

Ode for the Dancers

by [Peter Dreyer](#) (March 2024)



The Death of Socrates, by Jacques-Louis David, 1787

Ode for the Dancers

It is the traditional inspiration of the philosopher, but also his traditional vice, to believe that all is one. –Iris Murdoch

Link what you contrive to others' sense.
You aren't the only one to feel that way,
The world seemed like from where they sat
Who, sighing, contemplated it—their sigh.

Don't take some handy platitude for wit,

Or rambling for rebuttal of a lie.
Enough's enough's the best part of why.
Too much of a good thing might well be shit!

I choose my epigrams—or they choose me!

How could I trace cogitation's unsigned road
Not letting it go where it likes, free,

Ease wayfarers from mind's costive load?

We have a right to these traditions*
Earned in the immemorial blink of Time—
Our forebears fought to hold their positions,
In that stern Dancing Master's line.

*Cf. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition,"
in *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions, 1962), 164: "We have
a right to this tradition greater than that which the
inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have."

A Moment After

*The movement of time
Is shaken in these seas, and what one does
One moment has no might upon the moment
That follows after.*

—W. B. Yeats, *The Shadowy Waters*

What, though we may suppose it *might*,
Could bind together the halves, once severed,
Of this fruit upon the world's great serving dish
If each moment it's remade anew,

With just a shadow
Of the old to play upon the mind
And thus perfect the portrait's wish?

If you remember differently to me,
Maybe things were different where you are,
And neither's neither right nor wrong.

"The yew-bough has been broken into two,
And all the birds are scattered – O! O! O!
Farewell!"*

No more to say—or that can be said—
In this eternity once more of science and falsifiability.
We may perhaps hope to scent its pattern when we're dead!

*William Butler Yeats, *The Shadowy Waters: A Dramatic Poem* (1900).

[Table of Contents](#)

Peter Richard Dreyer is a South African American writer. He is the author of *A Beast in View* (London: André Deutsch), *The Future of Treason* (New York: Ballantine), *A Gardener Touched with Genius: The Life of Luther Burbank* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; rev. ed., Berkeley: University of California Press; new, expanded ed., Santa Rosa, CA: Luther Burbank Home & Gardens), *Martyrs and Fanatics: South Africa and Human Destiny* (New York: Simon & Schuster; London: Secker & Warburg), and most recently the novel *Isacq* (Charlottesville, VA: Hardware River Press, 2017).

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)