

## WELLING, REPLENISHING: RICHARD BERENGARTEN'S CHANGING AND THE I CHING

Richard Berengarten. *Changing*. Shearsman Books, 2016.

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While it is a responsible and even pleasurable thing to pay considerable attention to the structure and history of composition of Richard Berengarten's *Changing*, such an approach to the book, at least for me, misses a more essential aspect.<sup>1</sup> I want to pay close attention to the vision and content of this grand book. Berengarten's work may not be widely known or recognized (particularly in the US) in part because of his independent, skeptical, shape-shifting nature.<sup>2</sup> His poetry is not part of any particular movement or group, though it is helpful to note that one of his most profound influences was his friendship with Octavio Paz, inheriting his friend's sense of the poet's participation in a global or universal poetry. In the current age of poetry in the West, with the reigning fear being that of "appropriation," it is absolutely refreshing to find a poet—after 50 years of studying and reading the *I Ching*—who proceeds and writes a beautifully multifaceted homage to this great Chinese source-text. Berengarten's Postscript to *Changing* makes clear what his book of poems is and is not:

*Changing* is conceived as a single work, a composite poem made up of many small poems. It is based closely on the Chinese *Book of Changes* or the *I Ching*, and it is intended in part as an act of homage to this ancient text. But while many of its parts are rooted in the *I Ching*, and most take their inspiration from it and make repeated reference to it, and while its overall concept, plan, structure and themes have been configured through the *I Ching*, *Changing* is not a translation or a commentary. My hope is that this book will be read first and foremost as a poem, or gathering of poems, in its own right and for its own sake. (521)

For my money, the best (current) translator of ancient Chinese poetry is David Hinton. (By the way, his own translation of the *I Ching*,<sup>3</sup> which was too recent a translation to figure into Berengarten's writing, is also a poetic interpretation of the source-text. In fact, Hinton, in contrast to so many before him, understands the *I Ching* itself as a poetic text.) In *Hunger Mountain: A Field Guide to Mind and Landscape*,<sup>4</sup> Hinton begins by telling us that "Ancient China had a long and diverse philosophical tradition

centered on the nature of consciousness, the empirical world, and the relationship between them” (xi), but it is the fully extended version of Hinton’s introductory remarks that point us toward the informing affinity and vision of Berengarten’s book:

Ancient China had a long and diverse philosophical tradition centered on the nature of consciousness, the empirical world, and the relationship between them; but virtually all of that tradition’s diversity begins with the same, relatively simply conceptual framework. This framework, apparently originating at the earliest levels of Chinese culture, in Neolithic and Paleolithic times, appears in the Taoist and Ch’an (Zen) Buddhist philosophical traditions and, even more fundamentally, in the structures of classical Chinese language itself. (xi)

As will become more evident as I read specific poems from *Changing*, Berengarten’s affinities are principally with the ancient Taoist textual perspectives (as opposed to later, institutional Taoist practices). As Hinton explains, “*Tao* originally meant ‘way,’ as in ‘pathway’ or ‘roadway,’ a meaning it has kept. But Lao Tzu redefined it as a spiritual concept, using it to describe the process (hence, a ‘way’) through which all things arise and pass away” (16). Berengarten’s book lives within (but not exclusively within) such a Taoist mode of thinking. Berengarten’s book affirms *poetry itself* as a way, a pathway, and roadway—a process itself that expresses, affirms, and embodies the way that things arise and pass away. It is also a book that affirms friendships and kinships, sometimes with family members, but more often with poets, philosophers, and historians who share the poet’s vision of the intertwining of language, cosmos, and consciousness. And as Jacques Derrida made a crucial distinction between *religious* and *religion*, Berengarten’s own spirituality (a fusion of Jewish, Buddhist, and Taoist perspectives) is profoundly religious without developing a rigid set of institutional insistences or dogmatic tenets. Hinton finds the result of his own many years of living with and within the framework of ancient Chinese writing and thinking to be the development of a way that “is thoroughly secular, yet deeply spiritual. It is thoroughly empirical and basically accords with modern scientific understanding” (xii). I would say that such a conclusion applies equally well to Berengarten’s writing.



