

FOUR HUNDRED AND FOUR SONNETS

/
Bill Knott

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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The order of the poems is meant to be random, neither chronological nor thematic, though I may have failed to achieve that intention in all instances.

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The poems are set in 11 pt. Garamond.

/
The spacing between the poems was too difficult to format precisely; I apologize for the erratic look of the layout from page to page.

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Acknowledgements: see the 25 or so pages on this website: <http://knottpoetry.blogspot.com/>

INTRO NOTE:

I got interested in this form around 1969-70, and published several in my 1974 book, *Love Poems to Myself* (Barn Dream Press), and then more in the ones that followed: *Rome in Rome* (Release Press, 1976), *Becos* (Random House, 1983), *Outremer* (U. of Iowa Press, 1989), *The Quicken Tree* (BOA, 1995), and *The Unsubscriber* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2004).

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The number in the title is approximate, but fairly close to an actual count.

/
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/
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CURATION

As everybody knows, museums are filled with forgeries while the real paintings sculptures get gloated over by billionaires in big guarded estates, but it's not just art, of course; in fact

most people, most of us are facsimilies, frauds, our true selves put in galleries owned by those wealthy. We were stolen and replaced by fakes at birth. Why they have collected us, for what

purpose, no one knows. Oh surely not for our esthetic value! Pure shades of provenance, we live this facade while the real you, the real me

stay framed by arch-eyed richies, stately swells who are the only true connoisseurs since they alone know what's disposable and what's us.

PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond a paper boat; something about a child's act, dropping a pebble upon that boat to study the effect: but then to let other pebbles fall to see if it holds, to kneel there spilling them one after one until, until finally . . . If I weigh this poem down with much more, it too will sink—

Writing my poems of a boy on the brink has shown how ripples horizoned by sky remain the only real cargo aboard whatever that craft that unmoored us was, and yet why he treasured such passages. Saying they be lost we would launch each word.

VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER

(to Carolyn Kizer)

And yet what if the sweat that breaks
Even from Her feet as they pass
Can never rain these pavements back
To a mud- a milk-cud grass

Time that diamond instant dew dulls
Is it quicker than them quote
That strode presence those fading puddles
Not in this godless heat

Oh mirage oh haze of hydrants
Go Isis-proud across crosswalks
Leave brief seas without a halt

Till all my doubts dissolve at once
And down I'll follow cowed to lick
Your soleprints for my salt

POEM IN MOTIFS

The window's clarity reflects upon
the windowsill's clutter too brightly
to be believed. Each pane pleads show,
don't tell. Beyond this, what else exists—

wishing the sun would set on his wrists,
exsanguinate day with one fine slash
like horizons married to shy bottles of wine
whose red has not bled drybed as mine—

As butterflies would appreciate slower
yoyoes, so I wait, ape to uncurt my eye;
I pay the fares of long forgotten trains.

Peaks plunge cloaked in pregnant parachutes;
the soprano's single hairstrand stands on end.
My words erase their typist's fingerprints.

NARCISSPOND

This pond saw someone once
But since then never none
Has ever another known

Imagine if your mirror
Lay cover buoyed by it
Recognition ink and pure

This water held no features
That were of us or any
Unless its blindness blurs

The eyes that see until they open
The face which is theirs only
In one ripple too many

Of course he says his name is
But all it is is just the same as

MEMOIRISM

My bio is buttered by mother, my auto
by father. First, father autobio'd mother,
who then bio'd his auto in her ms. son,
the misery one. Non-bio exploits I abhor

as does every contemporary litterateur
adhered to being, that sole mode: we know
that those who imagine their works not
as me or I should be forced into therapy

made to take psychotropic drugs. No
exceptions are allowed: I too must join
the rest of you in this rendered real, this

overratio of truth to fable, I too must sell
lifelike anecdotal excerpts from my actual
personal past spiced with empirical detail.

DREAM AMID BED-WOODS

You must pull down sheets from these linen trees,
Blankets too, a pillowcase in full leaf,
But can't: to snooze amidst their fruits, beneath
The sheath of that composite canopy's

Roost, you must raise yourself past hammock heights—
Up where its deepest roots feel doubly sapped,
That dormitory orchard might lie wrapped
And ripe with you, whose foliage still invites

More lure of surface sleep. But must you trust
The ease in these boughs, the sway of whose loft
So often now wakes vows to never rest,

To somehow remain afloat, to resist
All berth above: you must push off this soft
Palletted grove, this tall, forest mattress.

SUPERFLUOUS

Better come love me before I make my kill,
'cause when I reach the top, Litotes, if
I can't forget you my secretary will—
you know my seck-a-tary will.

Weeds succor themselves; flowers, others.
It is with a kind of difficulty I say
as alpine algae you lurk in out of way
places, small of back, like, or flicker of knee.

Your loveliness is always unexpected,
has to be stepped back one step from.

If we are the trace of such pleasures, if
their constant loss measures us for a life,
what treasure is it persuades our pursuit?

The site of my delete must remain my delight.

WINTERSCAPE

If a lifetime of papercuts on one's tongue
Is one's name. 'The scar-fitted shirt, prepare it;
'The seed-sandal, the wreckers' sex. Oh ego intercom.
Come, weigh my palms upon the scale of my hands.

Enter: a colonnade of conifers who vote
For death as the most economical
Sin. See a tuningfork has been to highnote
Their monotony jammed atop each tree—

Now amorously by groans, by psalms I grow.
Licking a moonfob fat, my egg-dyed navel
Eager to inherit what. Pane-thrust apertures;

Figures pearled in games of sculpture maybe;
Purer minutiae. 'Thistles? Thorn icicles
Drop by drop will knit it, Knott-slits in the snow.

GERAL

in the jail of my journey
at some point I went astray
and started writing poetry
inferno curse that day

led me into not out of this hell
page by page I went in circle
every torturous Neo- or Post-
verse was worse than the last

now in knell nethermost years
with blurbs by Judas/Satan
my Collected Poems appears
remaindered on Amazon

and still I heel that old Virgil
like a dog through his gerald

POEM

when he woke in bed
it was 12 by the stones
that fell on his head

it was none by the night
and all done by the day
in either case it was too late

now a picture of his pores
handpainted on his bones
may show the way to others

shuttergrids of his face
promise pretty much that
yes he existed times space

his cup was both hands full
you can see it in the photo

VIDLOCK

These movies in common separate us
if we see them as real, as all that may
be salvaged by an image, the screen
blank so it can evolve toward some

higher form of media, a schism
between the eyes perhaps, whose
gap is carefully marginal with grief,
whose stubborn inborn hunger grips

like tolled-out hymns. Like old films.
And yet its website remains as secret
as a bridal veils' graveyard or any
facade acropolis can't penetrate.

Its made for TV trademark's a fad,
a name: one more fatal masquerade.

INTRUSIONS

Sometimes I wake up to find
I have been scratching
the phone while asleep.

Sometimes I forget the letters
that make up my name,
that take down my word.

Afraid of such disowning, I eye
every passerby. Each is
a breach in my uniqueness.

(None of them completes me.)

Each of my pores is a different color,
but I am not any of those colors,
the pointillist told me. I stared
beholder at that older world.

DEFECT

Foolish to perceive the leaves
as always falling in twos rather
than singly: as if I could believe
they each call for a companion

when they feel their end come,
some lover to accompany them
to the ground. It must be my eyes
have grown so blurry with time

that when I see one leaf hurry
downward that sight is warped
and wefted double; what is

the medical term for this defect?
Scurryviz. Twinmatism. Stig-
montage. Or simpler: Desire. Hope.

2 TRANSVERSIONS FROM RILKE

1. (BUDDHA II)

Kingdoms overflowing with karmic fault,
Traumas of state, murder-lief and slavery,
Are here secreted to gold: alchemy
Drips its dew on our pilgrim shoes: sieg halt!

Snatched from daubing lobes and toast-raised hands,
Tossed in a kiln can such kitey-high brows,
What lustful metals raised this transubstance
From their impure base, announce his res grows?

No one knows. Somehow he got here, never mind
The source we seek in meager things like house
And hammer, hoping his Amen bloodline
Lingers found in lost items, by the tools we
Set aside unthinkingly: may they occupy
Our sills those days we stray from dailiness.

2. (SEBASTIAN)

He lies where he stands, he stands there as if
his bed erected him to stand this stiff:
no *Symbolist* can feel the real arrows
that milk his mother ribs of their marrows.

These weapons are the tech his lost, his fierce
groin shot up in proving arcs to pierce
their progeny: iron they want to be, iron,
with virile shafts that almost make him grin.

Albeit he waves off his disciples,
fateful, mild to their autotelic reels;
how male they remain, despite his example.
His patience renders droll the actors' drill.

Renouncing, blinking life away as all,
already he allows for our survival.

LAST STOP BEFORE POEM

Sometimes I see this it-looks-like-a-stopsign
Thing—or an erased stopsign—then the scene
Cuts to me and I'm running or else I'm all done
Running, finished, out of breath—or out of sigh—

And then, in the end, it happens. Again. Night
To night daily through the day I fade: by
Mocking myself I make myself enjoy—
Quickie spasms of dream. Then squirm, in my seat,

When the vids spritz bits from some terminal stage
—PBS: "AIDS Victims' Deliriums." They dance
Their beauty. They shake that thing. Turn! turn! Retreat:

Death is such an easy cure for the plague
Named *Future*. What further survives that present tense
These endstopped enjambments will wait to create.

FACE IN THE WINDOW

I am a modest house, a house solely
notable for the fact I lived here once.
Its brass plaque depicts an oxygen eye
in which two pupils of hydrogen dance.

Downstairs is where I lit fires whose insights
with approach-velocity froze me, then
signed off into flame. This always happened when
I came close to a truth. Months passed. Years. Nights.

Shall I accommodate myself again,
a humble aquarium of lordly
thumbs, some *fin de species*? Of course each word

the blackout-moth mutters to my keyboard
shows the snowiest letter on this page is "I"—
must I now plumb its one remaining pane?

JANUS IN THE WIND

Who drains his breath from the sky,
who empties his grasp into the ground,
who moves on trespass, lingers on word,
pasturing his impostures, his games—

each one lasting as long as the steam
that emanates at first from the dirt
wrenched up harshly from its warm
depths when graves are readied during

winter in the cemetery, that field which
has to be ploughed and burrowed up
always, even in winter, how unfair,

how unjust when all the other fields
get to rest beneath their hypnotic snows,
get to forget (how briefly!) Spring.

ACTORS: THE DENOUEMENT

After each performance comes catharsis
as one more audience member is sewn
into the hem of the theater curtain;
some day it will sway too heavy to raise:

on that evening the play will not begin—
until such time our continual clamor
minds the same drama again and again,
less for its marquee-names than the encore

when one of us, us groundlings, us non-stars
gets knit into the huge velvet stagedrop—
a climax cheered, though we're still here to see

the final show, to witness what occurs
the night our hem-mates' weight puts a stop
to this farce. Will they be freed then? Will we?

STRAND

To swim in water colored green
means you may never reach the shore—
but if the waves are blue, then you
might revive your stroke and strike more.

Past surface shades could find the one
arranging dust, the hue your own
adequately echoes, earth tone.

Neither primary nor pastel,
its prism all but shallow bathes
every island that can be found
in scenes preserved by paint: it saves

the picturesque yet quickly drowns
our honed harbor, your wake, your wake
says, flowing home beneath no ground.

CURTAIN UP

The last whirling dervish to drop
Beholds transfixed what those who stop
Dancing an instant prior can't:
His veil is pierced by orbs that grant

The properly-spiritual leer
A picture which should inspire fear.
They say the face of God, maybe—
In my case I would probably

Flashback to 1961
Where filmqueen Romy Schneider's gone
Down on co-star Alain Delon
To pose for my holy vision.

They're flung in bed with me between.
See us there: I am their screen.

THE UNSUBSCRIBER

Like all children, you were a de facto
Member of the Flat Earth Society,
Believing nothing but what you could see
Or touch or whatever sense led act to

Fruition: mudpies made summer beneath
A tree whose measured shade endowed decrees
Between light and dark: such hierarchies
Gave you implicit, a sophistic faith—

(Fallacious fellowship!)— Youth's adherents
Ignore the fact that most factions reject
Their lyric league (which only fools have stayed)

Striplings of) and none condone its nonsense:
No one loves that vain solipsistic sect
You'd never join, whose dues you've always paid.

PASSAGES

Must I spread out maps flat beneath a tree
and sit waiting for bird-droppings to plot
my itinerary? Where but in doubt
of here has *placement* always brought me—

The winch that lowers checkmate to its spot
whines and vibrates too dramatically;
the rain falls parallel to the rainfold; not
believing in free will leaves me free to see

via dimmer modes, by seerscapes of fog—
The world blurs, in other words, into
other words. Water, I tell my followers,

is the curse of all such clarity. Fill
the sink with faces, let them drain
each other before you pull the plug.

CRAFT

lay the tragic mask
atop the comic mask

snip out the parts
where they don't match

then take this overlap
make a third mask

a superfluous mask
a mask of excess

a mask that is useless
that has no purpose

unless of course it is
the appropriate one

to be placed on both
your first and final face

MEANWHILE

It's the tiniest musicbox in the world,
And brave you, you're trying to save it from
Drowning. Meanwhile is [insert name of
Painting or movie] the AntiMedusa
To stir our stone eyes with or must we fit
A gumball globe over our heads like
Diving helmets and let its planets drop
Into our night: might that awaken sight—

Listen: what's it saying Save me Save me
As its wrung tinkling sinks beneath endless
Waves: meanwhile as in times past when
Everyone on earth died we must wait for
[Insert name] to come back and resurrect
Us. Surely she [or he] will hear our cries?

VAGUE CONSOLES

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest.
Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis).
And haven't we killed all the Indians yet?
In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,

I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop.
Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto
Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall,
Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague consoles—

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies
Trying to put down the peaceful demands of
Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it mattes—
The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await.
The crotches arranging themselves for death.

THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold. —Trakl

A threshold is everything that can be
seen in the space of the endurance of
our openness: thus at the conclusion
of *The Searchers* John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to
escape always the outward-gazing-lust
of that thrust doorway toward the horizon
or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit
is lost and we who had followed his flight
from the intimacy of this interior, we
must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile
while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

THE CLIMB

You'll know you've reached the top,
the peak, the moment your bootsoles
go out of sight, since you can only
get there by following yourself up.

Craning your neck to see that trail,
you'll plummet past the hope to scale
any summit if you overtake a guide
whose shadow is you, whose spoor

you are. Know him as the truer you,
the perfected precursor emitted by
this act of aspiration alone, this try—

stay in his tracks, obey the protocol
of all such quest-stakes, the miracle
no tree-line mars, the height it takes.

THE WAY

the juggler could
amputate parts
of himself and
juggle them so

as to fill the air
with synecdoche
the boffo finish
one final echo

to climax his act
to sacrifice limb
by limb his all

transformed to ball
that juggler'd
never fall

AFTER: "L'HORREUR" BY ANDRÉE BEIDAS

Horror
is not the seashore,
the beach
where each

wave breaks
like a monster
with two backs:

or a stormy sky
that rains one's veins dry
with lightning fire—

Horror is my face
displaced
by this grimace
of desire.

Note:

I worked from the original French poem, and from Evalyn P. Gill's
English version.

[HENDECASYLLABICS]

Of scenes of former harrow I now must tell
How in that world opposite the grave I fell
Coincident with my gestures of blessing
Or shame so desperately I drank the flags

Of your feet. The whiteclap trees the blinding breeze
In its lows the song undoubtedly loves you
While in its highs it hates all you have at heart.
Nevertheless it is from this you must start.

If snowpeaks wore sandals would you thong them with
Your tongue, what a long trek to link the vastness
Dancing with that witherwick whose days' drumstick

Ladled belly over each mummy mantis
That pranced in place. When twins gaze at each other
Through a keyhole one of them must masturbate.

TO THE EMBLEMATIC HOURGLASS OF MY FATHER'S
SKULL

The night that dies in me each day is yours:
Hour whose way I stare, yearning to terra
Firma my eye. There. Where a single hair
Would be a theater curtain I could cling

Behind, dreading my cue, aching to hear
What co-hurrah. More, more of leaves that fall
Consummate capsules, having annaled all
Their veins said! Printout *printemps*. And yet

(Altars our blood writes a blurb for god on)
Can one ever envy enough his skeleton's
Celebrity. Can any epitaph

Be adequate repartee for your laugh.
Days lived by me each night say less than it.
While sleep in ounces weighs me wanting.

AMERICAN LOVE SONNET

My kisses are like our mission
to bring peace to Guatemala,
and like our brave intervention
to save lives in Venezuela:

Congress yes-sirs my caresses
of all rebel breastholds: the Pope
blesses each fastness I rip loose
and now my freedomfingers grope

at every clit-tipped capitol
ripe for my liberating lust:
die, commie labia! until
I will regain your land at last:

FoxNews huzzaws as I install
El General in his palace.

SURETIES

The police see you, but it doesn't.
Indifferent to return your gaze,
And therefore free. You will never be
Able to smash it sufficiently
To erase the stasis it makes in space.

Rilke's "Apollo," this is. Headless limbless,
A tortoise that has retracted everything
Into its obdurate lair, defiant den.
Only the gods are as patient through lenses.

You dance like wallpaper thawing its father
And still you lack that proof-in-all, that aloof
Olympian ennui, the sniper's prize.

As long as change is your life it will shun you.
No shot will shut your target torso.

SPACE

From the trees the leaves came down
until we joined hands with a wand
and that act enabled them
somehow then to reach the ground

where they scattered round our feet
urging the latter to unite
with a baton as if that act
together with the hands can clasp

a dowsing-stick cut from the same
branch from which we launched
converging on gravity's purge-point

at which point we merged to remove
all consonants from our star-maps.
The infinite consists of vowels alone.

THE FLAW

Like a teardrop that although of many
Teardrops composed hangs singly in an eye

Which likewise might be meld of plural
Orbs if all were known I mean visible

Must I also go aggregate go greet
A global bitter mime that bears its white

Situate amidst their company sought
Opposite I wake lost at night without

The pains I have pawned my own for him
Grieve and the obeyed sweatbeads lamentum

Made for the mead whose gracious weaves supply
The final humors that give our body

Physicality current as the sea's
Before its fall repairs the fault that sees.

MIMED

My application for the job of 'corpse, public'
went nowhere, but as always in these mazes
the choicer seconds rose from the horizon
strata-et-cetera, where I learned the scorn

of my diminished status was too forsaken
to heal the breach in sardine measures that
taught me six feet deep doesn't need hell
to fill it. Flailing over the bannister didn't

help. Safetypins jabbed into my shoulders
should enable me to fly soon: until then
I'll muck up my manque like a lapidary ape

stranded at an ungainly height I can never
attain, a topiary lust can barely relate to
till mimed by flowers the wind carries it.

PERFORMANCE-ART PIECE

First she slides a banana up my ass
almost but not quite all the way in
then deftly with a knife she slices
the rindtip that extrudes and when

the pithsweet meatus shows its white
cusp like a pearl between the moue
of a romeo in a cameo says Right
Hold it Okay now squeeze real slow

as she squats and eats the ivory
flesh emerging and smearing fused
her red lispberries while the yellow

skin remains within me to be used
as a kind of condom for the dildo
she has to ram in and out artfully.

EXTENDED

Those positions sought in vain by trainwrecks
These two achieve quite quickly. Contorted
Limbs and mouths chuting their routeless tracks
They litter that linen landscape. The bed

Goes off the rails. Mountains or valleys push
Each place that's reached for beyond its distance.
Here in time's commute communed for the rush
Hour this kiss lasts. Yet always late since

Lovers' travel is over where but when.
How far they've come. Both bodies disembark
Homeward tramways while memories remain

Head-ons hurled from one's normal course again
And again. Everything goes bright then dark.
Either emerges on a further line.

THE PAST: TO X

Whenever keys lick our hands,
melting them into other hands,
each door opens on a scene of
thrust-aside bodies. The past is love

suppressed. Closeup: focus copulates with
F sharp. Memories hide a wealth
denied of music and outmode.

In oldies songs in black dresses
whose fade-labels frill our sex attic,
caresses are snatched from kisses.

The past is not us. Its lovers
are true for an hour that stays
surprised behind a threshold of days.
Maybe they can say when it's over.

SELF(THE POET PASSÉ)PORTRAIT

His task to watch an hourglass wash itself,
A ritual cleansing that leaves him bare,
Though no purification's new enough
To nullify the need for such labor—

Prior soon to repeat, platonic clone,
He should have practiced that horizon
Vocation, camouflage, opening his
Arms wide the better to hide. But of course

If the flesh is fire, bones are the kindling:
Still there but aching to be unbelied
By the lover; unbelied as breaths held
Until all the minutes fall to the wrong

End of the hour and find his final
Efforts've faded, dated as (or like) a sundial.

VOCATIONAL

In my father's house there are many homes
and in every one of them there's no way out
high-ancient Crustpusyule the cossacks cry
they killed my son the mothers heap cry

and always away at sea the shark the crew
was knitting for their captain's birthday
opens its sack. Life is such a strengthless pause
of waiting while it takes a jailer to pick

through his keyring to find the final door's
and the white hordes your voyeurkinder cried for in cradle,
oh skinny-factoried earth, will they ever open

and bless with high falconry these thrusts
or is it else we pray for more guise than this.
The epigone's dying words were his first.

POEM

I doubt you would mock a snowflake for
its subconscious sunflower so why
pick on me for wanting to be a poet

I know how stupid indubitably
my ambitions are likely I know it
better than you and furthermore

if you and I were clones of each other
like our coats in winter seem to show it
huddled in storm's conforming bent

or when tombs cover us over would we
ever really see what lies under
this bare disguise of you and me

but at least in my poems damnit I try
to go without that outer garment.

KAWAZU NYAWKER

I prop each rejection-slip
against a grass-blade

round the pond where
I drown myself to show

these SASE dismissals
hold the reason why

I must die but suddenly
a frog jumps in, ya,

shatter-drops lash over
those printed forms and

the padstamped name
Alice Quinn blurs blots—

ah!—what mizu mizzles all
her no-notes, oto?

Note:

Line 12: Alice Quinn, honorable poetry editor of *The New Yorker*.

After Basho's famous frog haiku:

Furuike ya / Kawazu tobikomu / Mizu no oto

ENVY-EROT-ETCET

Sexshorn in a fanfare museum, where
my kisses' strings crisscross Picasso's mattress—
I gropejob its lumps, those dents creases
scored by his endless corps of mistresses,

how cogently they queued up to lie there;
just one of the icons the fetishes
I mount in myself to make myself more jealous:
look, Anais Nin's douche wig, it's here

too, in this exhibit. As if spitballs
when they hit split/became origami—
But the transformation can't be that

instant childlike, can it? I wring it
all over my lips my love my lust for
those poets whose pics appear in *APR*.

Note:

Line 14: the acronym stands for *American Poetry Review*, which during its brief existence was best-known for all the pin-up photos of poets that appeared in its pages and on its covers.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Like helicopters scattering millions of leaflets,
each one of which bears a personal message
addressed to the individual who picks it up—
how unique the words apply to them alone,
so that page acknowledges their singularity,
and if like a mask they press it to their faces,
look the ink from those flyers smears their
features with those disparities or dreams by
which they may recognize each other as they
grow apart and disperse into countries that
bomb each other with endless sheetpoetry—
to win the war perhaps you should have your
choppers drop not propaganda on the enemy,
but blank paper pads and lots, lots of pencils.

BIO

He/she
will outlive
me and I
will die

wishing
I had had
her/his life
instead

of my
own—
how many

can I say
that of
and why.

POETCHAIR

The minus condition of my nerves this
finest morning knows prestige grows
from sheer act, Geoffrey Hill viagross
or timidity me, theory shows

Orpheus glacking back at Euridice
on their trek up from hell is a metaphor
for premature ejaculation where the male
fails to sustain his stead, his flung fore

swerve course with blinders on will stand
wreathy in the winner's circle at Oxfordstan
laureled with tin sandals. Meanwhile,

in the desert's waitingroom the authentic
and the false sphinx continue
to ostentatiously ignore each other.

LINEAR

Cheekbone-fluid runs down the walls of my cell.
A wind goes by with an air of freedom clamped in its teeth.
The angry mother and the drunken father
Take turns hacking my controls.
So
If I stifle my desire to feed chairs
All night to a revolving door
Or to mourn all the wheels killed
In inexact wars until
Until I must push disneyvisaged puppets against
You too. Try
To eclipse our lower steps with our higher?
If it weren't for nonsequitirs
I wouldn't have any kind of seq. Seqs. Sex.

COUPLETCLAWS (SOLACE)

For as all things bear the seed of heaven
so is the blossom rebuked.

What Babel-signal from the brain
makes me remember my name.

Can I account for every last nought
gold's emptied into my pocket.

I weigh my world on either hand
but I hand it on the neither way.

The bewilder-berried bordered-path
tastes as it goes of dark oh ness.

How wry I am for show and how
unwise for keeping. Wow if I could

only rest my head against the spots
that float in front of my eyes, I would.

OVERLIFER-BAG

Age is a suitcase of aches
you try to strap closed
with your own arms
but even they can't hold
shut what this tote crams
like hotel-soaps stole
when it pops open.
No clasp will fasten.

Packed up and parked on
the curb where a cab brakes
impatient to leave—
cheap valise
spilling out undies
each time we breathe.

