

Air dans le gout ancien

by [Petrus Tornarius](#) (October 2022)



Repentance of Nineveh, John Martin, 1840

*Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!*

—Rudyard Kipling, “Recessional” (1897)

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 4

The best defense is to reflect
That the self I was yesterday is dead,
And there's every reason to expect
That today's self has scant time ahead,
Not dying when the midnight hour's fled
But by bits crept stealthily to bed
In temporal fragments infinitely small.
There's little fuss to it at all.

So too then with the current year:
In hoc anno domini, 2022
Is well and truly on the skids I hear;
And to most about it that I knew,
I'll say good riddance! not holding dear
Its pestilence and reluctance to hew
To the high standards of our best:
There's much to like about the West!

The years ahead have feet to the fire
And their fateful decline and doom
To the earned oblivion of Nineveh and Tyre
Is the pink elephant in the Recovery Room.
Soon all those posturing panjandrums' ire,
The trumpery! the spite! will no more loom,
And we'll awake from our self-induced DTs
To flocks of grinning angels on their knees.

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Petrus Tornarius is the latinized name of the South African American poet Peter Dreyer—a form often used by some of his medieval German ancestors. He employs this pseudonym to sign poems he thinks “worth publishing, but perhaps a bit *infra dig.*” Dreyer is the author, among other books, of *A Beast in View* (London: André Deutsch), *The Future of Treason* (New York:

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