and sinew
That I leave behind?
Shall I blaze in thought,
Or be snuffed out as naught?

When I make my entry
To the far beyond,
Shall I find it empty,
Where no light has dawned?
Shall I meet embraces
From my long-lost friends,
Or my foes' hot faces,
Whose wrath never ends?
If not galled or joyed,
Then must I find a void?

When I take the entrance
To the world to come,
Shall I hear a sentence
That will strike me dumb,
Terrified if tortured
For a taste of fruit
Outlawed in the orchard
For its wicked root?
Can the hand that rends
The heart not make amends?

When to the hereafter
I at last have crossed,
Will great joy and laughter
Greet one found when lost?
Will they host a dinner
Slay the fatted calf,
Welcome home a sinner,
Sing and dance and laugh?
Will forgiveness shield
From swords that judgments wield?

When I have passed over
To the other shore,
Rising like a plover
In an upward soar,
Shall I reach a Father
Welcoming his son,
Or must I look farther,
Finding there is none?
Do I have a home,
Or am I all alone?

What will stop these questions
Robbing me of sleep?
All the world's suggestions
Equal counting sheep.
If there were an answer,
I could be at rest,
But what necromancer
Yet can pass the test?
Who is there to teach
These things beyond my reach?

Stephen Wentworth Arndt