OCTNOV AGAIN

The year's wrapping comes undone: foliage tied
By sun-strung cords is cut and cast aside

To present the godsend, the great last gift
Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifs

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget
The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed—
(Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare,
Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow
Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains,
We crave our carton, not what it contains.)

ANOTHER HOLE FOR W. R. RODGERS

Speak like a singularity, a lack
residing deep inside every lock, just
past the point keys can jab: against all thrust
make safe-ensure your door's core is held back,

for reckless access to that pure center
quarks more quintessence than taking exits
from those pried voids whose secret quickly sates:
ubiquitous if Space presses Enter.

Which inadmissible sill still calls loud
with imagine: our skeleton keeping
each such portal neither open nor shut,

unhoused of that exclusive dustborne cloud
we breathe, though there must be something
it accumulates, accommodates: what?

AUREALISM

All words beginning with AU or containing
the AU sound are more intrinsically poetic
than others. The AU sound in any word is
the heart of that word. AU is of course an infant's

first sound, and an ancient's last. The audible
note of extreme joy or pain. The Hindu word
OM, pronounced AUM, is the holiest word,
blossoming from the core of the cosmos. AU

can be prefixed (or added) to almost any word,
rendering it aureal. All words can be AUgmented.
An autonym—the true, authentic name—can
be found for every autonomy that auxists.

Aurealist poets we worship the sacred letters

A

U.

EDENIQUE

Under all the faces that never kissed
Their nearer-ness to mine, I draw a line
To show here, here is your level, hell, rise
To it if you can. Lovers heave high on

Its satiations. Its spoilage. I sprawl
Down through knees on nothing, I fever-crawl
Hoping my ripening will occur in
Wiser groves than apple. Fat tree forbade,

A gate apart which I have not entered
To gobble those lips deluxe and fall for
Guile's genital, till noon, which Solomons

All, makes me comme ci comme ca. Aha you'll see
Lies of all I've ever loved devise new
What waits unasked or else of us to prove.

TOGETHER OR APART AS OUR FAVORS CARRY US

someone to pause and take pills with
during the act of coitus
or the fact of cosmos

the days remain pain punctual
their numerals cracked exactly
at noon and night

they fall in a noise of wings
who's talking who's talking who's talking
each phonecall designer begs

where a sleep of engines calms
the horizon lies rendezvous

in v's we leave we leave we leave
wherever
our favors have carried us

COMPACT DUSK

Here at the height of the day night change
The color of the sky is uncertain,
The sky depending in which direction
One's eye strains, each of its swatches a strange

Hue which dies too soon and which makes this hour
Linger in the mind transient as a life,
Whose name once known remains another
Posed-up portrait on our palette knife.

Until even I wonder if one tint
Ever survives the harm of seeming unique
(Evening's intrigue, time's singularity).

Study for its trace, its place-map, I see
—Redundant as a stopsign in italic—
The face on which my profile leaves no print.

Note:

This began as a trans. of Jorge Borges' *A Un Poeta Menor de 1899*, but ended up as a kind of homage/meditation upon the original. The homage or translation is perhaps always a profile compared to the fullface original.

POEM

What avantgarde nonsense a photograph is.
Miscarriage of abstraction
Whose shadow has a breakdown
At the airport: perhaps
Its autobio will author a synopsis copyright,
But so what? Historically
That music is an animal's petals,
A message fallen between two names.
Several tapestries revealed this once
Evenings since
And even less can be raised up
Until the half of the human that gets born
And the half that doesn't
Exchange places, I mean poses.

AFTER BORGES' "TO A MINOR POET OF 1899"

Twilight-paned your rhymes remain when times change
And disdain as vain their vapor-vialed verse
Which from those dusks our galaxies disperse
May elect one second whose spectrum's range

Strayed so capricious it broke the scholar
Pursuant of ceruleanesques that try
To avoid this honorless flood and die
Midstream each leaching that flings a color

As brief as my life if I am alive
A-cling a clone destined to undergo
Any authorship of the words that show
Whether such vexacious tints can survive—

You must judge, ancient friend! what I've seen
Or accept as real the illusion I mean.

Note:

line 7: "honorless flood" is a phrase from Mallarme's translation into English of his Poe Tombeau.

HOME

Where the alley ends is always cast in shade
or simply too far away to be visible
so that is where the usual honorcade
parade has proceeded sure to disshovel

its heroes dumped as clumps of statuary
far past the garbage cans and armored dust
rained down each day's disdainful parody
as confetti junk thrown out from the thrust

of our palace tenements' wasteward sight
that shows for shame scoreboard teams of champions
hailed with all our collective love alight
along streets still streamering more war-wins.

Made trash the gods must stay there safe to hide;
only that pit supports their pedestals' pride.

1946

The year Noir was born; the year Nazis hid
In monasteries to restore their force;
Peace, but peace that made some things even worse
Than they were pre-war; I was just a kid,

Hard at play, cap pistols, hooky, apples
Filched through a farm fence: then my mother dies,
Killed illegal abortion style by guys
Quoting God, his badboy lies, his bibles.

Pope Vandal burnt the last *Complete Sappho*
Publicly, my mother was butchered in
A secret site; their results much the same,

So I blame him and him and him and him,
All of them from Adam onwards are men,
Meaning me, meaning the worst thing I know.

Note:

In 1073, Pope Gregory VII ordered the public burning of all books
containing the poetry of Sappho.

TESTAMENT

You know the fable
How a soldier's bible
Kept in his jacket pocket
Stopped a bullet

But that catechism
Born to foster schism
Also stopped his heart his
Mind from finding peace

He would not have had need
Of such a shield
Nor would his blood have been
Thrilled to kill someone

Of another faith
If in that book he had not first read death

TRANSHENDECULOUS

Granted every poet "constantly aspires
towards the condition of music," that sphere
of perfection which Walter Pater declares
the other arts must humble themselves before:

so why shouldn't I kneel by the podium
and beg the conductor to leave her baton
propped upon my proselyte head like a sword
knighting me until I can hardly rise from

that ideal sill: one could have no grail beyond
that grace; could never long for that pated wand
to guide your own quest: its shadow bids us toward

the stead path still, sticking out over the brow
like some penile spicurl: so why not die there
while maestro Mater makes his lowest bow?

Note:

"In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type
or measure of perfected art." —Pater. Title: Trans(from poetry to
music/from Pater to Mater)hendec(-asyllabics)ulous(ridic- of no-brow
me to adumbrate the Great Pate).

QUICKIE

Poetry
is
like
sex
on
quicksand
ergo
foreplay
should
be
kept
at
a
minimum

NUN CLAIMS MOST SNAKES TOO SERIOUS TO MAKE
GOOD BOOKMARKS (YOUR SOUL IS A CHOSEN
LANDSCAPE)

À la gongs, that await the Emperor's semen
But in vain, I partition silence into rooms
Called poems. Why? Only Empresses remain—
Is this too rigid: should seed, blown from some

Sunflower come to land solely on sundials . . .
Yet wig of compass-needles; comet. Soars
—For sync's sake? Like optional hearts, in styles
Singular averse against the opus wall of stars

Spring safetypins my penis to my navel,
Praying that so fetal a petal shall shrivel still:
A thank-quiet follows; a field day feeling;

Queen Staypower paints out our scene's see-me's
(Dream-prussic pupils flare, flush with their irises).
Then sun wonderlands it all a bit, by falling.

Note:

Paranetical title: "Votre âme est un paysage choisi . . ."
—the first line of Verlaine's *Clair de Lune*.

POEM

Zoomshot leopardspot asleep on
a conveyorbelt of coitus interruptus,
my elocution alone can save you.
A closeup vanishing, a species hard to tell.
Leave the cajun of my cunt ajar,
zoomshot leopardspot, occult telescope.
Your meat drips from my earlobes;
my throat packed in chauffeurs gleams
like a splinter of unfired eels. The mirror
picks slivers fleshlike from my eyes—
I am impaled by its opaque twin-ness.
Use polar charcoal to trace your name
or scorched samothrace. Pray while
I nullagraph death to all future cullers of this.

UNMOWNKNOWN

To scythe our names into
the lawn's green until
their cut-swath letters
make a maze.

Feet may falter to
a standstill
lost in the vowels'
circular forays.

Strut-path consonants
lead true for a bit but
finally we

concede to chaos its
grass where passage is
anonymous always.

THE HUNGER (enneasyllabics)

If a path to the Gingerbread House
could be established by breaking crumbs
off its edifice and sprinkling them
so as to find what lies behind us

across the featureless fairytale
void of childhood: yet how very quick
that trick wears out when the story's track
takes hold, takes toll, a far-older trail

prevails, we're forced to give up this lost
cause; and the fact is that every last
morsel was gone long before the you

or I might totter our way back here
to try to dissuade all these other
Hansel-Gretels hollering in queue.

GESUNDHEIT

Sneezes wouldn't be so bad if they filled balloons.

How many sneezes on the planet at any given time;
and if each sneeze filled a balloon,

imagine (bless you!)
all those sneeze-balloons floating in the air.

But a sneeze-balloon might be rather fragile—
more like a bubble than a regular balloon . . . hmm.

A sneeze is sort of like a balloon pop:
sudden, violent, unforeseeable. Out of nowhere.

In either case, burgeoned or burst, this transfer
of ether occurs wherever Entropy beckons,—

see its deadly equality shining up there,
glittering like globules of star saliva,

worlds atchooded by all.

THE MESSAGE

what if you're back
on call waiting
and the puter
person chirps to

please standby you're
next in line and
then you begin
to worry that

the one ahead
of you is you
and worse than that

what if that's all
you called to say
in the first place

WIDOWER'S WINTER

Outside, the snow is falling into its past . . .
I do want this night to end.
In the fireplace,
a section of ash caves in.

The fall day you were buried,
birds went over,
south,
thick enough to carry someone.

They took my gapes of breath.
—Their fuel?
We are together in some birds, who fail.

I didn't want to look down, to glimpse your grave,
its heroic little mound
like the peck of dirt we hope to eat in our life.

Note:

Line 14 comes from a phrase I remember adults saying to me as a child when I dropped a piece of food on the floor: "Pick it up and brush it off—don't worry, you eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway." (Perhaps only the poor do this.)

TROUGH

The bridegroom has fainted. Quel wedding night.
A witchingwell fumbles beneath his lids.
Our honeymoon resort surrounds a lake
The moon keeps on a string. It trembles.
Its water looks as vague as the smell
Of perfume hosed through a refugee camp
Pressed against a bland bulletin-board.
The crux of the android excites us.
Ignore the next passim in this poem.
Passion, passion of marriage, its strings barrage
Your phallic surge. Shaped to wear,
This mode excludes the mirror touch of
Any model. In the end everyone admires how
The grass invents the earth from dirt, from scratch.

FROM A DISTANCE

If lip-readers move their lips when
lip-reading, what do they say then?

Are the phrasings of the speaker
they scan claimed and mirrored there

unconsciously, an almost silence
less translation than transference?

Unless the mouth gets taken, sent
by its attendance to a strange intent

till even a cough, a kiss—enunciations
which paraphrase the space which runs

through all speech though all tongues try
to gun that gap by perusing, musing

mere coherence. Cued to its cusp,
these words of ours are less than lisp.

POEM

You'd have us compare madness in a glass
and then for contrast sake strike one face from
that frame, one name off that list, just to see
who's left. But all the asylum I am,

that whole alpha-non-grata of heads torn
from the page can't disengage your veil slur
stare where I sit, I wait, I browse my state,
I collate these collected offflurks of.

To attain the state each stark strives for, all
that sill is unevolved, a thumbless clone
halfway home, desiring these threshold scenes
stay furthest strand. These never near at hand.

To die in a once sense, once in a sense.
My necktie longs to rise and tongue my brow.

(LET ME TAKE YOU ON A) SEA BREEZE

Our flesh so tender so turnstile
Plus on top of that everything addressed
To that Occupant within me are read
Gauguin/Kerouac comes to mind.

Empty passim one more Day One passes
The field abandoned to handstands
Superfluous lay all waters in that gaze
Guiles of a map guess-gestured.

I'll become a crematory prostitute
The prom whose bra undressed my ears
None us dispedestal that idol.

Or what better yet a desert island
Sailed to only by blind sailors who smile
Like swans we maim our bracelets in.

Note:
Failed translation of Mallarmé's *Brise Marine*.

ROMANCE (Hendecasyllabics)

But when it had engulfed them all two by two,
the Ark itself became a greater creature,
an omni animal. And yet Noah knew,
surely this new behemoth shall also pair

and mate now, and that unlike the beasts before
this one is destined then to find true marriage:
because as soon as his keel breaks the water,
born beneath it will be that surface image

none of us desires to engage in divorce—
Natural nuptial partner, mirrored other,
the Ark's clone would emerge from nowhere out there

in the waves. And upside down hold bound the course,
faithfully accompany her spouse across
any world to reach at last their offspring shore.

AFTER THE PERSIAN GULF WAR (March-June 1991)

1. Blitzbiz

I was born to dive into a straw, swim through
a straw, emerge from a straw—
Sudden, glistening, the mediabreak
made me drink ice tea in a sandstorm.

Now even the core of a sleepmask digs
in me for the place I love least to go. Ink-length
away, its sky the color of manacles will
hold my toes locked to another's fingers:

count up, with them, the death on them. Memorize
these faces propped against the hearth of an
earthquake daily, pure propitiates. Sweet

cathedral built to pyromania's standards,
Icarus parachutes into the midst
of a cockfight and look! wins his feathers back.

2. The Outremerican Religion

Emerson said I must know it all firsthand.
I can't simply take another's word for it—
no: I must go there, experience it myself.
But in order to go there I need a car,

need gas, need oil. Like Jack Kerouac
I must cross the country incessantly using
whatever-it-takes: like Elizabeth
Bishop I must never stop traveling to see

the world close-up, anti-vicariously, re
my Outremerican masters drawn one by one
down that road, out past that sea, unkenning

the cost, not reckoning the loss of fossil
fuels my ego entails in fulfilling this
me-feel-or-fail, I-go-to-be philosophy.

(Don't stop—
 indulge
 my need
 for unmediated

experiential
 direct
 nonsurrogate
—fuck periphrase!—to

whom the immediacy of
personal hands-on
on-the-spot

on-the-scene
is vis a vis. Is Ism/ Real—
Artless. Autobiographical. Allyouall.)

3. Roadshow (Via Crucis)

Now the Saved the Lost
together must cross

Outremerica . . .
and down that downsome

road, god we're gonesome!
Gas station stasis—?

or 'Moral Crisis'?
Hear our war, our prayer:

Oh Christian Fathers—
Reagan, Bush—give us

a nation fit to
drive children through.

In herds,
with guns at their heads.

4. Garden of the Aediles

It remains beneath the lids to be
seen says memory. Vestige is mostly
an orchestra led by a dowser,
veiled, a water traced in testament,

thirst for it heaps each drop with desert.
False tooth fed into a rifle,
that distance mows us down. Our
lens weighs what, our faith? Outtakes

droughttakes where pillars of smoke
guide more children digging boundaries
whose tourists long to obey

any songbird's prey. High from its wells
they soar, branches scorched in charcoal,
limbs perched upon a pencilsill.

Note:

I can't resist appending just one quote from Our Redeemer Ralph
Waldo: "Everything good is on the highway." (But don't forget to bring
your Gulf creditcard!)

FROM AN OLD LEGEND

let's cut some graftings
from off these trees and
uproot those hedgerows
and hold their foliage go
armed with camouflage as
we approach the castle
hoping they won't notice
our smirks and winks
our shining eyes maybe
leafsecreted we can plant
quick shrubs and shoots
around its impregnable
walls then waltz away leaving
their fortress enforested

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to N—)

I lay your face along my palm and make
To trace its shape there a profile
Then I see the lifeline heartline break
Overlengthened by one leaf's fall

The plow it rests on a horror now
In the distance an ogre pulls in vain
To open a nailed shut window
Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of
The world we shared so spare-much of that
This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

THE SPELL

All the days with you in them
are better than the ones with I.
If you were me you'd know why.

All the words with o in them
are better than the ones with e.
If you were me you'd see.

Best of all of course is a
because it always comes first, hal
(Is it better being me or worse.)

But say these charms reversed
at times, would I worry who
surpasses me as versus you—

at times I could barely tell.
Better is good but not as well.

BREATH/LOST (a double sonnet)

At dawn I see across the way the treetops
seem to crouch, unlit yet, waiting for sun
to turn them tall again. I yawn, I stretch—
the day's first stretch, when the body, after

lying scrunched up all night, reconnects with
its cardinal quadrants, the four points that
encompass us: each limb jars the edge of,
marks out and wakes the corners of our cage.

Oh window! I am complete with this caught breath,
this space suffice on which even paper
airplanes must float, updraft that elevates

eyes to ritual heights, those clouds morning
throws passersbird down through to gaud the good
before I forget that it alone is my nest.

My diaries may be jammed to the Dec.s
with the return dates of comets,
but monitors track the orbits
I tunnel from. Every door connects

for this omen-minotaur: zoom-in
a queen running down a Paul Klee
walkways maze, filmstar footprints I
set out to portray on my skin.

Framed by the errand dole of dream,
REM thumbs my nerves like gloves
molding a voodoo doll museum,
its corridors recurrent as waves

pacing their birthplace backwards—
exit whose wax I blaze skies towards.

ALPHABETICAL MORNING

Stabbed by an elephant lens
On a meatless mattress I lie,
(Use a scalpel to trace my future;
The past, a suture) and die.

Spat at as often as the oil
Portrait of a moviestar on
The wall of a Death Row cell I fell
Into an abyss of worn-off

Sculptors' thumbs. Accidentally
Daily I cutted my throat on the
Drinking fountain. How was I

To know there is no justice,
Just a your-honor of trash?
I smile, a total inutile.

Note:
Title: of a painting by Alberto Savinio.

UNTURNAROUNDED (*MEDUSA SAYS #4*)

The way a ballerina boards a gunboat
At twilight in the tropics catches
Its carat out of what a critic watches
A scarecrow paint landscapes through: cuts pans zooms—

As long as we are forced to live in rooms
Having more than one wall our wounds' candies
Will never taste at last born. Tangents apart,
I mean, sightlines aside. Door some more? Therefore

The thermometers we stir our iced drinks with
Fizz with fever, with 'originality';
To focus, one must first empty the lens—

Where—river rumored or swan it's-said or
Moon bruted—my sculptor-scarecrow now bends:
Each snake has hold a chisel: that's handy.

UNTITLED

I fear my arrow may consider
the target, the bullseye,
merely a toehold.
But to what further can it aspire?

I hope they put a plaque
on the tree Jackson Pollack
crashed his car into,
on which his death is probably no longer visible.

And what about the cloths
Sylvia Plath stuffed
in the door of her kids' room

before gassing herself:
What if I stretched them out on this easel?
What if I painted on them?

Note:

Late 1980s, a spate of Pollack and Plath bio's. Their suicidal trajectories got me going on this.

HUMAN ESCAPE SYNDROME

Often our pendulum-curtained ocean
was thought to harbor a metronome,
which saddled the minutehand
and rode off to catch the hourhand.

Time's simile? Waves. Waves—teeter empires,
primed to fall, defined to fall.
But now time is digital.

Now time has no time for metaphors;
a cyborg is not a mime of me.
Human: android with a lobotomy.

I climb the cliff above time's sea.
The steep—and pull myself up by a thread
that dangles from the sutures,
one of the sutures in my forehead.

ON A DRAWING BY CHARLES TOMLINSON

By a swath of inks the eye
thinks it sees solidities
which alter with the watercolor
way his brush washes its dye

in distance, though even this
finds a faraway fixed not
by the surveyor's plumb but
by the action of the thumb

delaying all the fingers meant
to draw out of the paper,
splashed dry. The clean grain

catches what it should retain
if enough pressure pleasure
is applied to the stain to lie.

Note:

Tomlinson is not only a distinctive poet, but a visual artist of repute. His graphics grace the covers of many of his books. This Homage attempts to imitate his verse style, or one of his verse styles.

SAVE AS: SALVATION

Somewhere is the software to ID all
The snowflakes falling in this storm, but there
Ain't enough RAM crammed in my brain to call
Them forth by name, each crystal character
Putered and programmed, made to have a soul—
And even if I compelled the power
To inscribe them here as equals, in whole
Terms, I would not permit such an error.

*But which is which, cries Ms. Ubiq-Unique.
We're not formatted for whiteout. And when
The screen of your vision freezes in flurries
And the core of this word blizzard hurries
To melt again, to find itself again,
Won't mine be the sign these syllables seek?*

MY PLEA FOR SANCTUM IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN OF
MEDUSA

A statue's first pedestal is the stone
It was cut from out in. Those are just words, though.
Like: Spring! Then death puts on the wrong clothes . . .
Then air ruts flushed as bathtub sex, as . . . proseate?

Because, that prince of an ostrich Narcissus
His embedded-headed gaze upon his
Twin the corpse Hamlet proposed, posing for those
Snapshoticisms is so, so 'real-ergo-vile', less

Tangent than tangible, hell. —Till I stand
In Her garden's one among many I can only
Torment vesanic vanities/age-of-oh orbs where

Deep in the honor of my ether I soar, where
—Passing at high mimicries through the night
I go, all lop-worlded and alone, to kill abandon.

Note:

Line 8: "Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil" —
Mallarmé.

WEDNESDAY (to R)

Past noon; I walked her to her train; we said so long;
Her smile, her flash as the huffy train pulled away,
Like a knife withdrawing from robot flesh; sparks
From its wheels showered over me, black, lavacidal.

We'll meet 2 days from now: not enough time to enter
An anticipanthood, noviciate of rendezvous; to
Lift that iffy cathedral, brush Samson's cindery
Dandruff off my collapsing shoulders, not enough time,

Nor space. Cramped. Thighs. She's travelling far
Away—I'm so foolish! Why did I propose dramamine
For corpses when the trip from womb to world didn't make me

Sick? 2 days; 2 days. That's enough. I smile, home, past
The druggists and the hairdressers, hardware, the other
Shops, wish there was room enough here to put them all in.

REDCARPET STARLETS

All shadows dream of facing klieg—the urge—
to sag magnificent in staged wattage—

that fire which squints all sight, see-dense hive—

eyes cubed to one would seethe like bees
—only the moon can tongue such honeys,

or unisex models whose hair is being sucked
into their navels for a rote secundum of time.

Sized via dimples—calf-loined by tan-tucks—
their taut skin tours the pound-sun (beadbrilliantined)

down foreheads in a stream of them shines.

Touch Connors and Race Gentry attend them—

Where dustweevils fight the air they zoom
sheepish desires or soughcomb for a kiss.

The Premiere can gleam no more than this.

Note:

Touch Connors and Race Gentry: male starlets of the 1950s. Fourth stanza: this image seems to have come from a Dorothea Tanning painting.

A VIRGINSAIN'T AND A SAINTVIRGIN SHARE A
HALO A WHILE: A MEMORY (to E)

It was the onset of a golden headset
Our thought from covetous egypt took flight (suite)
Not so the veins' isle-lopped dictation
The sea that amanuensis with illegible gloves

But who wrote my pose throes over the white dot of
A desert's collectiste saliva whereon
A blindness bandaged by bats became dawn or
Was that oase-false face my scrotalskull gaze

The fever of eyecharts is distant tonight
This is my haiku scar this is my soft
Repeated sincere desire for fart-fairy confabs

Ah no abhorred form of present tense you see
That halo our askew nuked free is dead
Is circumscribed solely by the absence of head

SOME QUESTIONS

taking into account
all the poems I wrote

about death when
I was young shouldn't

my tote sheet show
a surplus of life no

it doesn't balance out
did I figure this right

I guess the one never
pays for the other does it

but I didn't write
more of death then so

there would be less
of it now did I

CHILDHOOD: THE OFFENSE OF HISTORY

Scraping a poised enough patina of voyeur
From your eye I spread peanut butter on my
Groin and let the ocean waves wash it off—
Hey, nice cosmic microdots. For afters we'll

Listlessly memorize the Smith wing in
The phone book or try to hump Empty Dumpty: vain
Efforts that crud up what we have done
In obscure countries driven by passion

Out onto balconies to address the
Populace with our love, false solution
For their poverty which is based on

The art that the dirt in my heart is white.
Crammed mad, thoughtmotes in a themebeam:
He has a shiv grin. The soap he uses is ugly.

IDOL-ALLS

Our tongue is the skeleton of the voice
whose body fills the ears of Echo who
did Jove a favor and got fucked over

for it. To worship the *Enfant* Elvis is
not easier, his vowel, his shrill cries
amaze us, make us doubt/double this quest

for deities . . . Speaking of which:
for the marriage of Pollack and Plath
—step on the gas, turn on the gas—

"what ceremony?" (Hart Crane). Oh quote! You
narciss-focus us/show forth a love
our moans can cut-to-cue, the classic choice.

If applause divided is hands, a face
multiplied must be a movie? Yes. Yes.

A CLOSER VIEW

A lighthouse up to its head in your hair
would show more than we comprehend here,
scenic venom. Like a harbor of slammed
windows and out across the path whose feet

we'd further have to erase from ours if this
picture wasn't vicious enough to include us—
even if its lack of focus is elsewhere. See
the sky *begat begat begat begat* with birds, that cloud

clapped softly in windfold now, before
the moment were over except for your sayso.