Approximately ten years ago, I found myself once again thinking about poetry and wisdom—rather than poetry and innovation, poetry and complexity, poetry and new modes of realism, poetry and current trends in

writing, etc. To Berengarten's credit, he has written a book that does not shy away from being wise, even as that wisdom may entail limitation and humility, but nonetheless moments and poems of beautifully moving insight do emerge. After all, this book is a life's work, and it benefits greatly from 50 years of thinking and reading (and 30+ years of writing the book), and it benefits as well from Berengarten's own aging and the insights that perhaps can only come about through aging, vulnerability, and the death of close friends. (My own response to this important strand in *Changing* no doubt stems from my own aging—I am 66 years old—and my surviving a serious illness this past summer. We often forget to mention in writing reviews and critical essays the personal circumstances and conditions that allow and encourage us to respond...)



I have read *Changing* several different ways. As I usually do when I am dipping into a new book of poetry, I flipped around randomly throughout the book, finding out if there would be enough poems that engaged me to invite a more sustained reading. Over the period of a few weeks, I also explored *Changing* as one typically consults the *I Ching*: each morning, I would pose a question; I would throw the coins; and I would read the hexagram/section that turned up (first in the *I Ching*, in the classic Wilhelm translation, and then in David Hinton's more recent translation, and then the series of poems in *Changing* associated with the specific hexagram). I found this method to be quite enjoyable (and deeply affirming of the kinship of *Changing* and the *I Ching*). For this review/essay, I engaged in the academically respectable practice of reading the book (consecutively, in order) from cover to cover, including the copious and extremely helpful notes at the back of the book, as well as Berengarten's insightful and informative Postscript. As the book is not based on a discernible narrative trajectory, any of these methods of reading will work just fine, and may eventually lead to a full reading of this remarkable book.

Berengarten suggests that the *I Ching* "is a generative and transformative structure which remains entirely passive and latent until it is 'activated.'" What he has to say about a reader's relationship to the *I Ching* applies equally well to his own book. Once this activation happens, the book

presents itself as immediately available for *practical application in the field of now*, in and through which it creates a flow of information for and through its user. As I have suggested, this information flow is based on a set of pre-formulated binary conversion rules which at their basic level are extremely simple. In this

respect the *I Ching* functions like (as) a kind of proto-computer. What ‘switches on’ the *I Ching* is the personal user’s asking a question in the first phase of the divination procedure. Use of the word *user* here reiterates the prime intended function of the *I Ching*, in contradistinction to any other books of comparable intellectual and imaginative scope, reach or magnitude in world history. It is a manual. (524)

Reading either book, or both books, provides (sporadic) access to *the field of now*.



*Changing* is a life-path book. From the very beginning, often told through characters researched and absorbed from Chinese history and philosophy, as well as European history, Berengarten asks about how best to live this life. In “What Zhang Zai thought”—Zhang Zai being an 11<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and astronomer—Berengarten identifies totally with Zhang Zai’s perspective:

Zhang Zai sat on a tree stump  
and quietly forgot about time and  
mortality and himself awhile

as he soaked himself into  
and through things. Not much of  
a life, he thought, if you can’t

or don’t get a chance to see  
patterns and images of heaven  
and earth as merely sediment

of marvelous transformations.  
And not much of a view if you’ve  
forgotten it. Better be poor and

remember this than have power  
and wealth and forget heaven is  
text and context for all wisdom. (6)

When I describe Berengarten’s thinking as Taoist, this poem and the one that follows are good examples of what I mean. The Zhang Zai poem, particularly the final three stanzas, could just as easily have appeared in Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*. (Perhaps all of us who write poetry are, whether we know it or not, heading toward that mountain pass, soon to disappear, per-

haps in disgust and retreat, and our writing, or the guard at the mountain pass, asks of us to write down what we know?) As the *I Ching* participates in divination, in ordering and directing our lives and choices in an effort to make cohere the extensiveness of our perceptions, so too does *Changing*, as in the poem “Cohering, Inhering,” a poem that appears early in the book, and acts as one of several early overviews:

All day long and  
all night long it starts  
now now. To

keep everything  
(every *thing*) in mind  
in its entirety, and

still focus entire on  
*this?* As the universe  
keeps all measures

and all in measure,  
and each thing main-  
taining its own seams,

stains, marks, patterns,  
edges, pleats, horizons—  
may the same quiet

patient appetite for  
order cohere, inhere  
in this, in here. (7)

Bearing some similarity as well to the task in George Oppen’s “Of Being Numerous,” Berengarten’s hope and petition is to attend to the one and the many, to attune to the order (and disorder) of the universe. In a wonderfully rich homophonic pun, Berengarten’s petition for coherence (co-hearing?) rests with what is in here, and with what we can hear here. It is a writing fully informed by the Taoist concept of *wu-wei* (nothing doing), both for the perceiver poet, and for the earth itself:

*you crusted ball of lava balanced on  
one invisible axis, indiscernible strings  
keeping your modest place, your*

*rolling pace, as doing nothing, you  
revolve and spin (14)*



The overall collection of poems offers many different pathways for reading, linking, and interconnection. Berengarten's notes help us to locate these interconnections—as with the poem on p. 20, which relates quite directly to the poem on p. 10 as well as the last poem of the book on p. 518. His poems do speak in and with and to each other. Sometimes, the connectivity stems from a key set of Chinese characters (which, at times, appear at the bottom of a page), as with *zhong dao*, the central path or middle way. All of these pathways lead me to think carefully about what are the many units of sense available in *Changing*. First, there is the particular poem, and there is also the layout of the page itself as another unit of composition, particularly with the subscript material at the bottom of the page (which links rather directly to the particular line of the hexagram that has “generated” the specific poem). Perhaps a more complete unit of thinking occurs at the level of the 7 poem series (or what I think of as a “chapter”) associated with each of the 64 hexagrams. Again, I would emphasize the very fresh, independent thing that Berengarten is (and is not) doing in *Changing*. He is *interpreting* each hexagram, but that does not become an all-exclusive focus nor a confining elucidation of the prior text. Berengarten is, more accurately, taking off from the particular hexagram—riffing, improvising, updating (not in the sense of improving, but in the sense of offering new historical information that re-enforces and deepens the particular hexagram), extending, and replying to it.

Berengarten's description of the principles that order and do not order the *I Ching* are equally applicable to his own book:

The *I Ching* operates transversally to sequential linearity. It cuts across both logical and narrative modes, intersecting them by applying a mode of thinking and perception—and hence also, by invoking a way of being—that is irreducibly synthetic, correlative, resonant, and poetic. To amplify these remarks: the *I Ching* does not function primarily in the way that any myth, tale, story or novel must proceed and operate, even though it may admit all such narrative elements. Nor is it 'rooted' in one or more particular places, as all fictions necessarily are. Nor does it proceed in the manner of developing argument. (523-524)

This peculiar structuring of the *I Ching* is replicated in *Changing*, with important implications for Berengarten's ongoing sense of how his own book *coheres*. Both books create a sense of a governing set of rules and structures, while eluding any sense of a strictly unified text. Or, as Berengarten observes about the *I Ching*, “Its symmetrical structure itself suggests

not only an over-arching ‘pattern’ or ‘frame’ but one that has no need to be dependent on the Aristotelian unities of time and place or, for that matter, on any other kind of insistent narrative or dramatic form” (525).

Structure (form) in *Changing* (and elsewhere) act as a provocation; structure is heuristic. It provokes the poet—is one aspect of a poet’s being called—to write. It is a lens through which something new (and old) might be seen and known. As with the Buddhist story about the finger that points to the moon, I am not so interested in writing about the nature of the finger; I am interested in thinking about what we learn about the moon.



In response to hexagram #48 (called “Welling, Replenishing”), Berengarten, in his notes, indicates that this particular hexagram is what he finds to be the central voice or imagem for the *I Ching*, and Berengarten dedicates poem #4 (“*I Ching*”) in memory of Richard Wilhelm, the classic translator of the *I Ching*:

Fifty years my  
friend, companion  
and spirit-guide

always trustworthy,  
never diffident  
never irrelevant

solid yet flowing  
firm yet yielding  
radiating images

self-replenishing  
inexhaustible  
fathomless

ever-fresh well—  
in plumbing you  
I soar

feet still  
grounded rooted  
in *this here now*. (388)

The multiplicity of senses for the final line enrich the variegated nature of *Changing*. While I tend to be drawn to more immediate present tense

now instances in *Changing*, there are also a great range of re-told historical, mythic, ancient, literary *now*'s throughout Berengarten's grand book.



