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1-30-2013

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THE REFRAIN OF J. ALFRED HARDROCK

I don't know when it happened—
The first glimpse of a Golden Apple
And of distant Helios blazing in my thoughts.
The aura clouds the vision and
A cacophony of discord fills the cosmos but, at least
My question exists—my self-redemption, I say.

Could that be what happened?
Me—apart, accusing?
"I arrest thy soul."
There was no need of judge, of jury, no need
Of legal accouterments.
I never thought of evidence,
That irritating detail—
A lynch mob of one,
Full of My Religion and
Righteousness—the weapon of the ages.

Eliot told me that assimilation of
Past and Present is the key,
No—more—necessity
Of fine art (and the fine art of living).

I hear you, fabled voice, between suspended peaches
And singing mermaids.
How uncomplicated, Progress!—
The only lack a standard-version separation of powers,
A simple pocket reference to guide
The Conscience and the Act.

But you were, sadly, perceptive:
We each author our own, no nearer for the effort,
And despair.

Gretchen Fields
Oldenburg Winner