Flash exit the extremis penis once tried
to hold, composite encroachment for
vistas of void to inherit, where, shadow's
transparent adjunct, I sit for its portrait.

PERSONAL POEM PROCESSOR

I swear the word insanity has two i's,
It bears itself what it brands schizophrenia,
But if my diary is my obituary's
Childhood, do I hit Delete to update?

The northern none, the southern some, the eastern
Each and the western who are all too othern
To SpellCheck, or would be, if I knew how to
Correct my yawn's pronunciation of you.

Once born my meaning is porous to mania,
So forgive me if I speak of my penis before
My heart, me before you: I need such errors

To pamper this new ParseGram. Or is it too late
To index exits? Reaching the happen stage
Our navels lacked certainty, that body phase.

AT THE "FEDERAL CENSORSHIP AND THE ARTS"
SYMPOSIUM

Just as the Nazis never proscribed Rilke
(he was no Expressionist, no Degenerate,
no Art-Bolshevik), so most of us poets
are thought no threat by those in authority—

Halfhass, for instance, his books won't get banned:
his Rilkemanqué wins awards, his "spiritual
progress" and "earned words" (—to paraphrase Wilde,
his genius gives good guru Po-Biz style while

his talent brooks those so serious ergo poems)—:
what might appease our fuehrers even more is
his patriot's part in *The American Poetry Series*.

Better silence than that? Better to hide, to write
for one's cabinet? (To paraphrase Benn,
the aristocratic form of publication.)

TO X

If I could dream what I want or not,
A candle held against an icicle,
That double phallic rainbow would conceal
My loner status, my chronic lack of you.

If Lot's Wife really existed, wouldn't
She have been all eroded long ago
By pilgrims rubbing their wounds against her,
Abrasive as masturbation grain by grain

Can erase the bitter taste of you. I retain
No memories; lacklore glosses me over.
My selfishness might then produce a kind

Of infra-red excess, a solip-super vein
Miners must switch off their hats to find.
Dark and below bedclothes I'll use your glow.

COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED

Cocteau's stars are bored by the love
of a sort of wince-animal,
who's failed throughout his life no less
to stretch a pimple into a profile.

Pipes ache to anchor in those teeth—
a sail, a horsestall, a fireplace
all beg to go backdrop, to gaze
agonized at your white spines.

Pruned against mirror, I imagine
laundering such muse, laving such sheets:
Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem,

whose publication has been timed
to coincide with the release of
my latest film, *Fetish Sans Flesh*.

UNDERSTUDY (WAGNERIAN)

In my dream
I was the diva

I stood there
my flat chest flapping
breathless with
a scales nailed
to my nipples

mistakenly begging
everybody in
the audience
to pile all their tragedy
on one pan

comedy
on the other

BROAD BRUSH

Each grape has a white pin
run through it,
one to a plate.

Soon the whole room's
framed in clocks,
hung from the walls.

As the window sees it,
beyond has seven vistas.

The faucet drips
until a tyrant falls.

What else is shown here?

Everything the poem
erases in half
with its first word.

FIRST

No sooner has the lightningbolt struck earth
than a snake encurls itself around it.
Ah, rhyme-me, if my metaphors
could only pounce like that.

The male form is still recognizable
until you get about halfway down.
Then one notices the scrotum
more than masticating a stick of gum!

Like a halo slanted to catch the last
rays of a hair, I hold up my life
determined to sound some farfinitesimal thing.

Why, whenever a bird pecks out the suits
from a deck of cards, does it do hearts first?
Heck, why not peck out my penis first?

AFTER COCTEAU'S *ORPHEUS*

These bright glass shards we walk upon
reflect the past too slowly so we
must quicken our step to keep pace
and rush to meet the bloody footprints

that tablet-trace our progress across
the iced sperm of this idle span
called home past all of which we come
dampseconds after I kiss your sole.

Montage is shown the same, screen-first;
then, if struck by a vast unseen pin,
pray to lay down more veins that pour.

The spotless splinter of its tongue
creates no threshold from the toe-mold
this shattered mirror alone can enter.

TRAGEDIES

The time actors take to make up
stalls the inevitable fall of the mask
worn by the audience, though maybe
a throwaway gesture will do, like

goalposts with whips curled around
them, all lashings of wit await their
cue stage-rear where the one playing
the door gets grafted on the wall's skin—

this is only human, the halts in line,
the queue with no A at its head. No
solving of the riddle today, sufficer.

Romeo age 7 or 8 kicking soccer
doesn't know yet even in a vacuum
one can easily stray out of bound.

POEM FOR MEMBERS ONLY

I chastise those who chose to transcend
flesh, who drained themselves from the rainbow
shadow, who strained to raise that sun
which we in a seas' circle on earth hold down.

Evolvates, through the straight stigmata
of 12 and 6 o'clocks soaring. Who saw
instead, dawn shed a twilight-hither glow.

Were they born or what, did their unsheared
blood never climb past bud, to reach: such
null-exegetes, soul-esthetes!—Should you try

to get a glimpse of this aspiration,
as if within your hair every strand
shone against itself; yet would you say each
was meant to be the head's sole ray.

HANGSCALES

The day reflecting across
the deep its passage is
over often before the eye
lets in what it should see

in most ways. The gaze
neglectful as any flesh
washed up in the hand,
argus-angled: a charm to ward

off the world with a word
unsaid or else unheard in
my try to weigh in favor,

to tip fate with presence: on
the wall a flyspeck's support
of all this continues strong.

HAVENOT

Out of a dozen I prefer the one
That's most like thirteen, the one
Autumn drops its cease-colored nets on.

Out of a once I prefer the one
That never was, that eludes its own,
Twins peering at each other through keyholes.

Out of a one I prefer the none
Who has my face, who evens the end
And odds the origin. The belated begun.

Out of a most I prefer the many
Who are not me, who remain free
Of that disciple number, that slave figure.

Twelve nonce, thirteen's the tense, which fourteen ends.
Despite my choice, I have no preference.

SUMMER ACTION FEATURES

Can I kiss this cinema's utter pittedness.

Moviescreen, you hype of hygiene, I love
to see a face lace its venom with mine.

When the hero has far too many minotaur scars,
the creases in my palms turn over and nap.

Archimedes revised: if I sink far enough
into the film, the law of displacement
should bring to the surface my truest self.

Then the blow-ups come on cue. The ingenue
glows like the sky: we both gnaw raw halo.

God knows I know each bomb is a mobile
some sculptor has failed ineptly to keep aloft.

Even I am losing my innocent twitter balance,
though statistically I will die eating purse soup.

HERE ARE THE HEIRS OF HARVEST

The lunatic walls that hide in front of love
Are right to hide, though the eye tries to find them
More undercover than the skull above

Which the face finds your face, to coffer share
A suffice of yes, an enough of no:
Is that still credible in the morning where

(Pillowjam/bedbutter spread, shed behind drapes)
Our distance occurs, our demarcation
Destinations lie aimed at farther landscapes?

Immured by dawns, the horizon trusts
Only the space we vacate, plotting to rear
An inherent figure, no longer us—

That which waits concealed will yield our founding place.
We must paint the house with what its grounds waste.

SIDESHOW (to R)

Announced by your nakedness you appear
The fold avert their blindfold eyes
Your rain-fossil skin lit by ajars
Of perfume (blood's-lace)

At least a murderer doesn't have to boo his shadow
You vow beneath barbarous marquees
Whose leaves have fallen
To placebo your profile

And if he keeps a pinkie raised while slashing those disciples
Together you and him must flee
Over an earth-to-earth carpet of kisses

Leaving me to play the mirror's old shell-game
Hot for what it holds in hide
By shifting its faces thus

AFTER BRETON EXPELS ME FROM THE GROUP, I GO
DOWN ON SAMSON AND DELILAH

The moon long undue to none of us follows
Typifying some life we phonetically loathe
Or other dolls umbilical to our desires
Let my lips fizz out against your thighs.

The annuities of these nymphs are so paid
But can our praiseworthy's cry concur
Pilgrimage-many the tidepools oppose
Sigh only my hemline has aspirations.

Typecast as fat Tantalus/as the last
Frame of an hourglass movie I yawn for more
Bouffant-slut roles roles with grunge-rapport.

Therefore a rumor-millioned perfumes inject
Each of my pores must emit its own odor
If we are to synchronize all earth's sundials.

THE SEMBLANCE AMBULANCE

From gaze-and-gone, that mine-or-yours is where
I remember us, always fumbling to put
the seal of arousal upon every stare—
but in that same vacuum our eyes create

with fade-outs/ins to each other, what waits?
Look, in the space our meeting faces made:
two eyebrows hurrying to earth, hair freed
of groping now, impaled on summer's flute-spurts.

The thrill that fills this masochronicle
is shallow as a thimble poured from a navel.

Waiting for a seashell's mating-period,
we'll keep the pose those opposites caused void
to disclose, as if by held they were being near.

See us there, like a truth carved by halves of core.

CASTRATION ENVY #11

Tying the pimp in dreams to a lamppost
His tuxedo wet with wheedled kisses, can
I wake up sucking the footprints of toilets
In jails that glitter like crash-dived marquees.

A dog appears in call letters on my skin.
Twin worlds, who exchange threats via scoreboard
I rival this night, this fight to the death
With enough leftover, ooze for twosies yet.

Either even, I wish I could put on take off
My clothes without first saying to my cock
"Excuse me, is this yours," while the stars

The collected no-shows of eternity, rise.
Hey, remember the way painters gauge perspective?
Me, I cut the thumb off and throw it at stuff.

THE EARCISSUS NECHO HOUR

One, two, the clock extemporizes, three,
Making it up as it goes no doubt, though I meant
Ad lib never lives past its insouciance
To waste mine correcting the clock's accent.

Echo's late lyric seeks to feel the cheek
Reap tears; yet if wounds refueled our blood would
We let such forget-me-motes out of our outlets?
Fuck me in the faceless chairlift, my ache

Nature thronging your wisp. Within the eye's
Quicksand tapestry that quicksilver pus
Penis directs its toward some haywire sphere

Devoted to teeter-totems. (Stemstruck
Water's catamite, Narcissus wishes this
Suspended animal of realm was him.)

POEM PUBLISHED IN *QUARRY WEST*

Apparently a landscape is all windows,
but try to see what it lacks:
imagine a wall, with moss, trees, the murmur
of [rain presiding at a cremation].

And picture then, roadside flowers
on a roadmap of thorns,
thin paper
rubbings of the first [wings] inside a seashell;

poor portrait peeling off its tacks!
This is what the dark works hard at, orphan ivory—
some whimper-of-branches, some adorn-of-me.

I am a field plowed by venetian-blinds;
soaked in [amok], I fall;
a proud gargoyle studies me for flaws.

SOMEONEOTHER

Now, while memory disciplines the occasion,
Escape and take up your life's last words.
Let them resonate and grate, killer cipher.
Use them to create the first or final

Poem of the Outremericans, to gibber
Through their tongue a song's stress. Of themselves
They are so tainted. Their blood outruns water
Toward some prior purer genesis.

Herald laggard bard, all my protagonist
Is my people, those to whom I word an anthem
Which if they heard they'd hate. Aha I see

This monkey-axis or global gnome
Has no home, no clonefolk whose screeds teach a poet
He mustn't form such a planetary country.

INSIDE OUTSIDE

I too will hang my coat in the closet,
telling it to ignore the quizzical shoes
below, their wondering mouths agape.

When my ten fingers have finished
sharing me equally amongst themselves,
shall I at last grasp something whole—

Each of my scars has been tattooed on
an egg, then the eggs placed in tiaras
on hilltops. Horses surround the horizon,

solar pegs. Roan-ironic tree-scapes. Night
is when clocks enter and leave. But time
occupies me in exit. In exit only.

I hang here. Sky drips from the ceiling.
Why won't you understand my feelings.

MOUNTAINMAN, MY MOUNTAINMAN

For the prohibition of a semen teeming
with hectic, sibilant selves, scales,
inordinate, alternate, enriching
the rumors of pencils that erase ease;

scrotal indelible herd stridencies,
battery-acid propellers acquiring torridity,
horsewhip larvae, nacre-packed, pure,
imploping avalanche taunts, vidcameo;

or accidental concussions of saliva,
diving under necessary dormitories,
dune-pilfered pillows, abbreviations of blond;

oh male enclaves where the me is maintained
stoic, aloof, glacial. My snowcap pushed
down over one eye, in play, by the wind—

POOL

Summer and the happiness of
a few fingertips pressed to a tree
for more before the day I implore
brings forth a rarer glimpse, love
or the same in purified garments.

War has all the anecdotes, peace
none, yet the latter awaits us past
every story's tall finis. Presence—
but here your face shines. For sleep
is what the breath peels first in its leap

to hang itself on an even higher perch:
Some say everything that fares down
into the ground will one day emerge
on the tongue of a divingboard.

DOMESTIC

Left to myself I might simply
fondle a platter of doorknobs,
as long as they are the mute ones—
I don't like the verbal ones.

If nobody bothers me I could
notice out the window how
each house but mine is best.

Maybe blow on my palms,
trying to mist over like glass
that place where the keys nest.

Or take another mouse out
of the trap and thumb its head,
thumb at it over and over
like a dud cigarette-lighter.

SAVIOR

Turn your pockets inside your out
And let its distance melt:

Ignore any occasion that has place
For the passages of winter

Or the halts of summer. Brief
As they are, our contents

Should not be listed in life
Coterminous with childhood,

Whose lockers contain the names
Erased by tracing its form.

A star should focus us on that
Which aspires to be beckoned,

Assuming it wants a few disciples
Willing to give up everything.

POEM

As a prison is most prison in
the tiny cracks in
its walls
I am most me in my pores

I lower my pores into the water
what will that net me
I open my pores to the air
what will that apprehend

now even those outer elements
dream of escaping
from the felony in each

of the body's cells
the murderer
I pen within

TO THE READER

I hope you die while reading this book
And then when your folks come in

With flyswatters and grins
They see the title in your hand and

Jump back ten feet land
In the garbagecan nearer oh god to thee

And then I hope they plant you still
Ahold of it so when the rats get going

They can use the pages for napkins
But if you do survive

This it only proves you're some kind
Of vermin worm only one of them

Could pore through a deadun's dirt
And live

(SONNETARY)

over a tosscorps divan I drape repose
like a condom slipped upon a rose
to slow tear off the legs in thrashes
of some silken centipede
and paste them on as geiger zoomy lashes
so my eyes can thread a need
to bravely serve in the rapes
and assaults of pollution against the sky
by sucking off a castrati
while cutting my underwear
into animal shapes
until all your deceitful sweat has no use
but to mold my gold hair
into my cold face's likeness

POEM

They say the universe is expanding,
not staying in one place.
I, though, have a small rental room
somewhere in it.

I don't understand this ratio
of the whole being free,
while the parts struggle to cough up
on the first of the month.

What do you grow in that vase?
Shards.

I don't understand.
And my worth is not enough
to figure out why. Who.

What suffers such distance just to endure?

BITTER THOUGHTS IN NOVEMBER

Every branch is more beautiful than
every other one, the rain falling or
the rain frozen pendant on this
twig I break off to swizzlestick that

puddle in which winter is opening
its cracks like sky, glazing minutely
drop by drop in closeup glissade
each face I bring to its brink, each beauty—

In theory the maze ascends, its core
is heaven according to mystics whose
stiles litter the way. Style is a pun
and therefore leads to perdition downward

doubters claim. Poets/critics: the veins
get pissed on by the capillaries.

POEM

There must be in the world still
Somewhere a lion could get me,
Or a cliff whose rocks might fall
(Struck by lightning) to crush me—

But wouldn't that be disloyal to
The carcinogens in my food air water
To whom I have promised my death,
The favor of killing me eventually—

It's nature versus culture: if we
Use the former to off ourself with
(Running into tiger cages/snake galleries),

Won't the latter feel like a child
Abandoned (boohoo) by its parents?—
After all, we fathered these tinytot toxins.

STEP

The shoe is left at the door
of metaphor,
which admits both rose and guitar
but not it.

The welcome mat might
exclude it too if not
for the feet time needs
to shape its toll.

Welcome the poet
but not her shoe.
Let it rot there on the sill,

a pedestal
in whose shade we'll read
old toes verse, young heel.

RECYCLED (SACRIFICE SUITE #5)

According to the Dictionary of
Glossolalia (page nifty-nine),
I must live with whichever one
of my executioner's gestures

occurs last. Recourse, there is none
but to lean on a coin, pronouncing
the gravy from my bandages
delicious. Ah, see the swirling

ceiling shed its diarist!
The tongue yawns fire. Daily
I dance I stamp my navel onto this
reciprocal dirtmount, this sievesync.

How can I live with what the hand sake
keeps offering to the eye sake.

NO MORE

A knife, a gun, a bomb, I invite
all these fine-gauged weapons between us
so we won't be alone no more.

A human companion to the pain
started to pray it would end,
a robot companion vetoed no.
The pain itself as always was neutral.

In history's metallic strata of wars,
in the landslide lode,
in the lackgold.

Shame. Ecstasy. The protesters bear
placards that read "Peace to this sign"—
as if there were to be no further warning.

As if there were to be no more.

THE ZENOIST

He stays here standing on a chair
and paces off the steps to the door
or still further, aping escape from
the rat-race or death or karma or

whatever's gaining ground: instead
of late, he speeds up, the chairseat
blurs a flurry of feet until the trip
he's traveled noplacé is moon-far.

How'd he make it up onto that chair?
That was a distance never to be
crossed, or even embarked upon,

a hopeless quest. Deciding to depart
must have seemed such a feat once:
he fares everywhere for that start.

LIFEGUARD CLINGING TO A STEEPLE

Why are all the survivors of the needle's eye
nude, as if their lifethread had disrobed
rather than sewn them. Sans coat-fare,
we proceed it seems only to precede;
birth to burial, are not yet here.

But when did we first start embracing
the wakes of ourselves in each other rather
than each other? As the fruit falls
to hiatus us, its bloom spoiled by last year's cores.

Or the sun whose portrait rots in our pores,
those sweatbeads blurred in closeup but clear afar—
that pointillist pap, that hybrid suicide.

The face carefully tattooed around love's wounds
does not itself look injured.

STEP ON IT

Passing the threshold one
does not reach
the threshyoung.
Language

contains words
which contain words
that contain us
who contain no words

prior to birth—
Shall I say that this
is grass, is overkill,

and have my symbol
also, a snail
scotchtaped to a stopsign.

CLOISTER: CONSTRUCT

Like days devised against the day, we stay
caught up in the final haste of dreams,
cramming too much into each awakening

gasp, a tapestry monks trapped in their own
sleeves might weave, a panic of REM-robots,
spirits rousing from ancient crimes and shames—

And then again transitions too prefigured,
raising the shades every morning to see
that all those brilliant avenues out there
could be used by someone in shoes, humbly

knowing that the instep is to the foot
as the profile is to the face, namely an
arch of absence, a lack. A sample-art.
It makes fissures when you kiss yourself.

FACESHIFT

I think the face reads itself by wrinkles,
like dog-ears in books each crease-fold tells

some favorite passage, a phrase that must
be looked up because to memorize

here would be betrayal: I have to see
that phiz-text line by line, word for word or

all the imperfections of my glance
will linger too long on the errata's real

snapshot, that ID-eal replica held
against the light for scrutiny only

by those who want my money but not me—
I want to know which is which: which chance

aspect has raised its own as mine once more;
which one perfection is still straining for.

MOUNT BLANK

Snow, the polkadots of vile clowns, falls. Melt
to a god-moat, world. Admit that everything
the cortex thought lost was probably what
the vortex thought found, though both of them

could be wrong: from brain to drain the range
of maybes remains protozoan-moan-criminal,
collateral closeups of whatever the hell.

A disguised zoo we keep blowing up, earth
retaliates: it lifts all its continental prose
in Andes-island rifts to fracture these words—
inclement gangster and diving nun, please

continue to dictate your own. Begin when
the edge executes its option to end, when
my merging meaning veers too close to stand.

SUB

The spirit drifts as if
a bubble were after it—
a bubble is after it:
I'm all the foam froth

that's left, and I'm
about to pop
in this pursuit. Perhaps
when a seeker dies,

his prey's position
is fixed then
momentarily

on the charts
of our quantum ocean?
The spirit drifts, uncaught.

MAN WITH THE

Like a ring worn on the worst finger, poetry
flashes and makes me wince. Vanity phooey,
through a pencil the hand pours on paper the need
to make the eyes bleed like muscles inside
a banana: I am the decor where these occur
(brain invents nothing heart has not suppressed).

Building instructions into the poem means
disqualifying patience. To carve a tongue
from the flex legitimate darkness, some token
of epigram specimans—zoom-in on
a griffin's claws curing a lame cornfield.

Adjusting the watermark upon my clothes,
I have but parroted your concern. So I pose
for Man With The Paradise-Tossed Belly.

FROM A DEATHBED DAYBOOK

copulation entries
in the journal jesus
don't look for those passages
in these pages

if I am scheduled for
a few more
intimate rapports
with long vowels before

I go I know those a's and o's
and e's will not rise
from the throat of eros

yet what vanity to suppose
thanatos
might want to jot down a few of these i's

MORE USELESS ENVY

When I imagine the cameras of fame
homing in on me for a closeup,
I back away, my back pressed against
my eyes nose mouth: the reign of the same.

Failure has surrounded me with flesh,
with human-remaining-human features—
Which is no consolation—Which does
not make up for all the psychic scars

which glitter-gifted faces inflict upon
the crowd wherein I'm crammed
trying to be as inconspicuous as I am!

Daily I watch the famous zoom past.
God, I wish I could persuade some void
to synopsize its emptiness with this.

LIFE THEY SAY IS THE ANTERIOR ART

Love dehydrates us with its thirsty scars:
The forebode brigade braids a leash for every:
In rut much oblivion finds one future:
I'm summarizing, of course; but is that why

We make art—because it compensates for
Axioms: will experts scour the past for more,
Its shared breath a vase unearthed by the shard
Yield beneath some kiss-synopsis? Although sharp,

What mountain's peak can core our ground; can anything
Break that surrogate, that curtained culture where
Museums seek a center and spin, crumbling—

How quick each chirp-equipped quote lets us go! There
Statues at their moment of greatest stress might
Cause my eyelids to carve all else to sight.

CO-STARRING OSCAR WILDE AS MADAME SOSOSTRIS

White: white as a tablecloth that moonlights as a bride
For the unborn you—appeared—or a waterfall
Which leans against another waterfall (your hair).
My beeper slave of lost voices barked: *what?*

While the cup that knelt to summer burst; I tried
To garden the fireplace and farm the doormat
But proto-frog-photos of you grew inside me there,
Groping with bare hands of flood my gnarl-gargoyle.

Deeper than my beeper you knew; sibyled guesses.
And yet . . . 'misery is proximity.' Oh
The seance was as far as possible tuxedos.

Aftermath is a mouth. Speaks. Speaks? Yes, but less as
Flesh than what; yak mask for that old fop Apollo?
The god retrieves his gloves and, feigning to go, goes.

PLAZA DE LOCO

It's high tide in the hero
The floodgates fail the heart cowers
Blood of his deeds drowns the town square
Above it all this statue towers

And as the captain of a sinking ship
The instant the waves touch his toes
Snaps to attention it waits
Commanding some former pose

The inscription on which is blurred
Hey what is that word
What does his crumbling mad pedestal say

To find my way to you is
To not find your way to you
Therefore is not to find the way

THE D AND M'S

I've got the D and M's,
despondency madness
hare me everywhere,
despair or mal-de-mess.

Diagnosis is malignant,
day channels the moon,
my denials mechanical,
all darkness unders mine.

Dearth and mourn.
Doldrums in mire.
I've got the D and M's

and all their dire malign
deep-plodes my mind.
I can't stand these damns.

TIME'S DIADEM

A man's mortals break over him and ebb
Away, waves crash like a steeple of cold
Teeth, whitecaps take snapshots of death in neutraled
Wall-nulls, blackboards which nebulae disrobe.

One X one zero-zoned the formula's
Zoomed-in, though all targets are in the past.

Now Copernicus pries open a child's
Fist while the sky fills itself with crossword
Dye, skipping those spaces that await their
Exact quarkweight, destined to be exiled

Always further stars or cursed with Nietzsche's
Eternal Return, but when your pores
Penetrate your tears, who cares? A glimmer
Of dust was the centuries' jewelry.

DRACUSYLLABIC

I hammered a bramrod woodstake into
The mirror, but sadly that myth's untrue:

I can still see myself in it. Worse luck—
Reflections resemble vampires, they suck

Out our year-marrow to show us just how
UnDorianGrayed we are and swallow

Sangreal the dull days away while we flush
Sleepcrud-rot from redshot eyes and brush

Teeth etcetdeath. Live! Each night I sink
Deep in the bloodstoke of my dreams, I drink

Them down whole as though I were emptying
The scarlet flecked necks of starlets fleeing—

I drink my dreams indeed, but the last drop
Is always bitter, is always: waking up.

[TOPPLED]

under the statue of It
lie the crumbs
of What

out in the show lot
the new models wait
spotless

I teeter
between the two
eithers
that beat me

or else I lie
beneath the daily
debris this pedestal
lets fall

TAUTOLOGICAL

I am not happy at present.
I have never been happy.
Has anyone ever been happy—

The syllogism does not follow.
There are others like me
Who have never been happy,

But we are a minority.
Most people have been happy
At least once in their life:

Maybe I too could be happy
If the few who are like me
In never having been happy

Would all become happy
And leave me alone, unique.