*Changing*, as the ultimate (though not final!) book of Berengarten's writing life, while it is a book that the poet insists does cohere, is also a book that opens outward and onward: "The book is constantly / being written" (141). And in our particular age and time, when poetry itself is a marginalized activity rarely read with care, depth, and patience, it becomes increasingly necessary for poets to be their own best readers, or at least to articulate their own reading experience as a corollary of the writing experience. Berengarten's *Changing* thus, at times, reads itself, or offers perspectives on how reading the book might be approached:

*What the book said about itself*

*In opening this book  
you open a locked chamber  
in which, before words,*

*you have to read lines  
to unlock the meanings  
hidden in the words.*

*Meanings lie neither  
in words nor in lines but  
cluster behind both. Nor*

*will these leap to greet you  
like puppies wagging tails  
to welcome Master home.*

*You have to sit and wait  
in a patience within patience  
without praise or hope*

*for meaning to grow  
like ferns unscrolling from  
cracks between lines. (160)*

As the writer of such a book, Berengarten's task—one among several—involves simplification: "*You have told me, / Throw away your / craft, your tricks, // your techniques, all / you have learned*" (168). Berengarten writes that "Our



job is to foster and grow // (a) coherent language” that enables us “to reaffirm the dignity // of the dead” so that this newly found language ultimately allows us to “mend and change the real / regrow and rebuild hope” (190). Or, as Berengarten puts it in the companion poem “*Tikkun, Majdanek*,” “Our task, to restore / the fallen. Nothing else or / less” (294). Part of that act of repair, of *tikkun*, of healing, involves detailed and heart-felt acts of remembering.<sup>5</sup> Thus, many of the hexagrams (see #23, for example) are built upon archaeological reporting and the re-telling of historical atrocities and massacres—tales of the suffering and injustice that must not be forgotten if *tikkun* is to take place. Berengarten’s book of divination—*Changing* as the multifaceted homage to and extension of the *I Ching*—moves forward and backward in time, offering pointers and visions for the future, but also an equally strong movement into an understanding of or bearing witness to the past, particularly the human past of cruelty, often enacted on a large scale.

The mandate for simplicity leads to some beautifully paced, patient poems—what I am tempted to call *wisdom poems*. There are a number of these scattered throughout *Changing*, and I will only offer remarks on a couple of them.<sup>6</sup> In “Winter Solstice” (from hexagram #35), Berengarten writes,

Sky a frosted pearly  
porcelain blue as I walk  
down Mill Road this

morning to post a last  
Christmas card. A mass  
of people out, traffic

honking, blocked solid.  
Yesterday, I heard another  
friend has died—that’s

two gone this week.  
Today consciousness, life  
itself, seems improbable;

miraculous. Presences  
of small glories mean more  
than all or any of

heaven’s promises.  
At home I boil a sky  
blue egg for lunch. (286)

This understated, beautifully compressed moment—of grace, glory, the intrusion of a sense of the miraculous in the commonplace, even as it is juxtaposed with the death of friends—becomes a sporadically reoccurring element woven throughout the complex, non-unitary texture of *Changing*. That very pressure of mortality drives the poet toward such moments of intensified love of being itself.

And in “Adhering, inhering” (from hexagram #55):

The way the light  
adheres and inheres  
to or in things

as if glued or  
as part of their  
fabric, stuff,

very grain  
and yet constant  
in its changing

is surest gift  
of world and time.  
Whatever else

may go or come  
this light changing  
on surfaces

is delight, is  
glory, the unique  
common miracle. (441)

Such poems exhibit a compelling gratitude—for being, for being incarnate, for the perfection of simple moments and simple deeds, for the miraculous seen (and felt) in the commonplace. And gratitude for change itself. As *za-zen* (zen meditation) often produces intensified gratitude for and awareness of one’s breathing, Berengarten’s poems are stripped of intellectual display and reduced to their essential words with rarely a wasted or redundant word. What emerges is that profound kinship between *thinking* and *thank-ing*. While that kinship is crucial to Heidegger’s *What Is Called Thinking?*, it is also a perspective and linkage central to zen thinking as well. As David Hinton notes: “we can trace *think* far enough back to see that it converges

at its vanishing point with *thank* in the Indo-European *tong-*, which means *love*. So it seems likely that thinking was early on experienced as gratitude or love for the world” (57).