POEM

From gem to semen is moan—
The sound of two lipsticks rubbed together—
Get your agon on, Antigone!
Oink douche evangelist bludgeons 12.

Can you feel his sandaldown hair?
Do you know his mission can you see
Printed on the back of his shirt it reads
Progress is coming to Sherwood Forest.

Slim colonnade in stamen-warm night . . .
Your dream paused there last night
To look out at the yard you had been saving
For reality [absorption / alternative / reserved]

Lust catered by the puffiness of cheeks at dawn
They were easing it up onto the lawn.

BACKWARDS

The moment I was born
I started counting
backwards
from a hundred,

hoping that rote
would reverse
this sudden painful
wakefulness

and return me to sleep,
to comfort and time
in my warm womb bed,

but unfortunately
I haven't as yet
reached 99.

ANGER VIOLENCE

for emptiness to completely
surround me my object
must cease first

if emptiness would spell out
what it witnesses
as it surrounds me

my objections
to it would cease

who has seen the emptiness
around me hide its object in me
must cease first

or else exist

why this thrust
these hands that go-fists so quickly

LIKE

Like gloves inflicting seesaw on
a piano I assume I must be tied down
though the flaws of lassoes console me.

Like frenzy after bare music, I rise.
Like a venous essence drained by vines.

The matchstick mattress lovers lie on,
Visionvulsion of sweat's features on stone,
Sweat dripping from a sundial.

Line drawn by false oars of evening; horizon.
Near-nipple tension.
Sphinx poles posit this Mapplepose.

Like grapes the brow has deserted,
Whitewash hues, thrill silence.
Vertigo of a bird above tundra.

JOHN MARCHER TO MAY BARTRAM
(for Laura Fargas)

Constantly assembling the dregs of dice,
the laughter: summer will never come from us
till the past is all contour, all tailfin.
Our defenses' tiny wingfins push in vain

as, prodigious and terrible, the sky
—fresh from its years-drowned descent—uplifts what sail,
drifts by any rialto whose tableaux
still continue to deflect our day, our

teteatete's yet-to-be. Tauter grins framed
the accomplice wellwishers in God's gameroom—
glasses held to a toast glinted. Soon they

decanted our hands: even the sea lay
in stills of inertia, distance-disinterested;
soundlessly panting as it crossed the bay.

Note:

Marcher . . . Bartram: the almost agonists of Henry James' *The Beast in the Jungle*, which the poem vainly tries to prequelize. Line 5: prodigious and terrible—a phrase from *Beast*.

PREQUEL

The speech I gave upon winning
The Hate-Bake-Off caused more pain
Than a mirror feels when placed
Beneath an icicle: at every word
The runnersup applauded slower
Than the fumbings of far ciphers
On cold sofas. Oath-sad I stood
Or squatted on the neckstump
Where a thoughtczar once Hmmed,
Knowing that despite my award
My words unlike his would never
Be reproduced, and that childhood
Itself was just a precursor of birth,
That each life ends with its prequel.

ITINERARY

I pace off my heart,
six this way, six that way,
the length of a small wait
or a cave behind glass.

Quenching my teeth in shouts
I advance little by little,
late by late.

They open the door
emptier each time I pass,
they: the measured threshold,
the keyhole's spider groin.

Bury the dawn in ambush,
let white curtains count for home.
Make ruin my own.

PORTRAIT OF A SELFSAMIZDAT

Examine the underside of each mask you
rip off of yourself, note its tiny flaws
and huge perfections which after all
must correspond to yours.

Hoping confessions made in sleep remain
anonymous, I type mine over the screenname
they assigned my paperthin. Which means
my rot-factor is flawless, it finds a child

in every thimble who is not my own,
my l'il yoke-year-old. Doubtlessly why
the date blames the day, that arm limb
lemming the lenient multitude maims . . .

An egg anchors my dimple
but when I smile it falls.

POEM

I am a jeers
of my own years now,
a hollow scoff.

The day in hour to its night
knows more of my
than I.

A sage, a prat, what else
have I got
to say that ain't.

May night once here
near what's there
in hour today

and find its own
way from mine.

A COMIC LOOK AT DAMOCLES

Sometimes Damocles is less afraid that the sword may drop
than that his enthusiasm for his plight might
—through the illogical process of displacement—
cause him to rise exuberantly up to it.

Once he glues a plastic bust of himself atop his pate;
once, while paring his fingernails with a pocketknife,
he sees an ant on the floor and throws it at it.
But all (both artistic and magic) remedy fails.

By old age he has quite forgot the deadly blade:
to his feeble sight, that gleaming flash above him
is himself, I mean his soul getting a headstart, already in flight.

In heaven he hears about an angel who tied a noose
to his own halo and hung himself from it, but sees
no way to apply the case, retroactively or otherwise.

FROM

I go for oops on
the down one

a lull goes by
I follow

the mirrorbits
glued in my armpits

from the flush of
dawn to the thrush of evening

trousers spuming
around my ankles

shed by waves of life
I wade proceeding

I seem to evolve in sympathy
with my tedium

EVAPORATING INC.

We want fate to be brief, to synopsise its
boring decease of flesh with pith-worth words, short
for existence. Like abbreviations that suddenly
find themselves whole, acronyms now, yet

not changed a jot, I am the same and am
something else: has my defunction occurred
as one more whose meaning has gone from
logo to noun? And if a slogan, what was I

a clarion for—the timor mortis forms
between shoulderblades. Slope for our napehairs
to stir in their muck and speak to what is

behind us supposedly (the past)—speak
and plead our case for an experience unique
as its purpose (which glints in every pore)—

DEPOSITIONING

so billions of humans for millennia looked
at the blue sky of a summer day and saw it as
bright until one day the boy Rimbaud looked
and saw that normal shining blue as darkness

and said I have removed from the sky the blue
which is darkness but his saying so did not
result in heaven being stripped bare of blue
to leave only immense endless light and hot

sun nothing but sun from horizon to horizon
eye-encompassing gorging all-point our view
no and in fact and amazingly his sly vision
or petition proved to have been only a sight

true and all despite his deposition the blue
which is darkness stayed it remained bright

FEASTFROM

on the table the knife hates
to be dripped on by wounds
it hasn't made

the meal lies obedient
it does not rise
from its triunal placement

whataya you want
the chef sneers
tell insert name
I'll have the same

how solar my meat waits
in pain to have learned
only a zebra can go
through the slicer whole

POEM

I keep a wind-up alarm clock
and at the exact moment it stops
ticking I wring the key intensely,
knowing the few seconds it takes

to complete this act may be
the only lapse in time, the only
alleviation: what has the clock
enjoyed in its brief vacation or

coffeebreak; I envision lunch
excursions outdoors in a sunny
plaza of feasting vendors while

the tightrope shadows highrises
throw across streets meet and try
to prop support our wobbly feet.

STALLED

There must be a way
back to the one
who is always before me,
some curve or go-round

or cloverleaf should
return me to she
whose face is here now
in front of me—

Whose name I repeat
staunchly as a stopsign
at every corner,

although I know
no-one will halt;
not even her.

CASABLANK

The 2 dead moviestars I believed in
embrace, forcing their makeup to
become intimate as a possibility
of channelsurfing past ourselves

or anyone awaiting reunion (all lovers
share a past) while the absence of
their blackandwhite colorized eyes
presents an alternate first-person

which is not nominalist, which preserves
a soupcon of that neoplatonic
void felt by Nazis in the New World
where they've always resumed reign.

(And once history forgets to save fate
let it wait for its own feature; right, future?)

SUFFERS

Your worm in all desire of course occurs:
you want a swoonathon, want the intensity
to go on and on, but I don't. Forgive me
if the philosopher finetunes her forefinger

by flicking it at clocks. Like a bird licking
an ant-hill spilling through a gondola
of doors whose keys fill my pockets with
clothing, I dupe upwards, mount-mantra

recited by dreamdrains, taps offering
advice to mammals rich in parallel,
obstinate proof of the sea's patience.

It exhibits a tactic of trembling.
Supine-precious as I am, even I know
the final particle suffers from proximity.

(SINCE IT IS INTENDED FOR THE ELITE ONLY)

Life like Gibbon leaves its footnotes untranslated,
but if I were able to read the Latin at the base
of this my existence, what would it tell me? Try
to imitate meaning by cutting out the details,

the empirical, it might say. Or isn't that poetry—
if words lost one of their letters each time they
were spoken, what word would be the last intact?
Past the mouth's Scylla Charybdis one word alone

can sail whole, the one that is never said or even
soiled by thought. Jason, Ulysses, all you mariners
who scraped safely through my lip-jaws know how

fragile one's guile gets. How tortured sordid
its particulars are, how obscene and thus elided
by time, left to die unsung in the original tongue.

NO WONDER

There is nowhere in the United States
Where you cannot arrange a murder
For a couple of thousand dollars or
Less, she said. This was Des Moines, Iowa,

But I can't remember the occasion—
I can't even remember her name, or what
Her eyes looked like when I kissed them
Or most anything else, except this.

Forgetting is a kind of murder, I guess.
But if, as my mom said about writing poetry,
You don't get no money for it why do it?

And why this poem; failed mnemonic
That costs me less than its insipid desire
To seem sincere, seem serious, does.

AUTUMN MOON

The tick hops
in and out of the clock,
the tock never budges.

I just carefreed my clothes,
but can they
traverse their own buttonholes,
pass through

into a new suit,
a transformation
of the case—

And watching it
ever was, must
I deface (like a sunflower
duelling an asterisk) this?

SPITE FATE

I sometimes muse a scene I can't for life say why:
A dancer, who has overslept, rushes by rote to dress
And ready a face all in a style obviously posthaste—
See her running to catch the train, late-panicked.

She's unprepared as you or me, as virgin-awkward,
Each time we find ourselves under and in a fumble
For the unnatural rigor of alarm-clocks or those
Damned thumb-blind buttonholes. . . . Is it, do I fear

Her second-knowledge gained from years of training;
How that slow-gathered grace of artifice still
Outstrips us and is what will outlast our

Daily demeaning of some other, this daydream
Scenario that fails to compensate my failure—?
And now her nine o'clock pupils attack their barre.

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand
On top of our Capitol's highest highrise,
Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves,
Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands
A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust
Doled out to me each day by our State, by you
The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there
And being thus empowered begin to pour
The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms
Bare, please note that length of project will vary
Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.

OUR CATACOMB'S NEXT MARTYR

The demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs,
Bodies fished out of rivers, and distress
In the hospitals are also on my list.
(Oh blindfold-anointed night, Nero Nixon nevermore.)

Waiting for dawn to rate the sky X. Love. Love—
The trendsetters yawn over their trendsets—
Hey, Hiroshima: duck! While the fuck of it
Sucks a crucifix stuck in the rat-hole door

Of the secret vault where a Getty gloats
Whole floors of masterpieces, real Mona Lisa and all.
In curtsyland I'll take my stand he screams.

The sound blood makes dripping on their neon
Must of bored the crowd. Facade-trod face of:
Inflect with your name time sours my knees.

Note:

Lines 1-3: "He wrote about the demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs, bodies fished out of rivers, and distress in the hospitals." — Armin Arnold, writing about George Heym. Lines 9-10: Getty Museum richest in world. Anyway, most 'masterpieces' in museums are forgeries; the real stuff is sequestered by billionaires.

BORDER

On the horizon of our lips
what kiss awaits
the arrival
of its sun
in rise or fall
the occasion delayed
beyond beginning and end
if departure ennoble passports
where distance is defined
as an erased echo
a looksee puddle of ourselves
some crossroads
may prefer the normal intrusions
the customary customs search

LAST WISH: TO AN AMAZON

Don't kill me yet
With bow and arrow
Through my heart—

Please: I want to die
But first grant this:
If for that aim

To better fire
Your right breast was cut
Off and if that

Cut-off breast still
Exists: graft it
—Implant-surgery

It—to my chest:
Then, shoot.

WHILE

As vast and deep and still
as a marble sea whose veins
sleep in me, always the dream lay
beyond its sill. All the losers

smoked leaf from the winner's wreath;
blue as a surfer's scars the sky
plumped into white, presumptive clouds,
Olympics crumbling

and filling our haltertops, and then there were
days, sails of somersault,
where goodbyes were only gropings toward

some echo we could not hear,
the sheer clarity of it broke the closest
spell. A hush confessed the rest.

ALFONSINA STORNI

Feeling as you wrote that the cancer quote
Is on its way upstairs to the throat
One breast had already flown migrant
Heart de facto amazon only the sea remained

Like a jealous mattress and old pillow stuffed
With insomnia's phonebills the sea
Is there to throw oneself at at dawn late
Up all night over a poem called Voy a

Dormir and which says this better than this
(Each time I read one by you I revise
Myself my suicide is to be me instead of you)

Sea that swallowed your poet throat
Does not for the having of it sing less
And besides only that cancer tried to float

Note:

Storni (1892-1938), Argentinian poet. In 1935 she was afflicted with breast cancer. A partial mastectomy did not keep the malignancy from returning, and Storni drowned herself in the Atlantic after writing a final poem, "Voy a dormir." The quote in lines 1-2 comes from a post-op letter: "I fear the cancer is on its way upstairs."

POEM

Meat predominates love.
I use cubesteaks to slap Cupid around.
And whenever birds flock over,
How many wormspecks
Dribble from their beaks
Onto us? The air is a mist of meat.
For an aspiring vegetarian
To breathe is to betray.
All our vows are undermined by meat.
Especially the pledge to purify
The soul. Useless to cry
The precipice that cornholed me has crumbled
When I share its eternal gutterscape, when
I participate in the sate of it.

MOTHER TERESA TREATS TERRORISTS TO TAFFY

The A rack and the O thumbscrew, the
E pincers. Yeah, I brandingiron, U electrodes.
World I am defeatist of—elysium—
You eviscerate asterisks like me:

Pick up that hotline in your hushed-up highrise,
Higher-ups! I videopoemed them please
But did God's Little Guru LISTEN? Nope
So, tipping my head sideways as if trying

To pour it into the ear's cup I shut up. Oh
To nix my thought on 2 fingers giving
The peace sign inside my mouth nose ass—

Or any other orifice they fit—'s
Fine with me. Neutron bomb has the same
Theory. Our entrails is taller than we.

THE RAIN EFFIGY

Besides its breezes, the play of whose yield
is greater than day's, we feel the sky as
prior, as pilgrim. The cleave in our love
leaves a field or bare place for where to build.

Strangely energized by the windshield
wipers, animated by each stoplight's
imperative, by every presence other
than our own grown so absent, we drive

toward the horizon, that groveled traveler.
And we ourselves might kneel before ourselves
if all our effigies hadn't crumbled/decayed

to a bare/stoop pedestal. That stance of us
as we kissed was not as statuary
as we had planned, was it. Less foot less firm.

HERITAGE

" . . . here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore I must have been
Adopted, because on my TV screen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

*Come: cancel everyone of us whose names
And clans have sundered human unity—
Descend always among daughters or sons
To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games,
Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family.
From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.*

THE NONUNIQUE

The deaths I lost to childhood are blue
as a precipice, green as a wish.

Their figures are an unravel I travel toward.

They inhale me whole,
they feel their navels cupped with home.

Around them
the air is inherited by handstands.

Somersaults secure the site.

The lives I've lost to age are even worse—

senility sillies! senilisillies!—
each believes it is the last, the venerable, the opus,

and that all the ones
following it
are merely posthumous.

POEM THAT WANTS TO BE ASH

Each time day returns to its sun
to forget the windows we opened
in it, I see the past minus peace
equals me, plus war you.

I stab a candle down through one hand,
an icicle through the other,
then flail them about,
restaging the stale battle of doubt

with faith, whim against bone.
Guess who always wins. Imagine
a color so true every prism
it passes through melts—

Because hasn't your voice
running mine, cindered this?

TREASON

Do our footsteps really want to become footprints?—
I mean: think of snails—if
one of them could move as fast as one of us—

wouldn't he be a traitor to his own—
a turncoat—a 'turn-snail'—?
No, no! Please don't pick them up and throw them;
they can't fly. They can only move

as they move, oh so endlessly across
this same ground we walk across ourselves
quite easily, not even hurrying:
this oh so same ground covered

with our foolish, wastrelly footprints—
which will never, never become footsteps!
(But see how quickly I become a turn-human.)

CASTRATION ENVY #12 (COLLECTED PORTRAITS OF
THE MARCHESA CASATI)

The knifefighter's mouth on my cancelled flesh
While, mutinous, tincan-incommunicato, I
—Or in that psycho syringe my face, all
The thawed camel of my eyes, the ball

Point pen pickling in my anus writes poem:
Trapped by titular star-wince, is it sky
I always escape from, to make the lam my home . . . hmm?
Unless my blood—like some more intimate

Form of ivy cover it—blond abattoir
Where a loincloth contemplates emptiness
Or less. Slash-wounds they should rename me for.

My gordian sex axed solves one puzzle though
I hesitate still, to give this portrait
A sign. Pool of saliva under the mistletoe?

Note:

The Marchesa Casati "was painted by fifty or more artists, from
Boldini to Van Dongen" (Phillipe Jullian). It would make a fascinating
exhibit to see all of these portraits hung, one after another, upon a nail
protruding from my forehead.

FORTHFABLE

What if everytime you cried you cried
the same teardrops originally shed by
Adam until all of them, their ripe total
will be transferred down through history
as far to fill, to flood then our final
human. And you too shall have carried
as lash-lade others before you your
socket-borne share toward our latter
great cisternment that dolor water or
lacri-liquid if we ever reach there.
You too must pass this on. See Eve
as she would have first received it, bent
beneath him: the wide brows, the wider stare,
bade eyes bearing forth his bared bereavement.

SADAK IN SEARCH OF THE WATERS OF OBLIVION

Is my Way to be crushed between your old
Testament and your new while the flood-blond
Of my major attributes burns, insurgent
And scrupulous beast? 'That ellipsodics'

Trigger phrase your name rages each page or
Are those foams yanked from among my teeth
Mere suicides giggling in a mudbath perhaps—
Only the beach leaps at lapses of itself.

To swab my pittance with this is heartless.
—And yet these traces of an unfaithful navel
In the sand sign Go mode as, vast pilgrim,

You undo my i.d. so skillfully:—
Rollcall of absence whose program runs
Through all veins! Oh sea. Besieged by ilk, I am.

Note:
Title: of a painting by John Martin.

SELF-ANCESTRAL PORTRAIT

Erasure's son, mislimbed by this drib, that drab.
So I long to be an assistant to a statue.
Helping it hold its pose. By example?

Solar dregs, this planet takes cash. All
Humor is banned in hyena heaven. A flower
Guards my hair against your portrait of it.

Insert an eye inbetween each eyelash—
Torn, old—the throat a showcase for whose teeth.
Ignore wallpaper inconsistencies, or

Cipher their militance. Surf-crash, wave,
Overhear a winecork hissing at a forceps.
Insatiable paws across the chessboard: night.

Even the high-tithed moon must condemn one
Whose instinct like mine is to succinct light.

from 7 1/2 POEMS TO, FOR, AND ABOUT R—

1. Substitute

If you have licked the whiteout off this poem,
then it exists: go on, strip it, stroke its wordwad.

Down its page-plunge, distribute our briefhood;
my flesh is blonde, my bones must be brunette.

Have I loved enough my planet's comet habits?
Look, how my blushes stain lambs. Oh shame-thumbed,

obelisk of hailstones, text rhymes with innermost:
to regain that clarity whereby it kills,

the vial of poison must be shaken, or jacked off—
I have failed to decentralize my navel.

Now my balding hairs are wove to make your hats;
my toenail clippings, glued, fused, used for your shoe-soles;

notice the metonymy. I myself am composed
of everything you excrete bleed sweat etcet.

2. What Missing Her Is Like

It's like ripping your fingernails off
drying them out
then carefully placing each nail
back on its particular tip
just resting it there
no glue or anything
then trying to balance them
maintain them all in place
so entirely normally
in fact so fluently that
the people you're arguing with
never even suspect

(I omit
the blood scabs scars part of it)

4. Buried

Sometimes I think she believes in
the Catastrophe Theory—
that her falling into and then
out of love with me was surely

based on the trend of Nemesis
(that changeling twin of our sun):
each lovefall seemed as sudden, as
doomed-to-be as the extinction

of what Saurian habitat.
Whole species annihilated—
some, I haven't uncovered yet.
But all, I better believe it, dead.

(They'll clone that dino DNA—
can love be revived that way?)

5. Long Distance Affair

The saliva gathered daily
by telephones across the world
from lovers yelling at each other
is an ocean with no bottom.

But say you pried apart those phones,
you'd find that all that wild white tide
of promises, cries, kisses, threats—
it also evaporates. The spit

is what we call each other,
I mean the words themselves, condensed:
distills us into clouds, into mist.

Rising clarified it drifts toward
Comsat, Telstar, there to orbit
closely around our distant lips.

6. The Word

Lower the noose into my throat slowly, careful
as you go, don't cause any choking until
you reach the word you mean to kill.
Since latence it has silenced me, since life.

Threading a shoelace through a hoof's cleft,
my scalp-holes will fang their follicles at
the thought. This means some names have a hangtongue
tendency to persist, finish fascists, tinsellantes!

Youth vanishes on those heights that relent to it.
Even the least will finally paint yield on a face.
(Hesitations before doormaps. Cowerboxes.)
Inert blurt, weighed inveigle.—(But why be mine,

Why plenish a gaze with me?) Then I insert my slits
into love/lovestyle. The almondine vowels whine.

7. Succumbed

I swallowed to pieces the loveletters
and then I bandaged the luggage past
goodbye, bon voy, we're there. I left a sign
stuck to me said Please Vacate Before Empty.

That ought to have been enough: or the years since—
but see each sun, all blush against the blue,
still find me hiding, still sifting clues.
Daily my hands are humbled by a crumb.

Ants add superbly their mite to me.
I wish I did not reciprocate, did not
as event join my weight to theirs—duties,

duties! yours were the toes I loved to buzz.
I would take my cup and raise it up you,
till memory's name-army overcame us.

CASTRATION ENVY #21) DOES THE
SWORDSWALLOWER SHIT PLOWSHARES?

Sure: the more me, the more morituri.
Mine duels his hand; some scroll of manliness,
Whose downfall almost dolored us. Though
Soon, up the brain tanks, gracias oozed.

The hair is a cohort of this. The hair,
Or the beard, a creditcard used as a napkin,
Swiping off a chin. "My adam's apple's agog!"
Quote: Exclude before you begin the male

Because it is vile. "The heart in common
Is the heart withheld," another recommends;
Hey here comes my favorite human-razed future.

Xerox of course a tapeworm lost inside
A hunchback, I squirm manfully on.
Deep in the direction known as thumbsdown.

Note:

Line 1: Morituri te salutamus—we who are about to die salute you:
the gladiators' obeisance to the Roman emperor. Line 8-9: Exclude
before you begin etc.: a pun on these Mallarmé lines: "Exclus-en si tu
commences / Le réel parce que vil" . . .

SONNET (to —)

The way the world is not
Astonished at you
It doesn't blink a leaf
When we step from the house
Leads me to think
That beauty is natural, unremarkable
And not to be spoken of
Except in the course of things
The course of singing and worksharing
The course of squeezes and neighbors
The course of you tying back your raving hair to go out
And the course of course of me
Astonished at you
The way the world is not

AT THE NIXON MEMORIAL

(Nixon Beach, California, USA)
(Just minutes away from OzymandiasLand®)

They say that robots simply have to slap mirrors
Up against their voice grilles to try and make sure they're
Not breathing, whereas I kiss caress this monument,
This eternal mall on which Herod has chalked x,

This statue stands for more than blowjobs in spaceships
Or all our names have razed, aimless oceans frying,
While a scab forms on the world's microphone: praise him.
Oh orgasm you robot's vomit I come unheck.

(Tape gap) lie back gunked motel whispers dream . . . back (gasp)
To be the genre of my frontier! One hears aborigines
Prefer to, er, fornicate. Money for thought, nyet?

Will the army vote to internalize its camouflage;
At the Reagan Rotunda Paul Valéry allowed how
Shores erode too, rumorous as their dunes.

Note:

Line 14: adaptation of a line from Valéry's *Le Cimetière Marin*: "Le changement des rives en rumeur." (A seaside mausoleum, so it seemed appropriate. With thoughts of the Shelley sonnet's last line.) Line 6: some have objected to the vulgarity of the phrase "blowjobs in spaceships," forgetting that the Nixon Era brought us both the Sexual Revolution and the NASA moon-landing. This slogan should have been one of RN's campaign promises. Traditionally many families gather here at the Nixon Memorial, after a day on the rides at nearby Ozyland, for the sunset prayer ceremony.

STREET

Down the street children run in circles—
A balloon laughs with a string in its mouth.
Why am I still interested in what lies at the bottom
Of my yawns of boredom?
No, I should not probe so.
Living on pavement pensions,
A mid-husband to the mis-wife of my breath.
In a doorway a savior pauses to straighten his stigmata.
Entering or leaving?
The choice leaves one speechless,
Groundless. The tall voice in my throat totters
Like a tower from which two or three bricks fall to the sidewalk,
Causing hoarse dust to rise.
The dust that rises immediately begins to avenge this insult to its
species.

SECRETARY

The technocrat gloats
at his remote desk
but just to show
he's still human

he still does a few
chores by hand
and adds a human
touch for example

rather than having
his computers do it
he himself stamps

all by himself
stamps PAID on
the casualty-lists.

Note:

Robert S. McNamara, USA Secretary of Defense 1961-8. For his services in overseeing the murder of millions, he was appointed President of the World Bank, where he continued his lucrative life's work of administering the policies of the oligarchs. One of history's henchmen; a competent monster.

ART OR THE CARESSES OR THE SPHINX
(CASTRATION ENVY #36)

The Lord Peter Mumsey of Thebes, that yummy
Oedi-poo dick, advises me, It's no use. To
Detectify a guilty party will
Soil the purity of our respective plagues.

Like a silo filled with silhouettes of sigh
I reply. My smarm/your frissonpassion
To be eliminated from the world's
Verticalities are more of what photons do

To Phaëtons. Therefore, if that obliteration
Our face slash esperanto saliva
Trace or clue is left to sift through but this

Issuey stuff, whoa, who's to blame, us! So I whore
Is for sure and if death occurs, facile
Excel. 'What's named between the knees' 's not me.

Note:

Title (excluding the parenthesis): of a work by Khnopff. Line 14: I can't
recall where this quote comes from, or if in fact it is a quote.

THERAPY

Scissor out random lines
from poembooks.
Fill a bathtub with these snips of paper.
Lower the patient in.

One by one extract the verse-ripples
and recite them to him.
When you've finished
he will be cleansed, perhaps,

but you, will you be empty of your effort—
weary, soothed enough
to dive in with him,
floating naked amid the stripped,

the choppy waters of poetry
(the saw-tides, the cut-wash).

THE PRESIDENT OF DESCENT (NEOCOLONIALISM #16)

'Insomnia, so I shot a few natives.'

Still, dawn has its palliatives; the cast sky
Lobs bullseye haloes; bolts of overview below
That pit whose voice timbers my spine: but why

Dis-niche this idol/this fiction called me? Which
A fluke, a fault, a streak of makeup down
A mirror where a clone once leaned to kiss—
Oh say the not right-out-of-it, say know.

Tongue: lightswitch of the body. Head: ha.
I'm serious! Every fable's a linear
Of topplings. And what falls first? Neck second

Of course. Torso—torso off of groin goes—
And so on downwards—downwards—thighs knees et al.
The feet are a final ruins; the toes, shards.

Note:

Neocolonialism: Outremer, Europe's first attempt to create a "USA",
fell after 2 or 3 centuries, overrun by 'the natives' . . . xerox for us? Ah
the comminution of this latter Crusade; me, crumb.

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff
most parents splurge on the average kid,
orphans, I submit, need more than enough;
in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid
the tree where sparkling allotments yearly
guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed:
(did each boy there feel the same denials?)
to share my pals' tearing open their piles
meant sealing the self, the child that wanted
to scream at all *You stole those gifts from me*;
whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists
they'd made us write out in May lay granted
against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

MORE BEST JOKES OF THE DELPHIC ORACLE

I vow to live always at trash point: to
Waste my past talking about the weather
In mirrors, how they cloud or is it clear
With no certain referent to that what was

Forecast. Like Snow White's dust-draped stepmother
I smile up at the dictionary whispering
My favorite definition, down at the stove my
Worst recipe. The endproduct in me

Agrees. It and I are one in this blither
And, I believe, we echo something endless,
Eine global vocal. Will those lips ever

Repent this recorded message. Lips
That remain a mere testimonial
To the inchworm's socialization progress.

THE FROOTLOOPS OF CONSOLATION

One of those landscapes that explicate Eliot.
Up: evening-pubescent clouds tuft-about a sun
That rusts like a shelf of spare parts for god
Or such, who flee with perhapses as pitstops:

The airport that sold me all I know is gone now.
The welcome-mats that were so cheap (a foreign
Manufacturer had misspelled them)—that whole symbol
Semblage/emblem forum: bereft of forms I bend

Across this blindfold's bliss land and see
My soul or a lobotomy spaghetti
—Choice of terms—crawl by. By what small light the

Day has not betrayed you step so long among
The Magritte-lit map. A single tight-rope
Stretches between its houses, threading the keyholes.

NO ANDROGYNE IS AN ARCHIPELAGO

The butterfingers things that hold us know
To plunk the gut strings of your suturous
Lobotomy lyre—but if it is to pore
Iota'd digits through a wall with no elses

In it I do not. Who scans test tubes for
The fatal ripple of my beauty finds
That long meant mirror has fled in error since
In their clone alphabet seems I'm z:

This crystalball bilge/ouch mosaic of
Out of touch omens will not tune true too as
My leavetaking leaking everywhere sees

A 'puter oh! inventory zeroes.
Why try to guess which one comes last? Just zoom
Your monitor. The past the gist of it gets us.

THE ASCENT

I masturbate bareback, grabbing the mane
with one hand while the other grubs self-love,
galloping through the recidivista of
my cyclops-eclipsed brainscape, that garbled garden

where sparks listen for heaven to come down hooved,
while leaves eeked by elves pierce their dense
veins' skeleton to seek the enough essence
withheld by me. Everyday I am shoved

to break brick from Babel on the tongue's chisel.
What top-bearing spire of it boasts my assumption
and hoisted over years climbing a stackhigh

of tables or chairs precariously
leaned up against a waterfall is all
I can pray then, its rainspray reining me in.

RODIN'S THINKER (pentasyllabics)

To reduce my thought
to none is my aim
to spite the trite name
that bit chisel brought

me knee elbow bound
thick fist to forehead
pedestal pasted
nicked on no good ground.

Even Rilke was
caught by the craft craze
of this forger, this

make god. May steeples
hoist up our pure souls
to people his walls.

INSTRUCTIONS TO A MAP

Approach, map; let me spread your lats out there
and shape them to that abject attitude
conducive to embarkation: lie square
while my coarsest cartographies intrude

with plumbines cast that fourways force embrace
newground boundaries as I toss more throngs
of tapemeasures in loops across your longs
and leave them involuted there to trace

fix each secret breach of all our borders
so dumbfound for terra incognitas,
where my lost flesh enrobes your erasures:
underfoot I will track these meanders

and stamp down every territory town
till none can ever drive outside my own.

MARTIAL

Military sculpture is
to sculpture as
military food is to food,
if there are

any sculptors or chefs
left who have not
been conscripted, since
military verse

is to verse as
military noon is
to noon, the hands
straight up in rhyme.

And music—
music of course is war.

Note:

Anybody who reads poetry can see the ubiquitous self-doubts poets evince regarding the validity/value of their art. Compare that to the smug self-satisfied attitudes exhibited by the advocates and practitioners of music. They take it for granted that music is the highest art, the universal art, the only art that transcends all borders and biases. They never question that given assumption. The arrogance of composers and musicians is insufferable. They really believe Pater's dictum that all the other arts are inferior, that all the other arts "aspire towards the condition of music." But every military that ever marched out to murder rape and destroy was led by what art: were those armies fronted by poets extemporizing verse—by sculptors squeezing clay—by painters wielding brushes—actors posing soliloquies? No, the art that led those killers forth, the art whose urgent strident rhythms stirred and spurred their corresponding bloodlust, was the art to which they felt closest, the art that mirrored their evil egos. That's why they have always put music up there at the vanguard of their war-ranks, because not only is it the emblem, the fore-thrust insignia of their purpose, it is their purpose: it is the condition to which they aspire. But if music is what its hucksters continually sell it as, 'The Universal Language', what that means is that before the Babel Discontinuity there was no music. Music did not exist before Babel, and will cease to exist when a true universal language (and a true universal peace) returns in the form of digitaldata/pictovids exchanged instantaneously by androids cyborgs robots. Music will soon be as obsolete defunct extinct as humans are.

JOHN GRAY

I try to tonguejob a languagejob you
You continue to perfect the anonymity
Of your first and final lovers or is that me
I try to occupy my debris till I see.

Are we the cow that swallowed the hymen Jesus
Spat out at birth for example-psych or
Dorian's portrait faced off with a virgin mirror
Is that what Life Beyond The Baton is like.

A disservice to myself is my head
The kind of divingboard that slices bread
They gnawed the renowned for fun they said.

Where the linger of one thought longer than
An other brings distress will this settle gelid
Its aspic of aspect make ick my eye.

Note:

John Gray: author of *Silverpoints* (1893). Ada Levenson in her preface to *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde* (1935) writes that Gray was "then considered the incomparable poet of the age." Line 7: he was thought by some to be the model for Wilde's hero. (The choice: Dorian vs. Jesus—or, as Barbey d'Aurevilly posed it to Huysmans after *À Rebours*, "the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the Cross": Gray was ordained a Catholic priest in 1901.)

MONODRAMA

Don't think, I said, that because I deny
Myself in your presence, I do so in mine—
But to whom was I speaking? The room, empty
Beyond any standpoint I could attain,

Seemed all sill to stare off before someone's
Full length nude, at halfmast their pubic flag
Mourned every loss of disguise, allegiance
More to the word perhaps than its image—

But predators always bite the nape first
To taste the flower on the spine-stem, so
I spoke again, which shows how unrehearsed
I failed to be. I went to the window:

Sky from your vantage of death, try to see.
Flesh drawn back for the first act of wound, it's me.

PERSONALLY

I saw this screenlegend guest on TV
promoting the need for everybody
inbetween plugs for their latest movie
to help out like with our ecology

small daily acts each of us personally
just little things we can do at home, one
example is don't let the water run
hey people! ya'know? when you brush your teeth?

Sometimes I'll remember that admonition,
sometimes after meals I'll grumble beneath
the bristles, under frothy gums and lips:

Hey filmstar! love your save-the-planet tips,—
and hey, look: my faucet's off, not on—see?—
the least you could do is come fuck me.

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH (THE EARLY YEARS)

Most biographies of the Moderns share
A common pose: ranks of raw youth appear
Often capped and gowned, uniformly there—
It looks alike in all such *Lives* we read.

Torn from some album somewhere, its focus
Is general: all the figures are crushed
Anonymously together and lost—
Just, some airbrush has dinked a single head.

Imagine rummaging through raindrops on
Transmundane panes and eenymeenywhile
Plucking from amongst them 'Source of the Nile'!

How of this many is there but one self—
Whose underneath name obtains its caption—
In book beside book, on shelf after shelf?

AFTER RILKE

As the year falls in autumn
to repeat the tree's chaos
again on the ground, to
reiterate its meaningless

in a sequence called status:
so dissimilar clouds already
multiformulate themselves
from previous contraband—

traffic of leaves redundant,
instinct-migrant heaven: every
day I rip from my nipples

a calendar's cleavage, I lie
clinging to lays. Lord the
summer was mostly waste.

ANOTHER NAOMI POEM

Her tongue was melting at the center of an iceberg
That had sank the 13th floor of every building
In which we were living, our sunglasses broken like *ciao*,
Overlooking what vista of siesta: nightly we rose

To harvest the end of a kitestring whose importunate
Tugging from below sowed heresy; we smashed
The one snowflake that was carving all the other snowflakes;
I warned her: "Your clitoris is my boyfriend."

Decades; quits; fades; she wrote some books, I tried
To write some books; we met occasionally, but why?
Other strangers than our own may remember. I remember

One time, my hair was hippie, she had to keep pushing
It off, averting her face, finally complaining that
This must be what it's like to go to bed with another woman.

THE SCULPTURE (to —)

We stood there nude embracing while the sculptor
Poked and packed some sort of glop between us
Molding fast all the voids the gaps that lay
Where we'd tried most to hold each other close

Under the merge of your breasts and my chest
There remained a space above the place our
Bellies met but soon that clay or plaster
Of paris or state of the art polymer

Filled every hollow which we long to fit
Then we were told to kiss hug hug harder
And then our heat would help to harden it

We stood there fused more ways than lovers know
Before the sculptor tore us away
Forced us to look at what had made us so whole

COVER STORIES

Exchanging secrets in the form of kisses,
Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass,
Each pretends for the moment these mysteries
Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space,
A safehouse right for private armistice,
The flesh they bared betrays them both at last.
Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must bear a true likeness,
These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not
The ones that will have to be worn once more

Come morning's normal enemy status
Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot
They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

NECKOGNITION

In love the head turns
the face until it's gone
into another's where
it is further torn

from its own mirror
and grows even more
erased and lost and though
the former still yearns

to be his/be hers,
it sees these lovers
over your shoulder show

that whatever disappears
can also go as verse
whose shape's nape-known now.

NIGHT AND THE NAKED (to R—)

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed
Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye
Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence
As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that
Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the
Restaurant part or the video part or the disco
Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me
Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe
Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus
Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked
Trying to remember our name ends in applause

TRAIN PASSING A CEMETERY

This pullman paints fast against frames of glass
No masterpiece great as these green screensaves,
Each tombface at last deleted by grass:
Its room compartments are the size of graves.

Death's depot depicts upon all our freight
What eye-spanning cars keep displayed for view,
Exhibits lit with that weedscaped portrait:
The one stop we pray runs way overdue.

Clack clack rails voluble as elegies!
Brake-squeal wheels will help sculpt an artist's panes
Carve transit his passenger's exit year,

Deafening reflections nobody sees—
Defunct in an instant, incessant trains
Depart. Their provenance precedes them here.

POEM FOR GEORG TRAKL

Graves that revert to suns at the end of
the movie remind us our lyric is thatch,
thatch this, thatch that, a cottage industry with
its piecework approach, its mode of pain thresholds:

so if the sky is a column of birds who
root each sorrow in a sievewalk sense,
distance astronomers splash dates at,
out where the sought torch gathers adornments;

and if my face on an eyelash leash reach
toward yours like hands that offer glass a space
to grow transparenter in, sheer-opposites
that squander unison upon this nest

precarious hosts of myself I deign to attend,
what else accrues to one's true instance?

Note:

Written after trying-failing to understand Heidegger's comments
on Trakl's *Ein Winterabend*. Images from that poem have obviously
influenced this. (His wine and bread my glass and host, etc.)

RESUMED PLEA

To pick up where I left off
at birth,
as I was about to say before
being interrupted by
the midwife,
my parents,
my teachers,
my commanding officer,
my employers,
my various wives/children etc.,
my physician,
one or two astrologers,
and the undertaker:

"Free me or worship me!"

I HAVE

have you ever tried to apply makeup
to a teardrop
under kliegwater

floodlit
and the starlet
you're trying to get fit

for the premiere
is all fidget
and praying her

tit-tape stays on
and you have to keep saying
stand still hon

or else'll
it'll run

PASTIME

surreptitious
and mute
are the vendors of my beauty

hide and seek
hucksters their
occupation about as useless
as the toss

of playing cards into
a hat that's simultaneously
being thrown into a halo on
the fly so to speak

though I know
I'm supposed to say
on the wing

MIZU NO OTO

Pain passes for sunlight at some depths
which most of us never strike; the dive
is too far: or is the ear sheer enough—

Basho by a pond heard a frog make
the usual faucet-dripping-into-a-keyhole
sound; it wisely ignored his efforts

to collaborate. Get your galley-slaves
rowing with icicles for oars, that's
one way some say. Resist the urge

to halve the sea/be laser Moses,
to submerge yourself as a slice
speciman, all random camera words.

Beyond the caprice of earth to slake,
thirst issues from the source it breaks.

Note:

A meditation upon Basho's most famous haiku, whose final syllables
I've used for the title.

STANDARDS

Any book opened on a snowy day
may for a moment feel its content
reflect the freshness of falling flakes.
Perhaps the introspective nature
descent awakes will shadow the plot
forever, still with each flap of pages
we'd sort of seek one phrase to save us.

More likely the blank blizzard that
edits every word we might unshelve
or inscribe will continue to publish its
volumes similar by far, unique only
in crystal closeup. Through the storm,
like prompters of vertigo, flags throw
colors distraught against this whiteout.

A SOUTHERN RUN

1. At My Grandparents' Grave, Chokenhole, Alabama

Let me return then, greenly festive,
a sleepwalker on stilts, a water-
lily on crutches. Give me leave, or shade
to smile, to claim: I'm like chafe-artists,

who do stuff to you with their wrists.
Plaintively I will try to rise to mend
your interior fruit vined round my lithe brand
of bracelet therapy. Or is it all lies,

my care, my concern? A drop of rain
might leaf—might root through entire orchards
to find the word that precedes the spade:

one word. The fear of which, if I believe,
I have sworn to stop, to burn cities
for each larva that escapes into love.

2. Disquisition at Knott's Funeral Home, Jelly Neck, Arkansas

Auscultate the boring symptoms of the dead
that heartbeat you do not hear is meat grafted
onto shadows, diagnose those future lives
may vidsnaps and ground zeroes grow on their graves.

Slap in the left hand Damocles' last wig
pinch in the right St. Sebastian's pincushion
scraped from your skin, imagine you ascend
a child's tooth-mussed smile, a cyborg's toe-tag.

Till this resounds solely on what seldom sea
oh net of pores, can you catch a body sheered
laocoon-clear above such wave-dextrous shores.

Assuming one has dredged from the flesh
of the moment himself, has taken the requisite
steps to emerge as me, who am I to be.

3. At My Grandchildren's Grave, Dunceville, Georgia

Will disguising my biography as realism
overcome the humiliation of being
so quote uneternal! Like Ellen Barkin in
Siesta, I'm posthumous but make a great smarmpiece

to orifice around with, blasé or various—
Stunt-winged, avant, we grope our precarious
karma, daredevils soaring up actuarial
charts! Oh midnight-ignored spasms, cameo

confessions—here I am, the soul complains,
in hock to meat. And, its co-stars all chorus,
I owe bread a living, of course! Some child's

jump-rhyme, some game. Autism's pious request
to glue my name's lips to mine. No! here comes
a pristine to kiss us; a prim to hug us.

Note:

Siesta—1987 film by Mary Lambert, in which Barkin plays a gregarious
ghost.

4. Accidie in Kilborn's Adult Arcade, Cuffs Cliff, Kentucky

So begun-gone, so commence-ended.
A delve away, only sleep is obedient to dawn.
The day bathed in jaunt, cerulean popcorn pouring—
So I beg the alms to interrogate my palm.

Knee-plenty take me. The topsheet teethes on us;
the cunning foreskin heaps up nakedness;
coulda-buddha-beens, nirvana-neverweres.
That table where the room is crowded looking

at photos of itself, that chair; anywhere
our mapping marauders, their cuticle helmets
withheld on high, thrash through ramblethorn bush:

spectrum for time's homonymgram. Thumbthroe?
Often the skull's skill at making masks is
unsurpassed by any dot I subscribe to.

5. At My Grandclone's Grave, Photomyopia, Mississippi

You said that hair was merely the head out of focus
and thus for a male, for me, growing old and bald must
mean entering the picture is leaving it. And yet, here,
when the cemetery grass paints my toenails with smoke I

need you to refute me more the ground I walk on,
not cloud. That uncarpeted core of space is where
there's too much perch to pose for polaroid-deviled scans—
they sun us toward life's Project Face, as if death

is young enough to get I.D. Gee it de-I.Q.'s me
to hear you say that skimming through nulls and skies negatives
the event to wait for a burial that involves

just ourself: see these forehead plod lines, the skull the flesh
which wings washed from me at birth have daubed listless
verdure over, the gaze ending so firmly in lax?

6. After Fainting in Bill's BeautyTique, Mocha Rendezvous, Louisiana

Until your cilia refilled me I spilled—
ooze from the wreck of some penicillin pickup,
no hush path closing my aimless course, I was
sippin' thighclaps on intermittent maps.

Life, sulk suicide. Pout puke preoccupied.
A dirge-grid doves sieve themselves through.
Cream of my colophon, klieg backwards, how
I peered in at the blowtorch's privacy. Now

I want to weld wings onto my letteropener
if I have a letteropener: the slander
of such truth is the saliva I long to be
mounted by, transphallic-tepid. A noose for

a backpack, I camp beneath the quicken tree.
Source ass, I am a horse brained by its mane.

FEBRUARY FOURTEENTH: FREEZEFRAME

(to James Elroy Flecker, with thanks
for translating teardrops into handcuffs)

Please press a valentine shape tool to my chest
And extract from it what was never there
Then singe your ciggie on this thing that mists
Over only when shattered's no mirror

I lie beside you my caresses deepmeant
Though they fade as fast as escape plans traced
Across a prison blanket by an absent
Fingernail whose blood you piss in my face

Is that it is that why I cry for more torture
That way you look at me pityingly
Iffen I say things like rain ice drops cling

There our branch out there like someone been trying
On all their bracelets at once to see
Which is prettiest but of course none are

Note:

Flecker: Parnassianism (his list: "Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Samain,
Henri de Régnier, and Jean Moréas"); *le vice anglais* (the home version);
death at age 30 (consumption).

WINDOWBEAM

Ray that overruns every pane,
force that first invades but then

is pervaded: sunstripe penetrant!—
what made your phalanx fail: why can't

its gallant-greaved angels'-armor
avert our dirt: must the conqueror

convert his ways, the savior adopt
savage customs? We slaves corrupt

all bright kings—each mote of us
holds abject thought that blots with dust

your gold-shed greatness: shadow
breaks your arc and essence. How

transient the transparency
you brandished here so recently.

I MEET AN ANDY

I'm blond which means my hair gives a shower to my face
Or is it wasserfall or 2 leash-burgers to go oh
Muy footbutch and anyway I am the guy right who
En-route to AKA a fungus minuet meets an andy

Which flicks back its eyelash crucifix and says
I come to touch you all ways but en passant
Like boohoo bruisers cruising Lost and Found Depts
But what about Marlene what about the twins who want

To gawk at each other through a keyhole or Keith
What about them the andy says get out of it that's
No pocket for the slit-rilkes and shard-kafkas

That's watching the sockhop heave the voxpop vomit
May they meet sweeter than soon in that room
I say and point back where the streets are full of cities.

WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs
seems to be stepping upward,
returning to that cloud which hangs
framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape
whose dust holds the days I desire
to live in, fixing to climb up
past that summer sun and hammer

the scene in whole. I didn't haul
my ladder in and now it's too late—
I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air
tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall.
All the undone chores must wait.

THE SINGULAR (enneasyllabics)

Whistlecraft aloft in the blue, birds,
belief has assured me your choral
enthroatments are whole and yet I spell
them out as similar to our words—

Your songs define you while mine unvoice
my field of lieu and fail to call up
a likeness new enough from the group
auguring each face its fate. The choice

seems too great for me but you seem to
flourish as flocks beyond your final
ornifact which Braque for one pictures

in wingspan style, his pursuit single
as I used to be. Is he more true
tracing the tune that eludes my ears?

Note:

After Braque: singleness/wholeness; individual/group; poetry/art;
etcet—

MICHIGAN MEMORY #3

Are you the only one here, Year-man?
Is yours the unforgiving sermon sung
by children who hoop their eyes across
this greensward ground ground-swallows

fly round and round. Their focus carves
a ring sparkling with the loot of someday—
every lawn-sprinkler yields a chalice,
through whose rubies puppies commune.

Oh hurry after the kids, wishing
the glaciers would return from their exile
in frostee-cones, in flinty marbles.

There is one marble they call the Pure.
We scratch endless circles around it,
we set our gods on icicle pedestals.

ECHO NEAR THE END

Severs and brothers, brokens and sisters, is this it?
Around me life has darkened like the afternoon.
Anymore to emulate the sunlight's posture,
I slither down off that perfect backbone.

I am alone, but so are we. We are alone but so.
Banking slowly the monster completes its turn—
A clingathon of wings flaps through a halo
That holds a weddingring up to a keyhole to

Pen in the one my fear was assisting at
The birth of adrenalin: I pause I postulate.
Wait. A mousehole Morpheus stamps our passport;
Let's hope sleep has the good stuff tonight.

Murder blinks eyes upon eyes. Suicides
Stick to the roof of the mouth, stupid tripod of spit.

EL POEMO

Little squiggly worms on the surface
of my head. I brush them off, but
more ooze up from within;
an endless supply it seems.

All I learn turns to the belief that all
my exhalations rise up into the sky
to form an O which hovers there
to watch me struggle for breath and die.

I always pause to grimace at the wound,
but the wound does not hesitate at all.
That would be an acknowledgement.

That would be a response.
A collation of purpose, a balm, a bosom,
even a poem perhaps.

CENTRALITY

as Marx said the navel
will wither away
and the soul will graduate
from Clark Kent University

to create that ideal state
super-androids wave
a wand over
the few remaining humans

look at them
their flesh covered
with simian grafitti

their planet still spun in days
still circling
some outer core of sun

SUCKUP

though the day is lingers now and longueurs
can we still attain to its names or share
a unicorn brassiere worn by Madonna
who only has to glance in glass to go voyeur

I wish it was that easy for the rest of us
every private term of sweetheartment
must have given that husk to her voice
tongueless auctioneer of our looms

same poem not in sync with its ampersands
Dante centipede I thought in grids of it
I wish it was that easy to rest against

he is still attending to his entrance
so you must rise and strew an alms after
this very day you shall be with me in montage-Ra

ELEPHANT AND ENVELOPE

Numbering their normal RAM in great noughts,
The elephant and the envelope are
Doomed to remember only pristine thoughts—
They both carry every souvenir too far.