One might argue, perhaps somewhat reductively?, that these simplified, stripped-bare wisdom-poems are what happens as one gets up in years. But Berengarten’s poems of old age (as with virtually every other topic in this book) do not occupy one perspective, especially not merely the nostalgic, melancholic backwards glance. One is equally likely to find Berengarten taking up a rather different perspective:

Getting old brings  
not sadness and regret  
but more hunger for

more life, more  
energy, more desire  
for doing, making

more—more of *now*,  
more worlds. (340)

Berengarten grapples with his own eventual non-being—“my mind // completely fails to conceive / of its own non-being / before birth returning” (502)—acknowledging the difficulty of believing in that eventuality. While that process of disappearance is painful to admit, it is also a pathway toward a more insistently Taoist view of the importance (or non-importance) of self and toward intensified gratitude:

Now how can there be  
no now-any-more? I go

into the dustless zone  
into gone deathcall, calling  
*Glad to have lived.* (509)

While Berengarten’s ultimate end might be a complete self-erasure—“Seek me nowhere. / Whoever or whatever I / was dissolves.” (430)—it is the encounter with the cosmos (with the stars) that takes us along with Berengarten through a chastening and pedagogical shift in perspective (as in the poem “Consoling, abundant, terrifying stars,” p. 443):

Consoling, abundant,  
terrifying stars, you humble  
the identity of me to

a point less than zero,  
to zero's irreducible core,  
whatever such might be.

What an irrelevance  
any such entity as 'I'  
compared with your

high hushes and rushes  
mastering unimaginable  
time-space, vast zones

of your habitations.  
Here, away from city glare,  
and faced with you and

my death, you squeeze  
all identity out of me. And  
that's fine, majesties.

In part, there is in Berengarten's thinking a movement toward self-erasure, though that diminution of the centrality of the self, of 'I,' comes from and out of personal experience and moments of insight fully within the context of a fairly traditional poetry of self and by means of a distinctly personal voice. The insights that come out of these moments of meditative observation feel to me to be profoundly Taoist in their nature, as when Berengarten writes of "us who, being / on earth, thereby / reside in heaven, // among heavens, / made of the same / heaven-stuff as they" (445). In such moments, as Hinton describes it, "in the moment of perception, there is no 'I' perceiving, there is simply perception" (113). Or, even more in keeping with Berengarten's "Heaven-stuff" (poem 5 of hexagram #55, p. 445), in writing of the poets of Chuang Tzu's time, Hinton calls "the deepest level of their wisdom: their experience of consciousness itself, not just the body, as woven wholly into the *chi*-tissue that is our physical universe" (113). Or, as Alan Watts describes such moments, "Ultimately, of course, it is not really a matter of oneself, on the one hand, trusting nature, on the other. It is a matter of realizing that oneself and nature are one and the same process, which is the Tao."<sup>7</sup>

In hexagram #24 (Returning), in Berengarten's poem "*Everyone knows the way,*" it is the ancient Chinese voice, the foundational voices and poets

of Taoist and Zen thinking, who help take Berengarten to the edge of a profoundly different perspective on human incarnation:

*But who except voices like these  
will take you and me on*

*into zones the other silent  
and unwritten side before  
birth and after death, where*

*light itself gleams brilliant  
black and angelic against  
interiors of mountains?* (p. 192)

What I've been calling self-erasure may more accurately be thought of as a displacing of the centrality and drama of the self through a broader more-encompassing cosmic perspective, the kind of meditation that we find in "Tracks to stars and back" (poem #4 in hexagram #25):

Complex thoughts,  
many-dimensional, fling  
tracks to stars and back.

'I dissolved. 'I keeps  
on dissolving. That's hard at  
first. But better that way.