No matter how creased and stained their skins fade,
Even the erratum images they encase
Remain abnormally there to be read
(Password: *remorse*). Is there no way to erase

The years the yearfalls or are all these flaws
Stored away somewhere perfectly forever—
All of our memory sites dotcomlinked—

Trapped in that utter trunkiness because
The envelope is an elephant. Never
Forgets: thus it too will soon be extinct.

PONSONNETS

*

how far have I come
to get to where
I never am

is said to something
jammed against
the thwart part

unless the rhyme arrives
its time has too
though ineffective till

reach the sill where
there's more
for your ponder to will new

themes from when
its own finds all

*

the bouquet resists the soubriquet
almost successfully

one might say
but no idea comprehends

our faltering toe sooner than this
and yet it is so

that drought-cracks lack
exactitude

nicknames are applicable
to the silence perhaps

I guess
but I wonder

whether days die beside their hours
or their ways

*
if every beginning
is captured cry
by slaves of the end

will I shiver
like a tuningfork
touched to a flame

when my sword
is nailed to dawn
with caedmon skill

the cigarette elongates
the cheekbone
but what good is

a genesis
confined in seed

UN-ISRAFELLED

Am I similar to slime enough, be-
Mimic with muck? Since Poe blew it that Tennyson—
"No poet so little of the earth"—equals sky,
I (boy bouffant) unto the realm of whom rise, I

Who synonymous with none, am anonymous
Without everyone: is that the light cast
From haloes; does it make the shadows of the heads
They glitter over smash down obliterating

The body. We twitch our face-costumes; scratch;
Crud dangles like a noose tied to high c.
Or is that noise claws—a phoenix scraping

Let me in on the door of a crematory,
A comet's dandruff. Its scars are ridges
Ledges, where the flesh of this ascent rests descent.

Note:
"None sing so wildly well / As the angel Israfel" —Poe.

FERNAND KHNOPFF

Days in the lull, gathered afternoons of it,
—A touch of star-decals on one's bookbag,—
Silence, like a vast confetti of souls, and that
Torporic breeze: oh how difficult

The culling of love from our facades is.
Once, never to go the cling thing seemed what's
Sublimest. Look at those cobwebcrobats,
Skittering skyward, fingerhold, nor toe- .

Deep down (in my ugh-roots) I longed to brag
My spiel shall deign define no July of these.
I'll fall chapter closed across your chest is all.

Now I am an atrocious expert; who answers
Every question by, "It is very simple:
We must listen to Beauty with frozen ears."

Note:

I don't understand writers who prefer "painterly" painters over "literary" painters. How can I as a poet place Cezanne (or Monet, Matisse, etc.) above Khnopff, and not be disloyal to myself? Shouldn't we appreciate most those painters willing to stain their canvases with some of the impurities of our own art? [I've changed my opinion since I wrote this note in 1988, but I leave it stet.]

DE-EVOLUTION OF THE POET IN RUMOR'S HOUSE

Neutered condom, amphibianed from whose lips—
The times I've tried to dive to Rumor's house! which,
I have to quote that brute, Ovid, is "the world's
Center," most quested-for, yet nearest core:

What verse ensures the windows doors there never
Close, oh porous palace where every phrase
Blurted by earthen creatures goes stored. Surface
Abyss, endless source swearing itself his page.

Who welcomes my omega—elsely geared, I bleed—
Island keeled in the always flood of fade.
The dying D and end N of our days' A

Resumes these scattered patterns, theme's mutest speech.
Each time it tries to say more than this
The tip of the tongue must wrestle a leech.

TO JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

The poem is a letter opener that slices
a to discover b in which c waits
and so on until z reiterates
my metaphor's acute dullness, its crisis

of belief: say this knife could core its way
past the final alphabet and penetrate
that rind that blinds us with its consummate
yield of polished inveighed truths which betray

nothing of the stuffing, the seeds that rot
innate tumors of meaning, enemy
rumors amassed across your desk each morning—

what if that surfeit of words was a warning
label only, just another skin to be
cut? And all this is unless the poem is not.

Note:

Line 10-11: 'enemy rumors': Lezama Lima's second book of poems was
entitled *Enemigo rumor*.

AFTER THE BATTLE (based on a translation by Stavros Deligiorgis
of a poem by Nichita Stanesco)

Upon a walnut leaf my forehead lies
and floats downriver to the saddest part
of day, that south where flags and boats capsize,
where cold lakes die: I mourn my mouth, I start

to press it hard on bitter bark or roots
that lure me down. Descending underground
I swim in tree-sap streams, their current shoots
an unseen enemy: my shoulders pound

in rhythm motions now, I ride the wave,
pursuing quick that shadow drowned in chase,
that rabbit-heeled recruit who fails to save
himself for ever, leaving me to face

lees loss. . . . Away from all it overflows
a valley stacked with soldiers, dead in rows.

OFFENSE OF THE MIST (hendecasyllabics)

Stamp inside my bathroom mirror the flesh steams
Pout with desire that must fade awake to find
Adonises never fairer fauned than mine
Whose handsomeness waits just wisps away it seems

To him shivering over the sheenshed glass
Or is he sheer suppressing the emergence
Of many gods who would have succored presence
Once affront such fallen minor forms unless

The vapor kissing this razorblade purepours
Sure its shorebank will brook no pollutant face
Unlookly as that streamyfaux Narcissus
If gendered beauty can fountain forth more source

Cognizant as such should any boy grown old
Still feel his tepid taps run their course to cold.

"THOUGH MUSIC MAY HAVE OTHER AIMS THAN US"

(Wayland)

If scores were blown off music-stands against our faces, they'd cause us to not see, to bump into things; struggling to follow the notes, straying towards each others' arms we'd branch out in such songs.

If here harmony comes from false maps cast across our visage like pages in the notebook of the composer, she whose echoes lead us lost—
Or is it the blindfolding wind directs acts of love.

Music that masks intent, make render my route.
Veer me off inward toward the core of detour foretold, proving its path along a graph is more

a quest than this fumbling, stumbling progress through the tactless swamp of the ears, this poem whose strains undermine the main theme of your pursuit.

Note:

The title is fictional.

EACH TIME

Leaping into the ocean is a gestureless act, a stripping of all learned coups, practised maneuvers. Each time is the first time. And out of that sea

we emerge always for the last time, a summation of all we were seeking via that plunge to expunge from our flesh, cleanse from our nakedness. But then

what greater urge shoulders us aside in its rush to die—to sacrifice—to extinguish all life arose from that global sauna—which unlike us has no scruple of purpose.

Its waves ignore the depths we dive for.
It craves nothing our drowning pours forth.

BAT HABIT (or, Who's that Coughing in My Coffin?)

bats are the nicotine of night
that's why I always need a light
ten packs o' Dracs a day or die
my lung-caves crave that fang-wing high

skreak-skreak addicts they never quit
yea though it blind us we find it
when I unearth that undead stash
each toke burns choked through a neck-gash

bat-weed bleeds me butts and gobbets
should switch to cygnet cigarets
get righteous off swan-white filt-tips

but it's not bad this bite-throat smoke
I can brag gloat after I croak
the evil Vlad still loves my lips

Note:

Line 14: Vlad the Impaler (or the Inhaler in thiscase)—: medieval prince
legendary for cruelty and dastard deeds, avatar of the vampire in
Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

TO MYSELF

How often does your penis
enter your armpit, not enough I bet;
and automaxillary eroticism
will not suffice. Such intercourse
or rather lack of it shows up
in the cast of your crap, your typical
excuses, your ineptitude charades—

But all orifices get worn out, so even
a rarely-fucked armpit longs for less;
as does the face, held together
by what coercion of emptiness;
an oral shoehorn probably;
maybe-berries dipped in occurence-curd:
the evasions are always exemplary.

BURIAL SCENE

On this shoveled open edge
On this lip of all our dreads

Earth seems most at balance
With its contending elements

The sun the cloud the wind the soil
All four exert an equal pull

So when the coffin enters
It presents no dissenters

Dressed in empty suitclothes
All mourners are scarecrows

Too far apart each one stands
Thus when they reach out hands

They can barely brush their
Limp glovetips against each other

DEARTH DEMISE

Satiety help me I have inhabit
of this world. Extant upon its designs
to be more aimlessly fluttering at
the window, to shadow all the patterns

it offers each sun. In frames far as eye
I draw my words towards a juggler's shards
as if our fallings-down our deaths occurred
but did not involve a lot of colloquialized

arm movements, the body language throws. Thus
the shape of your silence when it speaks me
is different than mine in saying you,

though both of them resemble that spasm hymned as
repose lifepause a happen of sorts the way
the horizon's a long way without meaning to.

OVER AND OVER

A child recites the alphabet
but you in years still hard to get,
your rote is what I memorize.

It's you these counted words revise—
and say that today's forays, they
hazard voyage, do you care for sure?

Alone now with the old shapes that
bless tables bare, can't you wait,
wait for *A* to begin anymore—

how ache with alacrity you say
every tide is an advent, a day,
and too many days is the sea,

though the sea is day. Unique
with frequent stays you repeat.

DRUG OF YOUR CHOICE

And so I write, "Love paces out its exile
beneath an Arch of Triumph." What the meanwhile
does that mean—pacing is going nowhere
and the arch is built to remind a war

to bring tourists. Overhung by that shrine
(till infantry is the prose of pavements)
time remains a frieze from a waxworks famine—
vista in which we cum, sweat, become silent.

Like a monkey caught in an orange pharmacy,
love conditions the fool to riot reason . . .
But from corners that climax has not stirred, coldly

a cacti acrobat holds the horizon forth as
an ideal of what constitutes refuge, pane
deposit, distant, though its cuppings could kill us.

TEMPTROUSSEAU

The clock is dressed in drag, I mean it wears
space instead of its own proper aspect—
but if it wore *time*, would it disappear—
isn't visibility an effect

of transvestism, that shield/pastime whose
crosscausal aim unmask the eye: must you
assume the costume of the other to
be here, to present the sense with an *ess* . . .

Narcissus saw his guise decked out all ruse,
but if there were none, what would our true clothes
consist of, our rig rags, our regalia—

Whose dapper element dons us: Einstein's
continuum, or Flaubert's confidence,
that come the same the Bovary c'est Moi?

CRITERIA

The rose is
more poetic than
other flowers because
it has

only one
syllable where
daisy lily violet
et cet

are over-verbal,
poly-petal.
Beauty

based not on color or
odor but
brevity.

KEYS IN HIS HAND

Sometimes a man home late
is steps away from his door
when suddenly out of the dark
a passing car lights up a window

just in front of him so the room
behind it is thrust into such
a semblance of clarity that once
again he sees why we see only

with glimpses like this, with
happen flashes as avid as this,

but always the lane's corner takes
that revelation past before
he even resumes the posture
of his intent to enter, to live there.

ADHESIVE VALENTINE

not knowing where you are
not knowing who
so I'll coat with glue
all the envelopes I mail

where most words fail
mine will still pursue
kept in these veils of glaze
every postal maze

no matter how far
no matter how overdue
they will find the true

letter bound for you
and there be pressed
adherent to its address

STRESS THERAPY

Time, time, time, time, the clock
vaccinates us,
and then even that lacks
prophylaxis.

Ticktock-pockmarked, stricken
by such strokes, we
get sick of prescriptions
which work solely

on the body.
Systole diastole—
It is by its very

intermittency
that the heart knows
itself to be an I.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envy young poets the rage
You wish you could reverse your night
And blaze out born on every page
As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight
Whose wattage now is theirs to wage—
What gold star rite you wish you might
Raise revised to its first prize stage.

But listen to my wizened sage:
He claims there's one disadvantage
Should time renew you neophyte—

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite:
Remember if you were their age
You'd have to write the way they write.

ZENITH

Once a rocket lived in the soarway
Now it's gone
Only a bird fills our sun socket
Then travels on

Hovering at all angles to
Those tallest days
Where the lion says needle star to god
Far lingers no trace

I wanted to share
The occasion of that height
Even if it was only a while
The moan-length of a laugh I had

I wanted to stay there
But I failed at the sight

THE POSTHUMOUS APHORIST

I said the red and blue you haven't lived
will be the green and yellow you've died.
I guess they might be the colors that fade
when I see you to one. Is that your shade?

(A dozen acrobats debating zero:
trapped in a hurry circus at center
ring, my pyre prepares to free its hero.)

(A maniac unwrapped from the moment;
like a satori triggered by sneezes.)
(The symptoms named our sin a trance.)

It likes to dress up in creation and
take us for a walk. But can a maxim be
revised to include doubt? Any obit
presupposes a life if not its opposite.

AS USUAL

Immediately I'm dead
Body laid out straight
Please don't hesitate
Just cut off my head

Lift it and lay it a foot
Or so below my feet
Shift it till I look like
An exclamation mark

Overt sign of joy pain
Surprise consternation
Despair exuberance

As usual a metaphor
Meant to make up for
My lack of coherence

HEILSTYLES

Of course the Spring fashions buried in Fall
And dug up to wear in boisterous April
Make the models even more skeletal:
Body by Buchenwald; shade by Chanel.

Nazi nurses infiltrate CIA hospice—
At Safehouse Haven the dying agents
Are coaxed by swastika sisters to confess
A. Hitler was their greatest influence.

A disappearance echoing with shoulders,
A veinburst serpent evolved to doubt all,
Still these lifecopy killers follow me.

Wise fashionists resist history
By staging it over in stale revivals.
To stay in mode, though, one must grow older.

AFTER BAUDELAIRE'S *CAUSERIE*

The ocean of verse has left in my chest
That stale ebb-tail taste of a bile blueplate—
Its word surge bitters too gorged to digest—
Even my critics' deaths can't reinstate

An appetite for this: acid reflux
My poems have all become, which in their prime
Fed vanity's veins and pain's glut stomachs
Enough to fodder a second lifetime . . .

My heart? Is Heartburnsville. Landfill palace
Leveled ever since my fellow poets
Chewed its dumpster pews into prose-pellets.

Come share their bard-fare, their warmth and fireplace—
Eyes blazing like a holiday barrage,
They char my offal flesh long past garbage.

RIGHT ON SCHEDULE

Inventorying the calendar,
Counting to leave it whole I am chore-horsed
By the urge to register all the days
But one, so as to save that one for always.

My laptop hums as it sweeps each interim
Into smaller units but my wife comes home
From third world reich each dawn saying Hon
All our leaveway's left. How long—how often

Have I survived an earthtime of your time.
How I resent that instance: how I sneer
Hon it was gone long before we got here.

ID-dodo forced to take temphuman form,
What trained your jettison person to die?
Exit, pursued by posterity.

STORY OF OR (to Pauline Réage)

To pose nakedness is
To refute it. A pose
Is a clothes. Like
Stanzaic arrangements of

The word which should
Ideally, be in pain against
Its w and its d. No slack
Is why such heaves of or

To denude itself could
Make us exude gold, yet when
Was that ever opposite enough

What scream or epigram
This sperm has come
To measure our mouths for.

Note:

For "or" to free itself from "word," it must strain ("heave") against the "w" and the "d" that enclose it. If, via this strenuous (perhaps squeamish) process, the meaning of "or" is transmuted from the English into the French as a sort of homage to the pseudonymous author of 'Story of O' (*Histoire d'O*), then, alchemically speaking, (or so an Auralist might suggest) it will have risen from the pose of its measures to or-emerge as an else-gasm.

LAMENT

A bruise there was, which
Prospered on stale blood;
But growing smaller, the bruise became
A lecturer in escape-routes,
A philosopher of loss; relying
On the body's reluctance to be
Normal, i.e. immortal, it
Had hoped to survive somehow—
As a useful parasite perhaps, draining
The self's hidden wounds,
Masking its aberrations . . . but no.
For always there is no mercy for
Anything that is not whole,
That begs (like the brain) to be alone.

A BACON

An oval invested with teeth;
the brief orifice of a head
thread-melted through its tweedboned coat,
half throatway down a sundial drowned

with chalk-caul runes for avoiding
such rains: though of course the chew maw
that crowns this gnome with no likeness
also barks forth a white porkdrip,

unsustenance for those of us
who seek a resemblance here: see
how the magician longs to saw
the swordswallower in half. Now

this facial Francis finds our mouth;
hell leveled by its wells without.

Note:

Not an ekphrastic re one canvas in particular, but a response to several of his paintings from the 1940s. "Figure in a Landscape"(1945), for example.

CELEBRATION (dodecasyllabics)

The conversation-pit is filled to the level
Of the floor with the soil of former parties here—
Crushed cigarettes, napkins, all kinds of cocktail swill—
We stand at its edge, grinning, wondering who's there:

Is there some version of us lost in that rubbish.
Such a Pompeii probably took years of soirees.
Where's the carpet to cover it—dense, bottomless,
It makes the livingroom around it seem empty.

And why get superstitious—why greet our fellow
Guest from way across this trashhold—since we must know
Its surface could bear our most intimate meetings.

Oh, somewhere the host is winking working elbows,
Showing no embarrassment—but here we have grown
Sober over the grave of what greater gatherings.

TO RIPLEY (*Alien 1-4*)

Always your face like a space
(Destination: beautiful) ship
Empties its mote of closeup trace
Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown
And coma time is a line
Where waking centuries often
Drained against that measure may find

All our blood redshifts (direction: west)
Until film can clone one sun
With stars both whole and gone

Attending every sequel
We pray for an intent equal
To our interest

TWO POEMS TO S.

1. (Desire) Threadbare (Desires)

The light lay in shreds across the bed,
only your waking could make it whole;
resuming its costume of day, its role
that seems to overnight get ragged—

Fate latent as weights in theater
curtainhems, what soul is sewn here
to be rung down at last, divested
of these disguises. But if we are

bared by such cloth as cries in this
lament for the sun's fragility,
would I dare now to shake you astir—

to drape over you my own shadow, whose
myth-ex-machina remains all mine,
mine, and therefore torn from yours.

2. The Tethering

The handclasp is burned up by the embrace
and the embrace is consumed by the coitus,
and I too am subject to a hierarchy
that requires every stratum version of me

to be fuel for the one above till each one is lost,
impossible to find in the final illusion
(a mirage is something that doesn't see us
even when we blind it) of a final one.

Why and whom must we each our own to? Go,
let cemeteries bomb our sleep with omen
hiccups, I'll nil persuade myself there is a person
somewhere up there, perhaps perhaps it's you.

Identical arms babe your arms in theirs.
But love, tied hand to foot to flute, lingers.

DOWNLOAD QUOTA FOR A QUAND OF SOUNDS

Question nothing else none as the poem comes into swim,
although I hear the true soliloquist doesn't care
about acoustics: for him each room or realm is bare,
or so says the sort of solver of this problem.

Exclude all quirks of love—the corkscrew inside the kiss,
the tongues that twirled themselves around yours and
yanked you out pop, suave wine spilling a space
maps render near enough, sunder's purest land.

Sill-pale, false, I shall toss the dust on my feet at
each huge wedge of wet which looks to be glass but
softens here to the condition of tear. I'll bear
their failure, a grain of quicksand in every pore.

It begs its boundaries from the surround. And yet
the surround itself must seek its limits in them.

POEMCLONE #4: HIS LIFE, HIS FATE (LAMENT)

Beautiful as a TV tuned to me,
Ending every line with words that end in
The letter z renders him total, final,
Whole. By analogy? Ergo-oh-oh,

How simul/how my epitome's prose. So
Extra-lapsed from time—from time's yawns blending
Our matinal soles (our toll head of vesper) where
My brain (that scab of bonbons) mimes a dung-

Gone thing as long—as long as this elevator
Of nothingness descends into whose lungs . . .
This down-urge of air, this breathe-me, breathe-me . . .

Then: whenever the xerox cries he dies.
Is it fancy, is it drifty? What's all or null
If I see my teardrops copy my eyes.

SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS HYENA

Kindly deferrer to lions,
Late flocks of vultures, packs of winds.

Last to destroy the lost, discreet,
A shy, toothpick aristocrat.

Servile, even, leaning over
Droves of bones who disdain such care,

Who in their marrow preen and bear
Huge swarms of self, a hubris herd.

Is that why he laughs—why he finds
Joy in these humiliations,

These measured modesties that mass
And make him eat his words at last?

How strange it is to stay astride
This prey, to taste its pride of pride.

POEM

in poetry one
is never enough
but two is always
too much

in the realm of halves
quarters eighths et
cet it exists

(somewhere between
Zeno's dilatory
arrow and or Magritte's
perspectivism of clones)

its niche
is never more
nor less

MERRY - NO - ROUND

The wooden horses
are tired of their courses

and plead from head to hoof
to be fed to a stove—

In leaping lunging flames
they'd rise again, flared manes

snapping like chains behind them.
The smoke would not blind them

as do these children's hands:
beyond our cruel commands

the fire will free them then
as once the artisan when

out of the tree they
were nagged to this neigh.

DEPRESSIONISM

Without any necessity to name it or anything,
I remember this bombcrater before it held a garden.
Once I saw children kneel down there to pray for pardon
At an altar on which a little toll-money rolled laughing.

Swift suedes of evening, night's purple peltdown.
I don't have to invoke the past; it's not required.
I'll just settle here stolid like a stopsign repeating
The word I stand for—sit and let my tired feet hang

Over the lip of this pit-deep garden whose intricate
Vines query up at me. Quiet from the town I can hear
Orphans rattling the gravel on their plates and or

Other faux pas I'm under no order to enumerate,—
Jet-lag of angels, a snake, faintings on summer pavements.
This bombfall failed in its intent: having none, I won't.

FIRST THING

"The first thing I can remember at all was
a dead dog at the bottom of my pram."
—Graham Greene, *Journey without Maps*

A dead dog at the bottom of my pram
Seems to be my earliest memory,
Unless I am part of an implant program
To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted
By ETs and beamed up into the sky
Where I was undone then reconstructed
Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog
I mean: before Mother or the Mothership
Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log—
Until that moment died I had no script
No guide: no word undeified my sign.

BOY AT THE MIRROR

A child emulates what he can't know
is true, a murderous dew
that appears every morning to be
his face, but already it evaporates at

a touch: the lurking effects of
the unity granted by night are never
enough to maintain this ripeness called
time, this waking up to a cherub-scope

that looks back at him in the glass growth
like hammerblows a devil checks off
a list—the routine begins so early

and even the wattage of the womb
behind him is too bright, too ready
to hale an unsought self into sight.

THE RETURN (after Follain: from Merwin/Romer)

The sun has washed with white the farm that waits
in ways for the stranger who's late to come,
but he whose force was never sure of home
may not even pause when faced with its gates.

Clothed wholly in the mendicant's threadbare,
his headwear the tin lid of a trashcan,
he will know to announce himself as man
the prodigal: *Hey guys it's me!* But where

the mule gnaws roots and the mare's coat burrs dark
and the pig guards the last milk it laps at,—
where the dog has a starred brow and the cat
can augur storms, they have formed their own ark.

Unyielding the response to him must be;
the same it has been since edenity.

Note:

I worked from the Stephen Romer and W. S. Merwin translations of
Jean Follain's original.

A CONTRAST OF MUSTERS

Each schoolroom tells them who they are,
But rollcall always goes too far
So what kid listens any more
Beyond his own responsive roar—

Should names get lost in roster blur
The zed grad's shout might not occur;
Throughout that endless classmate choir
One final voice will still aspire.

Compare with poet rotas where
They list me last and I must bear
To learn their grade-charts may endure:
My word once marked could stay obscure.

(And scream unheard by any ear
Its absent claim of being "Here!")

EPOCHS

Even the tamest media trembles
When it hesitates to depict the gods
Raping and raging down on us mortals
Though as always the middle class applauds

Others fear this bestseller artistry
And they run hide between bare walls of earth
In such troubled times officials must see
An increase in myths of a virgin birth

If miraculously you can survive
Opening spring through its fine frozen doors
Hoping to catch any ally alive
Notice all the windows in the big stores

How they all show a swan bedded in blood
Her advertised blue eyes lidded with mud.

Note:

after "Époques" by Jean Follain—I worked from a trans. by Serge Gavronsky. and from the French original.

TRUE STORY

We stole the rich couple's baby
and left our own infant with
a note demanding they raise our
child as if it were theirs and we

would do the same. Signed,
A Poor Couple. Decades later
our son racks summa cum laude
while theirs drapes our hovel

with beercans. But did we prove
our point? This heroic experiment
(a jeu de joie of performance art)

attempts to assert the adroit
of nurture over nature, the pure
narrative we write in order to write.

THE SONNET IN ix

The nube, the nude, the not—you know: the Nix—
Her Septet of orifices? (males have six):—
Was it massed by Master Malyoume for the fix
The fucks. Rape-scene: she, some defunc'-off, kicks

The mirror while centaurs click centerfold pics
Of her fingernails—each closeup mimics
The anguish with which our pallored poet sics
Midnights on. Encore encore, you sexniks,

Steph calls, tiptoeing away toward his sonics
Lab, 'The Sign in X.' A thousand-quicksand thicks
His step. He's pitbogged by all the nitpicks

Critics have glitched his path with, those pricks!
Don't they know that stars—stars can't hold shit wicks
To his candle?! (That bitch, that *Nix*: *he* sucks it: "I-icks!")