When all's said and done,  
'I matters little to anyone. (204)

But if we compare Berengarten's realizations about the self, and his commitment to a process of self-dissolving, to those of another great partisan of the *I Ching*, a considerable difference opens up. Whereas John Cage's displacement of the self becomes central to his own methods of composition—chance determined (through consulting the *I Ching*) and an embracing of randomness—in poetry, in painting, in musical compositions, and in filmmaking (particularly in editing), Berengarten's changing perspective on the self comes about through a poetry that remains intensely self-centered within a compositional tradition of a recognizable self with a particularly distinctive voice. In other words, Berengarten's poems tend to enact (or summarize) conclusions about the proper place of the self in this universe, but the method of writing the poem (while intensely and carefully structured by the poet's relationship to the *I Ching* as the exemplary source-text),

does not undergo a correspondingly radical compositional change.



There are so many possible pathways in and through *Changing*, many of which have evaded my attention in this essay, sometimes due to my preferences for some strands over others, sometimes for my own lack of preparedness to fully appreciate particular strands. But one pathway that continues to resonate with me is Berengarten's interrogation of and gratitude for our—human being's—nuanced relationship to language. In fact, the first poem that Berengarten composed for *Changing* propels us down that very pathway. The poem, "The complete art of drowning," appears as the concluding poem in hexagram #41:

Being 2 ½ years old  
this child falls, every  
day she wakes, into

the lake of language.  
Sometimes I watch her  
from under this water

I swim my life through  
having drowned here long ago.  
Each day she gets better

at diving. Already she frog-  
paddles on the surface. Her  
gills are growing, lungs

disappearing. Soon  
she'll learn the complete  
art of drowning.

When engulfed in words  
what worlds will she lose  
and what world gain? (334)

It could be argued that this fall into language is what this book—what poetry?—is about, though *Changing* would make us wary of any singular assertion. Berengarten, in "Roots, roofs, routes" (poem 1 in hexagram #46), summarizes the complex dance that human consciousness and language have been doing ever since we became capable of entering the dance:

The central nervous  
system—most evolved of  
teleonomic structures.

*Whose purpose prompts  
this? Is it we who pattern  
language? Or does it us? (369)*

While Berengarten has confidence (and perhaps faith) in a natural process of coherence—“Things of their // own accord fit and / cohere, including our / breaths and this air” (p. 364)—perhaps it is the penultimate poem (“Alchymical Perle,” the fifth poem of hexagram #64) of *Changing* that provides the best summary of his perspective on the nature of things. It is, as I have been suggesting all along, a classically Taoist (and Zen Buddhist) act of equivocation, expressing and choosing both /and over any singular assertion:

Axiomatic, our *precious*  
*perle wythouten spotte* is to be  
found at home, in our own

hearth, heart, guts. And in  
the core of commonplace, among  
ordinary (ornery) things

is where we're to look  
again and again, before our  
noses, behind our backs,

in and through darkest  
deepest blind spots. What  
at first seemed simple

may turn out quite  
complex—yet simplicity  
and complexity keep

opening out into each  
other, interpenetrating,  
blurring, irradiating. (517)

## Notes

1. In brief: *Changing* consists of 450 poems, 7 for each of the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching*, plus two additional poems. All poems are 18 lines long: 3 lines per stanza, 6 stanzas. The review by Paul Scott Derrick in *The Fortnightly Review* is especially excellent on form and structure [<http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2017/02/ringing-the-changes/>]. Derrick considers *Changing* in relation to Berengarten's many other books of poetry, noting that "Structural and formal control have always been essential for Berengarten. This is one of the many qualities that make him such a fascinating contemporary poet." Silvio Pio's informative review, "Prayer, Prophecy, and Poetry: Richard Berengarten's *Changing*," is also excellent [<http://www.margutte.com/?p=21380&lang=en>]. See also Owen Lowery's review in *The Jewish Chronicle* (3 March 2017, p. 46) which places *Changing* within the context of Berengarten's overall literary career. Of course, see also Berengarten's own remarks on form and structure in his Postscript, p. 525.

2. As one poet (John Matthias) who has known Berengarten for many years puts it: "He's always been at odds with Cambridge poetry orthodoxy, esp Prynneians...It's hard to take Richard's measure as he has been so many things—English, Jewish, Greek, Serbian, and now Chinese. But I do think *Changing* is his masterpiece." [email to author: December 1, 2016]. Until somewhat recently, Berengarten published under the name Richard Burns; he now publishes under his family name, affirming his Jewish identity. Wikipedia offers this helpful summary of the range of Berengarten's affinities: "Richard Berengarten (born 1943) is a European poet, translator and editor. Having lived in Italy, Greece, the USA and the former Yugoslavia, his perspectives as a poet combine English, French, Mediterranean, Jewish, Slavic, American and Oriental influences. His subjects deal with historical and political material, with inner worlds, relationships and everyday life. His work is marked by its multicultural frames of reference, depth of themes, and variety of form. In the 1970s, he founded and ran the international Cambridge Poetry Festival. He has been an important presence in contemporary poetry for the past 40 years, and his work has been translated into more than 90 languages."

3. David Hinton, *I Ching: The Book of Change*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015.

4. Boston & London: Shambhala, 2012

5. I think that an interesting essay about the intersection—kinships and differences—between Jewish and Buddhist thinking could be written based on *Changing*.

6. For other poems of similar simplicity and beauty, see also p. 128 (this particular poem being a superb answer to that question often posed to the elderly: based on your life experiences, what advice would you give to someone much younger?), p. 452 ("Now I confess"), and p. 364 ("Beautiful September morning," p. 364).

7. Alan Watts, *TAO: The Watercourse Way*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, p. 32.



It might be said of Richard Berengarten's *Changing*, as it might be said of the ancient work of divination known as the I Ching, that it is a long poem. The former, in the words of its author, is a "single work, a composite poem made up of many small poems," mirroring the structure of the latter, a 9th-century BCE text whose poetry resonates despite the obscurity of its language to contemporary readers. Berengarten suggests that *Changing* might be read as a "gathering of poems", pointing to the affinities as well as something like a relation of comity or concord between these short pieces. In #48 Welling, Replenishing, Berengarten describes the I Ching as a "self-replenishing/ inexhaustible/ fathomless/ ever-fresh well": never diffident never irrelevant. by. Baynes, Cary F; Wilhelm, Richard, 1873-1930. Publication date. 1980. Reviewer: rn tmssn - favorite - March 28, 2020 Subject: no content. what's the point of pretending that this is any kind of preview if none of the sentences that make up the content of this book are included in the preview? 976 Previews. 9 Favorites. *Changing*. Richard Berengarten. Bristol, England: Shearsman Books. Richard Berengarten's *Changing* is the most ambitious poem ever written outside the Chinese language in honour of the Book of Changes, or Yijing [I Ching]. *Changing* is a homage both to this ancient text and to Chinese history and culture. The poem takes direct inspiration from the Chinese classic, as well as its form and the inter-relationships of its parts. The work is a remarkable achievement in its own right and a living testament to the enduring and universal quality of the Yijing. Berengarten has been exploring the Yijing for more than 50 years. The book has a preface by Edward L. Shaughne SAMPLER. *Changing*. Selected Writings 8. Richard Berengarten was born in London in 1943, into a family of musicians. He has lived in Italy, Greece, the USA and former Yugoslavia. Exhausting 48. Welling, Replenishing 49. Shedding 50. Cooking, Sacrificing 51. The reader will soon turn to *Changing* and will find that this collection of poems "or perhaps I should say, this single long poem, composed of many parts" easily withstands even an affront such as this. Many readers will know of the Changes as the I Ching (regardless of how it might be pronounced) and will know both that it is the first of the Chinese classics and also that it began its existence as a divination manual. They probably will not think of it as poetry, except in the loosest of senses. The Book of Changes -- I Ching in Chinese -- is unquestionably one of the most important books in the world's literature. Its origin goes back to mythical antiquity, and it has occupied the attention of the most eminent scholars of China down to the present day. Nearly all that is greatest and most significant in the three thousand years of Chinese cultural history has either taken its inspiration from this book, or has exerted an influence on the interpretation of its text. Therefore it may safely be said that the seasoned wisdom of thousands of years has gone into the making of the I Ch...