Note:

Failed translation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Sonnet en yx.' Line 14: I-icks! (both i's are short, as in "kiss") is an onomatopoeicism that accompanies the expectoration and or taste of the candle's cum. Sort of the sound you make when you use your teeth to scrape it off your tongue ostentatiously. But why did I end the poem this way? Was I influenced by the Master's regret, expressed in his essay *Crise de Vers*, that words lack an embodied, material, tonal consonance with their meanings: "Quelle déception" (he writes), how perverse, that the "timbres" of the word "jour" should be dark, while those of "nuit" are "clair." And yet, he concludes, without such "défaut des langues," poetry itself would not exist. Assuming he's right, then onomatopoeia are defective because they're not defective. In Japanese, *kireji*—"cutting-words, used to separate or set off statements"—are onomatopoeic, and "have the meaning that lies in themselves as sounds." But as Hiroaki Sato notes (in his book, *One Hundred Frogs*, from which I've taken these quotes): "Basho himself simply said, 'Every sound unit is a kireji.' " In any case, the faults and falls and false of my trans. should be clair to all.

ADMASS (ORBIT)

The comet whose path is contentment
shall seldom appear: compared to it
Halley's daily. What eye flared to it
can spy that rarest speck in the spent

of space debris, moonspat asteroid
which opium lets Bethlehem see,
while telescopes all miss this tiny
tinsellite, star I hope to avoid:

useless to pray for that mite ray caught
by truer poets, whose verse converts
at first sight. What may they sing as sought
in such light, but I will not pay church

no matter how witchburn-bright that tailsphere
nails our night with its sales pitch Christ Here.

MOON AND HUE

The ancients leave us linear—
those immolation angels wear
their serenity Eden: my eyelids
cannot shake off the lassitudes

of longitudes all gone, some
semaphore one called home,
map scrawled on white butterflies
impaled by antlers. Paradise.

Write more that I may pursue
your Hermes'-sperm and spend
its message both-forth the send

way that sign-language is hand-
tinged; as I am tinged by you in
sun and shade, or moon and hue.

FINISHED

what if you
prefixed beautiful
with a ball throw

on my grave throw
a bell and a bowl
to represent hollow

hollow or silent
in the end we all
lack instrument

ring the bell fill
the bowl throw
the ball until

its beauty is over
its word through

EN PASSANT

above our toes is where
we like to be below our hair
but are we really there
the occasions rare

so I keep my whatstabs in the air
hoping that others might
kindly go along with me despite
the whywounds they bear

and every chance we meet
our lives dispersed as days
I keep hoping the street
will kindly go with us a ways

before resuming its maintenance
of the distance

BELLTOWER

stentor contemptuous of rhymes
tin-ear deliberately flat
day out chimes immetrical times
echoing fate with its that's that

thrown here under what thunder spire
pray our course lies off some ways else
how resist this hourly gongfire
lead us not into numerals

ultra stopless birth death it rains
baptisms funerals weddings
shower high teardrops fly ricegrains
tolling controllably more rings

even if bells themselves all crack
once they peal there's no appeal back

PORNOKRATES

We paged through the phrase as though it were ours.
—The lovers in the act—those de Sade-laden hours,
Where, dumped out daily as ashtrays this dream
Some room's motel, will it burn a hole here too—

And coop us full of that till our limbs' arms
Chainsmoked by adrenalin, slither dour-white
Unepitaphed beds but. What gargoyle jail
Their contortion poses (the lovers in the act

Of mailing themselves to famous crimes) if
(If perched on each other's tongues we fly)
Only by his mind these bodies thrash—

To share this fire is, surely, a tithe entire.
So each of us alone unless upon our lips
The world forgets our name and stammers out its.

Note: Title: of a work by Rops.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF SOCIOBIOLOGY

(to —)

Those scars rooted me. Stigmata stalagmite
I sat at a drive-in and watched the stars
Through a straw while the Coke in my lap went
Waterier and waterier. For days on end or

Nights no end I crawled on all fours or in
My case no fours to worship you: Amoeba Behemoth!
—Then you explained your DNA calls for
Meaner genes than mine and since you are merely

So to speak its external expression etcet
Ergo among your lovers I'll never be . . .
Ah that movie was so faraway the stars melting

Made my thighs icy. I see: it's not you
Who is not requiting me, it's something in you
Over which you have no say says no to me.

LEDGELIFE

The taller the monument, the more impatient our luggage.
Look, look, a graveyard has fancy dirt.
Historians agree: this is the pebble which beaned Goliath.
Every billboard is theoretically as beautiful as what lies unseen behind it.

Mouth: the word's exit-wound.
It is impossible to run away face-to-face.
Shadow has closed the door out of you to you, but not to us.
The sign on the wall advises: Hide your gloves beneath your wings.

Even sculptors occasionally lean against statues.
Migrations?! Fate?! Life swears up at ledgelifelife.
All the sad tantamounts gather.
They want, they say, to errand our ways.

Please aim all kicks at the ground.
Address all blows to the air.

THE MAN WHO MARRIED HIS CHECKOUT LANE

Daily, in the supermarket where I go,
I gravitate to this one lane—the one
that's most full—you know: the busiest one.
Have I fallen in love with my checkout lane?

Well, I am male, I feel drawn to this aisle;
its openness is shameless, sexistly exciting;
the real way it squeezes my shoppingcart
and deigns to crowd me in. Oh my checkout lane

has the longest wait of any—though unlike
these others in line I refuse to leaf the life
those tabloids provide rumors of: none of them

are beautiful as what infills me as I enter
as I am queued up for that brief orgasm
as my cash is on the counter and I am home.

AN OBSOLESCEMENT AND HIS DEITY (POLYPTYCH) (for Charles Simic)

Bending over like this to get my hands empty
Rummaging through the white trashcans out back
Of the Patent Office, I find a kind of peace
Here, in this warm-lit alley where no one comes.

For even the lowest know that nothing new
Is going to be thrown out now—no formula,
Never not one blueprint will show up in these
Bright bins, their futures are huge, pristine.

Old alleymouth grabbags my attention at times
I see the world flash by out there, furtive as
The doors of decontamination chambers—

I return to my dull, boring search, foraging
For the feel it gives me of the thing which has
Invented me: that void whose sole idea I was.

ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can
Break this slang of glass whose illustration
Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm
Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for
Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope
And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt
Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up
To shield the face against that bad vocable our own
Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room
Otherwise empty while one at a time
White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Note:

Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. *Siempre Sera*.

CODE FACADES

When light passes through a Mies Van der Rohe
it grows greenlike, cubed, a square root of itself,
absinthe ice. Architecture fractures the sun
with the earth, earth's verdures and verdants suture

solar gold with grass/emerald-held stems
transpierce our ledge-stalked land. But montage
refutes all light, the flicker when it dips itself in time
is like the moment a stopsign changes tense

or similar transits, closeup mesmerization
effects. The flesh fauved from the bone. Thus
no imprint stays in the wind of the rain which
fell all night until now, at dawn, tides worry puddles—

then I move to Sands of Time, New Mexico;
shampooed by hammers, I shut my window.

(L)ID

Each time I blink
Is a lapse in my life.
Each blink outlives me.

The one I was before
The blink is never
The one I am after.

And the one I shall be
Desires me to cease
Quenched with each crease
Instant of the lids.

An eye juggled on
The tips of its own
Lashes might see
Who I have been then.

FLUSH

I pulled out a dollar
but it was a fish
gasping with big
numeral 1 eyes

poor dollarfish
sadly I observed
old fingers hung
from it like hooks

now I fill my pockets
with water hoping
to lure more

somewhere a penny
minnow winks up at me
from the ocean floor

TO LIVE BY

Work from the original toward
the beautiful,
unless the latter comes first
in which case
reverse your efforts to find
a model worthy of such
inane desire.

Even the mouth's being
divided into two lips is
not enough to make words
equal themselves.

Eavesdroppers fear
the hermit's soliloquy.

Wake up, wound, the knife said.

GRAFTING BOARD

The way the grass weaves my walk into its
intricate bouquet, the sway of my hips knees
branches snatch and carry aloft all moves
that imitate apples cherries: orchard

(it lingers by the ways prior to it)
I could accomplish you who cry.
The days have their noise and I none else.

If the sleep I poach from is posted with
echoes, does tapping these trespass keys—
does each step staple a sapling to a tree?

Because nothing is changed by beauty because
beauty is a part of the way things were
changing anyway because it's never
a catalyst but a process (I guess).

EXTINGUISHABLE

birthdays you bend and blow
out a candle in a skull

it's always just one candle
but each year one more

skull is added to the table
which by now is plus full

and that makes this ritual
more impossible each year

each year as you approach
that crowd of past selves

somewhere down there
in all those bone sockets

the annual candle waiting
glares and dares you to find it

FIRST SIGHT

Summer is entered through screendoors,
and therefore seems unclear
at first sight, when it is in fact
a mesh of fine wires
suspended panewise
whose haze has confused the eyes . . .

What if we never entered then—
what if the days remained like this,
a hesitation at the threshold of itself,
expectant, tense, tensile
as lines that crisscross each other
in a space forever latent
where we wait, pressed up against
something trying to retain its vagueness.

POEM FOR LOCATION

Looking out the window is no worse or
is equal to accepting advice from
a hallucination, but you continue to
glare through it, certain that the flowers

out there could stop your lobe-shaped laments,
time truer to one's due self than you:
they seem to lure something surer, something
pervasive, a creature seeking abandonment;

lying in wait amongst its private parts,
is it me is it you is it who? And starts

to purge our whip-appld childhoods,
to lecture the thoughts learned through lapse—
but how? I must try to find more words
accented on the erratum-syllable.

SUCCESSION

Upon the welcome mat the foot announces knee;
knee, thigh; and so on. Each part of the body
becomes, in the process of this introductory
entrance, merely a pavlovian John the Baptist,

mere clarion omen of the one above it. But
the head, what does the head presage? My hair
can't grass over a path thus opened. The self
must make way for itself, its progress upward,

upward, and irreversible, like life. Which is why
I waver here before you now in the fear that I,
the poor shadow of whatever it is I portend,
I may somehow fail to properly augur forth:

caught in that unreeling portrait called Arrival,
will I prepare its import, bear up and be its doorsill?

MENAGERIE OF THE AEDILES

Now what thought is thrashing from this brain to be
unleashed by a brow-to-brow collision with
a unicorn? Or could it go released through
other throes I wonder. For if I were gored

there, mightn't I, like, die? When Terminator zaps
a hole in someone's forehead they don't write
a poem response, they drop and he steps on them
crunch, french, act, your soundtrack may vary.

The plan was to get scalpels taped to the Creature
From The Fuck's huge flipper-tentacles and
then lie down hoping that perhaps their wild wave ways

surgically correct my defect my gender—
penis revealed as gap in consciousness—
Though I know none of you beasts loves me that much.

STRETCH

We feel more imprisoned
by walls with cracks in them
than by walls that are smooth
and featureless: the latter

do not mock us with examples
of breach, morals of escape—
indeed, as further punishment
our cells from side to side

are fissured with gaps not wide
enough for exit of course;
but through which can be seen

fair glimpses of all the others
penned around us, the ones
who deserve this sentence.

PEACE (PASCAL)

There is a valley
Is the oldest story.

Its temperate qualities
Make us descend the trees
To settle down beside
Fruits and fields.

By its river content
To sit quietly in a small tent
To fashion fishing spears
From fallen limbs.

No need to climb its hills
No need to go up there
To look to see
Another valley.

Note:

"Most of our problems proceed from our inability to sit quietly in a small room." —Pascal.

GENIE

As evil as the first
Of your three wishes will
Inevitably be,
Maybe the second or third
Can redeem—
Don't count on it, though.
To recoup the past,
To reap its here-homing futures.
Remember when you run
In a mummy marathon
The last one
To break the tape wins.
Peak: where the mountain
Rests before continuing.

LAPSED

Poem-and-beans poor, my job cleaning spittle
out of prayerboxes while a gauntlet
of gonergods riffles blank Readers Digests
in my face and laughs. The slum I am laughs too:

because just as at birth the flesh covered
our teeth, so something waits behind the smooth
meatfacade of the sky to bite us, to
unsheathe one answer that puts an end, that

quits a quietness lost. For who would condemn
the dead for the way their fingers decay
into self-caresses, the flesh dissolving

onanically, the tenderness of love
at last achieved, if it weren't that I too
am a thumbnail handful, an elbow-erwhonist?

THE RETURN

Behind me someone stalks
with shovel and covers
every footprint with
a spadeful, all my faultless

tracks effaced by small
mounds of dirt that mock
my slowing walk and show
the graves where to excavate

themselves, to get their holes
ready for that lag-leg day
I shall have to halt in the heart
the pace of my stride

and turn and try and take
the first steps back . . .

BY HAND

The day is a book of hours
out of whose painted pages
a minute drips from time to time.

This almost never happens—
the tints usually dry right away—
but when it does, everything

is left dyed by that drop.

(How cumbersome to memoirists,
all those lean nonfictionists,
whose futures already leak.)

Crowding us out of our pocket lives,
ever-enhancing event/event,
overflowing the most fulgent eye—

Luckily, it almost never happens.

TO MYSELF

Poetry
can be
the magic
carpet

which you say
you want,
but only
if you

stand willing
to pull
that rug out

from under
your own
feet, daily.

HURL

My failure has homes in France. Bucharest,
Taipei. Around the globe in thoughts and finds
Everywhere it lands the same, the fatal
Frontporches, never mind the odds and ends

Tipped over. All my Applause-Minus-One
Discs scratched. These traces of my worthlessness
Worldwide have the bearing of their meaning
Obvious, engraved in spade, metaphors

Monotonous. Why go on? And the spread
Of my failure contrasts with your success,
Its local nature so centered in you, reduced

To a town, a street, a house shining with the urge
To not retain you, to scatter you as I have
Been thrown elsewhere, far from the core of it.

PUTTING ON MY MAKEUP IN THE MORNING

If life is instead, its dozenthread thoughts
gnarl the mind into volumes that obscure
the true enigmas, those narrow fatefurrows
restricted far as a prism's panes are to primary

(I've sepias it seems to choose from) persuasions
that oversee and judge, evidence our scene
differs from shame's umbilical/remained bookspines
too straight for snakes to sleep in: I'll need more

than coilpace if I expect to root allsole.

Sometimes the names feel just wasted on a people
paperweight that doesn't hide enough words
on the page from which one's brain wakes and wakes—

Nosejack eyejack mouthjack, the mirror
breaks the connections the makeup makes.

RINGTROT

The city you shall plan is such music
That they're sure to arrest you with one hand
While the other conducts not just traffic
But symphonies. Rotting in jail may you stand

Shamed for the crime of strumming its towers
Aloft with softchimed cries of I'm innocent,
When even cell bars banged through endless hours
Render rhythmic your imprisonment.

Regret thievish whims that create a world
Blameless as this, errata forever
Dancing with its decimals in sync, heartbeats

Cued to wonder, still, if your toes were twirled
Round one of your fingers could you discover
The keys to close these recidivist streets?

GREEN-HEED

The grass on my mother's grave
is a sparse species which must have

yearly tearfalls from at least
one mourner to merely subsist;

there are verses where lament
rains forth a veritable font:

compared with their cataract
whatever moisture mine may lack

shall always wither in drought
seed-deep as her greedy grief-root;

whose weed needs the kind of care
I should spare no shame to shed here.

Perhaps there are more eyes who've cried
than I feel dried up inside.

THE FOUR VIEWS

Each dawn you wake to find that once again
during the night the four windows of your
room have been newly carved into the shape
of the loveliest object each one overlooks:
the east glass is now a worm's silhouette
while the west gleams bicycle-like, the north's
a sycamore leaf, the south a snowblind face . . .

Who remolds these panes while you sleep
and who carpenters the sills and lintels and
why are the four vitriforms always changed,
different each day: is beauty so inconstant—
so subjective—assuming someone chooses.

Are you a phantom here in your own home,
or a squatter in the house of René Magritte?

A HUNKA HUNKA

A rolling morass gathers no leftist,
Yet sans passport is a portrait I can't
Paint, chained to this poor Outremerican
Landscape upon which the head limns itself

In a tittle of tether whose gigolo
Gloats in the pantry of my pantyhose:
With all its tongues inkling to call us home
Till a signature on the sill spills dust.

Then I try to climb my outcome, that vast
Of charade, imploring portion the Prez
Gets on his big set I would bet. Meanwhile

May mislead us to run, newspapers held
Over our heads whose headlines always say
What's that, one more blank of angst to honk at.

FOREST FEARS

Everything I invest in frightened energy
deludes me, every attempt to see death's good—
all the roads from childhood have wayside
slopes where shadow grows back to its roots,

grubbing a thirst in dirt as I walk by wondering
if I could thrive from such dry clods too if
I knew what shoots do sprout from this corpus
of quick arriving as me, departing as itself—

What a lingering hate I feel as it goes,
a resentment that it can never remain me
but must return to its numb vegetable
state, the shape it had before taking mine on.

Stirred by its terse, its quiet commonplace,
my body loathes the tree my life will crown.

POEM FROM SUMMER

That gap the world includes by vanishing
on cue, that studious unborn sweat
beyond all if the body's primed for
exit to overvisit, time, encore.

Say it pertains to our name, say we find
the eyes' goodbye-corners torn routinely
in ebb with this, each departure a kind
of statue suture's paw stalled in caress.

My pate is centered on the four labors.
Make a snowflake the shape of dextrous dust.
Make your sex a handspan across my skull.

Lit up by landscape is the movie
I hate of my life. Hollywood heedless,
bright faces born between sweet and sweetness.

POEM

To make our lives unavailable
for autobiography
should be the story
of our lives.

All our statues hold
penultimate poses. The last
is reserved for us.

And in our faces
there are always details
which a portrait must exclude
to maintain its integrity.

We set walls behind mirrors
for that same reason,
to help support the sight of us.

NONSENSE SONG

Mother-of-pearl, where is
your child-of-pearl, inside, and how,
who'll say, worn away perhaps
by so much worth?

Upshot white of hail's hold,
unhalved from issue whole,
world nacre-torte rolled
in sheets where no breakers foam—

Say what wave is ours,
what home. Now your shadow
is one of the shallows of light.

On whichever is the far side
of the eyelid I see it. I pray
my tongue may be your mouth's hermit.

FIRST BILLING

the skull's expertise with masks shows
through the mouth at times
the eye opens its sieve
of cyclops

from this image what remains
in an hourglass
movie the last grain
must be the star

that time has passed
a man proclaims
he reads from his notes

but he doesn't really read
he just reaches in between the words
and pulls out big fat me's

KEEP

You will keep growing until
your measurements are the same
as the exact degree of the pain
inside your grave.

Until then,
statistics always misspell your name.
And the fate of a misprint
concerns no-one.

In fact, the same one occurs
until it's fact,
meaning epitaph.

When each grave becomes too painful
we will fill it with
the anodyne of self.

TWO LEFT FEET

they say if you can hum
you can dance
if you can live
you can die

guide-graphs on the floor
may draw our soles
toward a ballroom grace
in the first case

but with the other
each time we look down
there are no paths
no ways no wonder

we're always stepping
on our own graves

WART-HOUND

Not even those pirate's teethmarks on the moon
can tell the real as opposed to the false gold,
which is why the welcome mat nailed across
my mirror needs dusting. What's the use—

Because if I opt for the truth as opposed
to the tooth that slashed those obviously
painful crateratrices on the moon, I too
am one the drossiness of fate lacerates—

Which is why all I do now is I hang around
barbershops, scouring the floor with catchcanny eye
in search of a wart that's suffered similarly:

Fallen wart, comrade, hacked off by haste or
the CIA, hey wart, whoa wart. Here you go,
wartypoo, into this test-tube with you.

MALE MENOPAUSE POEM

How as to lean my non-eon on autumn's roan
Undoing, to smile while the stymies crawl
All over me and the prismatic blindfold
Around my testicles creaks: guess this house

No longer knows which door I am. The window
We were, does it remember its view? You-or-I
Saw so little out there; what future only
Catches, catnap glimpses, of nightmares to come.

Doorknobs worn to doornubs—grey stubble on
Gaunt armpits—lists like that litter this earth.
A lattice of graves greets me or is kind to me;

My hair plowed with parents, their protracted
Smoothings of some poor, tuckablanket bed.
As said each road I find in your face is fled.

THE LOST THINGS

Even the lost things that are a bird's-nest
Must know if forgottenness is simply
The finetuning of memory
To a perhaps higher frequency.

Or could those who pursue the streets
With earphones in their heads
Be listening to the sound perhaps
Of their previous footsteps.

Lawnchair backyard flaked out
Making maharajah gestures at worms
I who am in terms of real
Merely a skull rattling on a roulette wheel.

I see the birdfeeder is empty hmm
A vacuum presupposes a moral.

DEMODED ZONES

I exist between two sets of pillars, the one
Hercules, the other your arms and legs. Nights
I know which one to sail toward, but always
I feel the counter at my back: for whether

I am the lover or whether I strangle the twin
snakes of despair, I am in twain to each. I am
in half to all. Myths are the piety of montage;
I'll never get off their page. Earwax hobbies' guide.

The candle stood for what it shed, stub's-kiss
of shadows. Its weepy scars show aura is more
an appurtenance than an attire, like grapes

misted with the waist of goodbye; hill and gone,
hill and gone, grave-mounds dozing in the sun;
so flowers grow on fallow gallons of light.

EROS AND ESPIONAGE IN 'THE BENT CENTER

(for Helen —, after reading D. G. Rossetti's "Troy Town")

More undermined by your meander than my thirst
From wine's first cup what shard still tastes this milk
Above whom shone a normal polaroid of the void
A song saliva cannot tie its envious vines to

Shall I paint through all the Isms to show you
Bricabrac from that breast fill worlds marked sale-price
Yet conceptualists slumming in the real congeal
Is here a thing to say of this say or said place

Now the merry-go-round it goes-a-round old 'Troy Town'
My bed hangs out the window by its toes shouting
Each day your hair strays across such ruins

But to live live simply in compress with our time
TV-star footprints to immortalize sidewalk
Me slurp your sweetpuddle up out of an autograph

LAST

That in the first condition of love
I may be found
Is a guilty plea, but poetry
Is the try of the serpentine
To destroy the feathered—
A snake in my brainpan
Jabs each winged word;
A poem slash line
Means a birthday will bare
Its wherefore from faraway,
From the orphanage on Treasure Island;
Borderless or paradise,
All alpha to us it is.
Origin? none, the first one's paraphrase.

HITLER SKELETON GOLDPLATED (FROM *TREASURES OF
THE C.I.A. MUSEUM*, EDITED BY HILTON KRAMER,
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JERZY KOSINSKI.
RANDOM HOUSE/IBM, 1984)

What falls from the drunken pliers of my nose
President-pit pope-rind police-bone
Is all they got on this fucking menu
Always the pure provend of more more more

The piss tease of masterpiece ass
The missionary position is there to catch you
If you drip off that mosquito plaque I guess
Gumming a gifthorse's defectual innocence

The gunfire in the hills is old and I
Am one pile of shit which will never excrete a human
Hey Parliament Congress Politburo

My cock/my KGB has it on lasertape
The moon posing between the horns of a bull
Two hymens touching through milk

MISDIRECTIONS

If world is north to infants
and south to adults
is it east to the unborn
west to the dead

Kafka's *Castle* is home
to Count Westwest meaning
God whom K the land-surveyor
meaning human must map out

Jesus Christ on the other hand
not being human lacks
spacial awareness lacks place

Consequently all he says is
set the timelock on
my tomb for 3 days boys

ORPHAN

Like blueprints hung on a clothesline,
anywhere I could have lived
is rinsed into the dirt,
my final and my only home.

I lack a long-ago, a childhood:
I spit its name into my wounds.

I am ringed by a landscape
of complete aversion. The compass
hides its face, the horizon lights
a familytree-fuse that explodes in me—

In the middle of the sea,
sole survivors of a cargo shipwreck,
welcome-mats line the shore
of a desert island.

ENTRANCE

first he cuts a notch
across his shins
he gives his knees a slash next
and then his thighs

higher and higher
the gouges come
to show the increments of growth
the measured ascent

it's getting there he muses
how long do you think
the scars will take

before it's big enough
for you to leave through it he asks
his empty room

HYPHEN

The sound of a needle
scraping out
a thimble.

A knife
excavating
a spoon.

Categories
can only be cleansed
from within.

Self-purgation.
Aristotle-spectacle.
Deathbed-confession.

The sound of a pen
... ?

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF THE POWERTOOL
WEEKEND (NEOCOLONIALISM #5)

So—as the depth of the adieu—on my forehead
Shows, or my—signature, lopped off at—the wrist
Witnesses: ah, more quantum formulae scrawled
—You doodled margins of my christian bible! For

Like that drop of venom that longs to hang from
The comma although, cream of that snootiness
Magazine-covers sic us toward, my reflection
My joy is just (gloss to amuse) this world! which,

Built on zoos, can't last. Or at least not till
The herd steered by its wounds disinherit
All I seize surmise of deepest tiptoe! Poo:

I lack the face you evolved to paw, Joe Blow,
The figure those fingers of yours grew for, Meg Smith.
I got no legit to forget it either, no greater esthetic.

POEM

I fear an alias abandoned
At birth awaits to name me
After life, an ID I must
Assume again, a prior self.

Migraine angel whose crimes
Include the nail ordeal of hands
And the toe torment of feet.

When a chessboard meets
A crossroads face to face,
Is their contest foregone, lost
The sinuous routes we win?

Uncloaked by the light heaven's
Decryption sends to none,
I come coven to your command.

POEM

Please, no dreams tonight.
No transfigured eyelids,
No siren rain
From the day's clouds.

Let the moon
Be boarded over.
No mirrors must signal
Their ally the wishwell.

Let there be nothing
For our faces to open in
But themselves.

Seen in this least light
They may appear
At last to be whole.

BABBLEGATE

In early childhood an act
consists of another act,
a multiplying chain of
this and that. Cat, windowsill,

sunlight, they're all events instead
of sights, but eventually they
too give way to the eye. Time
distances the other senses

until one becomes intent instead
of intricate. That's why
dimensionally I can only

try to run toward the place
I've already passed, squealing
ba ba ba ba ba bnh!

CLICK

From the bottom of my well
I see the sun and moon just
once a day, which is nothing

when compared to you above
who see them both so often,
so open-shared, so totally:

and yet I believe that in that
instant when daily the sun
and monthly the moon fill

my circle rim up there, I am
illuminated in a way you can
never be, quenched entirely

and all sealed in light. See:
I'm whole now. No cracks in me.

POEM HOLDING ON TO

A space whose whiteness has to be in quotes.

How we parted our names and pasted them
to a pebble too light for a paperweight
but now it circles the sun as I wake,
my worthless sought brought back to earth ways.

The time, day; the place, debris.
Beyond my description is nothing
but it means to do me harm.

All my steps few-transit the forsaken dew;
darkgutter caress, the leash of looks backward at me and you.

Fierce ice fenestrates the gap, cuts
a pane's penance across my faculty
forehead. Scalped scarecrow,
I wear an infant patina of voyeurs.

REFUSING AN INVITATION TO THE MASKED BALL

No knees forcep my tongue to you. Met when
It dims like hesitant fever over
That oasis-in-a-swimsuit, what studious mirage
Rises. Mist is the dog augments the scene.

Whose collapsar sponsors these closeups?—
The escapes in forced moonlight of the prince
At his powerboat throughout alpine lakes chased
Or so the whisper ran, rotting in attendance:

May I hang the fur coat on the beehive? thanks—
That place that fills the map that swamps the front
Seats of the Royal Starship rendezvous

Holds perhaps. Till then, scintilla antenna
Omniscient thistle of my Etcetera Dracula,
A smile across that which we would share, flesh.

SCHOOL FOR INSOMNIA

A bed of nails a manicurist hurls polish at—
The colors, liquid, thinking of a high tide I wonder
If it can remember the Primal Scene it relives
Again and again in pangs of ebb that plethora

Moment of what trance—conception—or are we
Beyond source now, free, all pasts forgot as easily
As adults will plow a path through a children's
Birthday party—their pink lit-once, lit-twice,

Lit-five-times cake not stopping this progress, not
Even for a step that guesses what our heels could
Make of these tiny candles, crunch as crayons—

The colors, of evening then night are flames I fall
Tranq-sank in, the miniaturization of dust continues,
Night lies down on a bed of nails or stars—

CONTEMPORARY OUTREMERICAN POETRY

Lips eclipsed by the dark O of a howl,
Stereo Echo, monaural Narcissus—
That old abyss-as-sinecure noise
Seems pure enough: but toward what laser-fold,

What mother-scold, of dream? Is that why
Jumpcuts catch fish; thighs nailed to birth push?
Cybele—Jesus—the lap presides? The name
Carved on this polyglot ingot was whose,

Lone rune gods can use to dispute their senses!
Immune I remain, group-blind to your game:
Imagine if a couple, eloping

Out a window had paused on the ledge,
Had stayed there, had set up house right there on the ledge—
That's how far we get to marry words.

THE BUILDING OF THE BRAZEN TOWER

I, an ahem, uncertain where to stand.
Unsurefooted as surveyors on clouds, preparing
further slums of heaven. I, glimpsed only
while entering or leaving a stab.

Is this why I long to betray the small
bodies left on the lips after love? Pale
empiricals, all pout; but then, some bumblebees
are larger than the flowers they land on.

What happened on all fours in my other life—
how staged, how improv each movement grew—
(kungfu of sequins) an eclipse also
maps what it mires: the none alone must know.

Hope is eating paper stripes off a jailcell.
Faith says, It's only a zoom-lens, not a fall.

BECKON GONE

Now I see they put the world together
at an angle that goes wrong to the earth.

Tables and chairs have a destiny in this,
flawed beyond all hopes of wood. The wind
rivering through the bare branches gathers
their withering rather than my growth.

Shadow sutured to the eventual skin of
our ascendance, your swami crannies
fail me. Amadeus, Amadeus,
the sky calls. Beckon gone, go, go on home—

Nothing blunts my perfume as I become,
as I attempt to exude from within
the most faintly effigy I can. North
of birthfants, south of deathdults, where am I?

PER REQUEST

when we're always alone
and when we're never alone
which one
answers the phone

all that separates us
is the finishline
face in a race
with its own cheekbones

this toe to toe battle
with our shadow
to gain possession
of a narrow choking ledge

which one which one
I cower beneath my resurrections

UNTOLD/TITLED

I move during your interstices of movement,
you are still, I am still no longer than no more,
well-forced to peel from stopsigns decals that say it.

But crossroads are made of mispronunciations
of our otherwise swerve or caught destinations;
imagine radar squiggles in a big, nuke-out war.

Then vase sass, sponge tossed onto a slit throat—
I bet my seance has enslaved my tan. Lacing
the leech to itself, life traverses some navel?
Lung abbreviations, breaths: departure's dictate.

Because gone is a great while, daily I yell oh
our absence enlarges the burden of penthouses.
Ape-acne's eunuch, I comb through emcee cues.
Youth-starch, time, you tease the tonsured tongue.

LAST MOMENTS IN THE MASTERPIECE

Once aboard the world a venereal disease
The Beatles* gave you takes on new forms
And shows them how to elevate birth. But then
A pasture attends. The clothes fit the cows,

Though styles are better back in the barn, where
Some denouement mode monde meet as photos for
The magazine this poem has published or
Will I be the sum of misprints here.

That should suffice could hours need to suffer:
Our clock ye-gods toward arrival, medieval
Catapults release aim-things, whose same music

Is defter in sepia, that mooing hue, lit by fakes.
*Or Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Santa Claus, Der Führer,
Or any other 3-syllable entity you'd prefer-er.

AUTO-RENGA

In the collided night, sate with pool. The
Truly gooey goes if an armpit could point
This is what it would point at. Same veneer
Where I chew your girdle and gum your bra

—Crates to pack Proteus in, the days
Oops. The fall took all the minutehand. So
The with you will die and the without me live,
If life's a letter mailed inside a folded

Up postagestamp. What do you hear from whom?
Softer than the pins stuck into cacti by
Rubbing my sores on the Lot's Wives displayed

Or shit. Mud. Crud. It's milkingtime:
Sometimes those udder-things have to be cleaned off.
So you use the first squirts to do it with.

LINES FROM DAYTON, OHIO

Reason sates the horizon—
fulgent, full of elegant oils,
giant unguents. A sun

a racecar's engine,
hoisted in a hammock
set sway, between two trees, backyard

*

A world washed up by dew
onto this bluer world,
—as though the genitalia

were a shadow
thrown upon the body by
some dubious, some distant deity

*

Oh
I lack both seriousness and so.

LAPSE POETICA

Smashing the elixir of life while
shouting "From now on this is my life!"
may not be the best manner
to ensure progress, I know. One

never dips apes into human navels
in order to baptize angels,
even if those navels are absolutely
as we say, brimming. Filled with

the water, the essential eau de vie—
Blink, blink, my teardrops blurted,
do you think we enjoy chewing
that sphinx's loudest eyelash?!

If just one of them cum comes true, I'll let
each new you-pseudonym name me its.

THE HEROES CROWD EACH OTHER AT THE GATE

But this cryptic impulse to eclipse a map
While voiceovers avail one's profile or
The blindfolds floating to the ground smile
The vegetation shiver a little

Light has not accustomed swimmingpools to this
Glitter and illiterates with gold records know
And all our next door to door neighbors the Nukes
Family who play charades to remember

Each other's names they feel it hie vie die
Across that oversuffice of knife their life
Santa's reindeer sneer down from the sky as

Guiding your foot with my hand to its mark
My face I reflect of how this world which
Does not consist of more you's than you does

Note:

Title: a phrase by Abel Gance; as quoted in the screenplay for *Hitler: A Film from Germany*.

EUCLID ALONE (to R—)

Androids strolling up Everest will know
How harder it was for us to care, to cuddle
Visits from that summit within. The pique
Of pickups is endless. And when our oxygen

Thins to a pin who cares who's X who's Y—
That altered acme stares at me—icily—
That game where time (come to theme) recombines
To dial them new stars night never fell on: it

Beads up as my eye, friend planet. Who like
The sate—crazed by my birth's first trip at bat—
A pork genus cordless vibrator whose tip

Whose tongue exbunded from your hinder heart, wet
With non-umbrageous plus-signs or what?
(But can we touch each other's thwart I thought.)

Note:

Title: "Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare."
—Edna St. Vincent Millay.

MEASURES

The birch-upsurge of a sapling
separates my buttocks, pacifix
crucifist bearing what bird:
is my lipstick a parrot

because it repeats my mouth?
Normal in the miscellaneous
sense, I need repairs at birth.
Until then I'll keep stating

that at peace conferences
teacups often get chipped,
if not actually broken.

Tepid-deepened, I attempt
to intervene with my fingers
and force them to write this.

SMATCHES

An ocean must prove itself by puddles,
a mind by gaps, the spirit drying up
in smatches of this and that. Departure
will reach the point of flight too late.

Distance-extenders go. Dancers smeared
on leaves of echo near the loose hipped sea.
Autumn amputations empty semaphore
from arms. This signing is too great to bear.

Its absence fills each tree. The sap is worth.

In one of its reconcluding candle rooms
your eyes were promised to breathlessness,
so we raised the shade toward horizons
that fill the sky with hangings. Each voice

is cupped in cuts. River occurs like a sentence.

THE LINE-UP

The snake
came first
then the giraffe
et al until

all the animals
appeared all
the suspicious
species

but then
together they
pointed at me

saying there
that one there
he did it.

AN OUTREMERICAN SPEAKS

Outfit your mirrors for departure,
though the rope-foliage looks nervous,
hung from harpstring hooks.

Roll pause while drugs pestle the place.
Sceptersweat, you are the grid, the
grill on which I barbecue my b-b-gun.

All nudes and rafters, upcushionings try
to census-suck my neck's chaff.
Then whose flour envies the thrift of thorns!

But see—see what sacrifice suite site got
lawnmown out of me: watch it curate
the only shelf not marked Self, that

flowerpot filled with fruitjuice.
The revolt exaggerates the populace.

UNSCULPT

Gloves flung at statues may fall
into the same grope that shaped them,
rare gesture meant to make not maim,
reverting art as it were to ritual—

I hurl my chisel at time itself
but nothing yields its clay to curse,
emptythrust dies the weapon kerched
round this stiff wrist's withering staff—

Like those plots of paint Bacon threw
at a finished canvas to undo it,
ruining and opening a conduit
for revision the stone may grow

malleable; not so our fleshen glove,
which disarms each form of perfect love.

CURSE

My current core/inner nature
is all facade-and-run—
a teapot tumor, a comma gun;
the endless journey towards a single step.

Meanwhile I grow expansive,
lounging towards lebensraum
like pygmy godzillae, or is it humans
I see slug down their Mafia-Cola.

Oh surely I must remember that
the body is the soul's stuntdouble
stand-in—its issued nudity fills

the streets; the campanile
where each shut window and door force
my eyes to be the decor of the visible.

THE LOST

Those who miss themselves
will depart from postal shelves
to eliminate home
from their name.

Those who fly away will find
they can envision
a feather's features upon
the face they left behind.

Those who leave too soon
now that faraway's full
of neighbors will ruin
their one chance for arrival.

Even so, they're all willing to go.
Will I in likewise kin be able to?

LIDCAM

TV anchors should wear bibs in case
the nonsense starts to dribble
and splatter, or the sense utter a moan,
while screendrops weep the walls behind them.

Those walls—have you noticed?—show
how excitingly time varies with distance,
as opposed to any human heartbeat's
hometown-like monotony—

Starlets frolic across windshields,
the police freeze in profile.
I am your tease-host, they glimmer.

Have you noticed? CSI weighs down
each corpse's eyelid with a zoom-lens.
They say you can see everything that way.

OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4)

The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky
Perks up birds this coldsnap morning—every
Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . .
Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path

Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early
And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly
South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth
A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind
Can reduce anything to description—
Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone,
As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton
Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

ELEVATIONS

Things that announce themselves
from faraway, like thunder or death,
are good to end a poem with.

An elevator with no floors grips
that gordian space Borges called
Aleph: in the story of the same name

as not I can be found expounding
the heresy that no poet's words empty
any cavity other than my heart-well!

Higher lower the pleady ones go.
Every edge will find its echo.

A valley filled with rusting padlocks:
on the hills around it keys brood
peeking down at their former homes.

ROCK PICKED UP FROM THE BEACH

To focus on thing, thing whatever it is,
in some cases a mountain, an object
somewhat more intimate for most of us—
a fate transformed then framed into a fact

plucked from a beach full of rocks the same size
and shape, not much to distinguish it or
confer more meaning than perhaps the eyes'
choice, the hand's: what justifies this favor?

Nothing. And nothing is appropriate
for something common chance has snatched from
phenomena's moment, its montage pace

down the page. One word leads to the one right
for it: that's right. One can reach out random
or one can wait until it's in its place.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE BEACH

(Enneasyllabics)

In retrospect the tragic nature
of sea is a taste wept too freely,
soon depleted by scenes of rupture;
the eyes have other secrets to see

and deeper use for the detritus
within us: the bright effluvium
of ego dries up, mired as it is
in wealth, that remedial medium.

Blame it on fate, on beach memories—
pebble put in the pocket or shell
fragments; any memento carries
us as much as we it. Time capsule

contains every evening's interval.
Each ocean observes its own puddle.

PORNOPUNCHINELLO

I lack the pleasure to claim remorse
Is at my loins earning its pariah's name
From me who may have kissed a worm or worse
In my time aspiring to that acme shame

Unless shame is a sense of having shirked
Refused what love dangled just above me
All those tantalus chances for lust were jerked
Out of reach but not by fate's absurd pulley

My own hands gangling in the back somewhere
Supported those puppets' pulp character

Tame filmstars lame mimes where are your faces
Enduring still your enticements I turn
And twist until you've all lost your places
Prompter-perfect I but you you never learn

DIMINUENDO

If I cannot carefully slowly lower drowned
windowwashers down the face of highrises,
what use am I? And what a bad little
good-for-me I am, regardless. Even

my hems lower their eyes at the sight of
such remissiveness: therefore whenever
the flesh gloats a police stick removes its
widow's peak. Worlds have lost for less their keep.

To fathom at random your crumbling core
while the sun is burnishing its bullseye on
all the margin mountains and seas whose scene

we supercede each time we sneeze is like
scratching myself with forgetful eels, asking
is this my own, my Tennyson sinecure?

ANGLOPHILE

the barber slaps my face with minnows
to show how localized desire is how
it stagnates at the bottom of a polevaulter's
teardrops despite the efforts to measure

it can one's expertise spy a certain urge
and pinpoint every fetish as it melts
like the beauty of barking trapped inside a doll
but where flickers catch shadow and fall

quickenning skies that once were tinted
the color of crayons running from eyes
and when the eyes are emptied flints

aren't they then just thrust away in disgust
while still dazzling albeit free and lost
a watercolorist barefoot in the alps

PARADE

The day was resting on all its descents as
I escaped blackly down my boundaries
joking that if Einstein's boxinggloves can't
punch a hole this paperbag must be real.

And forth that time we shared its birth many
but its end never. Always eluding us
like donuts in a volcano their shapes echo,
though shock to shell I'm cueball if I care.

Centuries watched that procession avidly:
the way it took such painstake, plucking flaws
out of every sleeve as they quickmarched by.

Gallop I say, limping along behind them,
straightarming a lemon cart. Street where all
the marquees slump weeping on my shoulder.

EMIGRATIQUE

The Eskimos have 26 words for
snow but none it seems for why
the fuck are we freezing our ass
off let's pack up and move south—

Language presents its dislocations
in the guise of placement where
or there don't care, you're born to
bear its limits/its circumlocutions

as impasse: am I less thwartitude
than those furclad icebounders if
I lack the discriminouns to name

each hellflurry I see; numberlost
the environmental of despair
whose slim glaciers pen me here.

MARRY

The empty chalice we fill with each other is
a vase unearthed at the base of our first kiss.
How archeological that find. Clay deeply
clings to such artifacts, false as the last kiss was

crumbling on the shelf. Sharding as they said on
Cspan where does this hunger end for local
control of one's own roar. Is it a heartbeat or just
tomato-bugs? A pullover window shows those

staccato visions, unwept perhaps. To extract
a few drops of truth-serum by squeezing loveletters
or poems, to pulp your past for that precious ichor,
spare potion that might revive for a nonce though

don't blame your oughtself for that drought health.
If Mary had married that guy she'd be a widow now.

ON PAPER

in some ancient scriptures
every word in the text has
so many meanings that one
parable exhausts the thesaurus

always candlesticks ablaze
on a wedding-dress's train
retreating over cobblebubble streets
light our way to the matter dome

paratroopers have slightly shifted
the dance diagrams on the floor
of the slaughterhouse next door
to capitalism's next move

just a few of the things I felt
worth mentioning to the page

CROP/NICHE

All it takes is Laura Riding's riding-
crop across my butt, and I'm off:
Git-up horsie she cries astride me as
I crash sweetly onto the carpet.

Boredom what an esthetic,
cleansing the days—
I laud the vintage of my toothpick.

Small-husband to the floor,
my foot stoops in dance,
in courtship intervals.

Putting their clothes on afterwards
the lovers are surprised
at how emptier
the buttonholes seem.

Like one of those catatonics who go
nuts and run around screaming if they happen to
overhear the name of their first therapist,
dare I listen for my "accidental" words most?

Hypercraze puzzles, they come conundrum
contorting themselves in the tongue's regress,
as if each birth expressed what must be repressed. . . .
Jinxed from the start-fate, sphinxed by origin—

against its heart-riddles, what pre-oedipal
will pile up high my years' eclipsedness—
wall that has no Rec Room in it, no niche-all,
no refuge from the familiar other? Act One

finds our face mano a mano the Goddess.
I adore men with momentary nostrils She says.

Note:

Line 1-2: a pun, yes, but intended really as a comic hyperbole of Riding's relationship with Robert Graves, who in a spoof sense is the speaker of this double sonnet.

COUPLETURES

The power of a map to unravel
equals all the distance spared by travel.

At noon our shadows have
the same depth as our grave.

All I ask from my stylist is
that my coiffures be carnivorous.

Nine towns down,
Troy has no wish to be found.

The body lost in its orbiting of
The body. Body below, body above.

Seas surround you and murmur your pores.
Only the water can decipher our scars.

The avantgarde only came up to my ankle,
but managed to drown me after all.

SUSPENSE

The final page of
everyone's book
reveals the same
dunnit, don't it,

even Agatha Christie
couldn't surprise us
there: nobody sneaks
a peek at the end

to see the guilty
culprit's identity, we
know it and yet

mysteriously
this boring story absorbs
us as if we didn't!

ENVY

My mother flung a drop of urine from
her hellhair/her pubis hiding in fear—
In anger my belly flings a drop of cum
back. On humanity's photograph

ripples appear, smack between the sight.
Unwrapped from the moment, time is born
in place of, always in place of. And so
I pause here to currycomb bygones. Now

there is an evil I cannot name because
its fellow evils will swirl around me crying
for like recognition. Love? That anthology!

It stuffs the shelves with die-all, deep rows
of throwaways where I long to forge that wedge,
that smorgasbord bodyguard restored by bed.

ROYALTIES OVERDUE

Unseen because it's montage,
in the zoo's emptiest cage
a game of tag
enters its final stage.

Yet who can understand why
the charades paid to death are
still valid? Write this down everyday
in modes made passé by me.

What is the afterprosed poem when
all stories are priorversed when
Sappho holds your copyright.

Her prologue's dog-eared but the rest
of us behave when dross invites us home
to tell us it envies those who lie writhe.

THE DAY RODIN'S THINKER STOPPED THINKING AND OTHER POEMS

The main cause of strife down through history is middle names
Yes I said middle names damn me
Logjam fur was talking to monocle blubber
While dripping wax flirts with shipwreck and widowers trained to attack
fossils looked on

I mean think of them always straining and sweating
To stop your first and last names from coming together
So's you could have some emergency peace and be a whole person
How many wars did these copulars start these cognomenical
cloggomites

No no don't condemn them poor hermaphro-handles crushed in
between don't
They keep the right holding things in natural balance apart oh
Disruptive middle monikers

They sparred argue com-
Plained all through that pom-blue betwixting day
But none noticed the light pause every now and then to strop some rays
on their umbilicord (for at evening the west is a sword-swallower) so
engrossed were they in this strangely ignored problem

DAS LIED (octosyllabics)

Should I have ear-pods cued ready
to shove in my head when I die
Beethoven maybe or Mahler,
share of what ultimate encore;
shall I prepare as death's due rite
a soundtrack: background tunes? too late—
dare I page my old days through now,
meager-all merit music; no
date among them stays worth raising
from its quantum of occasion
with any en passant popchant,
much less symphonic revival:
so why the hell would this final
event warrant accomplishment.

A PIGEON THAT LOVES TO MURDER SHIRTCUFFS

Tell me, held zero, flush halo beyond the sun,
can any compare to the air's disinterest.

Medusa's mouthwash parts more collarbones
for swimmers, breasting arc, floor departure.

These depth-ruptures thrust so beautifully far,
gusting mach-aqua spa. Holding the sun

in slices to his face he hoards all I love.

Covet surprise while the world bides shame.
Twin octopi piano-play their wisplame.

A sparkspan away he melts in undressdom,
he slips from our days like an opposite ripeness.

Bathed in a plot, set against post-possibility's
spritzer disco, on the grain I tap branches as

ever until, your bright vases fill, blossom extra.

THE ENEMY

Like everyone I demand to be
Defended unto the death of
All who defend me, all the
World's people I command to
Roundabout me shield me on
Guard, tall, arm in arms to
Fight off the enemy. My
Theory is if they all stand
Banded together and wall me
Safe, there's no one left to
Be the enemy. Unless I of
Course start attack, snap-
Ping and shattering my fists
On your invincible backs.

MEMORIAL GARDEN, NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY,
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.

Where every rose
blows more bellicose
than the killer heroes

beneath: the pinks all bleed
on parade; each hybrid
seed dreams of omnicide.

In bouquet-beds they love
like bayonets to shove
their thorns through the air. Above

these barbarous bushes
the most vicious
flower that ever grew

swishes—
the Red White and Blue.

Note:

I ask any translators of the above to replace "Arlington . . ." with their own country's major military cemetery, and to use the colors of its national flag instead of "Red White and Blue."

LABMARKS

Notice that only when
the footprints reach the center
of the maze do they become confused,
and that the spysat zooming in
to scan those tracetracks
orbits its own core
of being, the seeing
it conducts for avid screens who
rather desperately blow up the ground,
increasing its resolution until
a great impress of toe
or heel reveals
all that will ever be known
of the pilgrim who ventured there.

WHEN TO THEN

When to live elsewhere, torn by the lure
of a heroic past, youths ago, the scars and deaths
regret fills you with or me in this case. I can't
go back and make the choices retrospect

wishes I had made to love the wrong ones,
the burden of hoisting death to my fate,
though Newtonian formats provide an end-it,
an un-alternate, nothing I could have kept

from happening until the fated time of now,
now when the track conveys the stone, the much
praised meteor, sheer momentum come home.

The house turns the corner to the room
where they are skinning a cage meant to contain
a post-it note urging occupants to leave.

WHEN

Everyday yawns, not a hand
but a body covers the yawn,
the body's innate politeness
hides death. Its ill-mannered

dailiness offends our sense
of occasion. Why can't it stay
a holisolemn lark from work—
a wishfilled birthcake instead

of this always. We'd appreciate
it better and celebrate its own
unique event if only we knew

beforehand to buy the candles
here and now and then so we
would be prepared, but when?

SONNETAIRE

*

what if I could
somehow combine
the games of

solitaire
and sonnet what
the heck would
the rules be for

this cross pastime
and would you
even know if

you won aha
last card slapped
down first word
or what

*

in the game
of sonnetaire

you lay down
fourteen lines or

piles of cards
or words as

you prefer
either combo

is irrefutable
and if you deal

the permutations
of it right

you win
a copy of the rulebook

*

Would it be possible to create
a game that combines the rules
for the sonnet and the rules for
solitaire, an amalgam of the two,

with a set of guidelines one
could be able to follow and play:
using 52 cards and 14 lines,
how would the mathematical

interfaces work, if indeed they
could. Or should the term be:
sonnetarot. Should we
employ that picture deck instead.

Four stanzas and four suits.
The Joker's your perfect volte.

AFTERTHOUGHT

[Just as all streets and roads could
be amended to include
bicycle paths,
so all literary avenues
should have a sonnet lane—

Everywhere those big
poems roar expelling their
hauxious exhaust, there
also our footpowered craft
could glide—

all SUVs (surface ugly verses)
ought to make room
for these smaller more
eco-esque vehicles.]