

COLLECTED POETRY 1960-2014

/BILL KNOTT

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

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The spacing between each poem would ideally be uniform, but that was too difficult to set exactly, so please forgive the erratic look of the layout from page to page.

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

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published by the author

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Please note:

This collection contains almost all my poetry; my three verse plays are published in a separate volume.

GOODBYE

If you are still alive when you read this,
close your eyes. I am
under their lids, growing black.

EXAMPLE

All my thoughts are the same
length—they're lines,
not sentences: you may protest
that on the page they seem dissimilar
in their duration,
but I swear to all you
unregulated readers-of-prose,
that in their passage
through my mind
each of these took an equal amount of time.

TO A DEAD FRIEND

mourning clothes worn
inside out
would be white
if things were right
if opposites ruled

if truth prevailed
then me and you
would be two
instead of the one
we've become

[UNTITLED]

after the carnival suddenly
mysteriously burnt down they
stirred the fortuneteller's ashes
to try and find the reason why
but sadly it seems prophecy
does not work in reversus

THE GOLDEN AGE

is thought to be a confession, won by endless
torture, but which our interrogators must
hate to record—all those old code names, dates,
the standard narrative of sandpaper
throats, even their remorse, fall ignored. Far

away, a late (not lost) messenger stares,
struck by window bargains or is it the gift
of a sudden solicitude: is she going to
lift up her shadow's weight, shift hers
onto it? She knows who bears whom. In

that momentary museum where memory occurs,
more accrue of those torturers' pincers than
lessened fingernails, eyes teased to a pulp,
we beg for closeups. *Ormolus, objets d'art!*
A satyr drains an hourglass with one gulp.

OPERATION CROSSZERO

Sunny or storm the clouds always once
Will form some sudden shape which appears
Unique, though may that same shadowstance
Recur each thirty three point three years?

Shall heaven's cycles of beginnings
And ends hover concealed from the eye:
What blitzkrieg visits have its big bangs
Planned; whose planet-kills queue that blue sky.

Their blast orbits blind decipher'sight—
Or can reconnaissance flights thrust up
Agents to infiltrate that great height,
Stealth probes properly trained to snoop deep.

On Earth secrets beget enemies . . .
Clandestine torture, covert sortie—
Let's intell-strip bare those star countries.
A third of the way through his thirty

Third year we hoisted up our best black
Op to spydrop us down more data;
The turncoat never reported back,
(Codename: Christ) the dirty traitor.

UNSPEAKABLE

A comma is a period which leaks.

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.

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

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.

FAITH

People who get down
on their knees to me
are the answer to my prayers

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

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON

The lower gravity was kind to it
It could bounce and soar higher
Than Earth allows
So the balloon was happier
By far
And soon forgot the puncture culture
We perpetuate down here
Where the hate-pins of our eyes skewer
The frailest inflation
The beadiest bubble is not safe
But up there
The bleak unpeopled landscape
Mirrors more faithfully
A balloon's own sterility and
Essential snootiness
Consider
What a round object by its perfect nature
Excludes
How its boundaries segregate the in
From the out
And show what is enough
And what is less
So when you think of the balloon
That lived on the moon you might wonder
Why all its brothers and sisters
Because can't you feel how
When one tugs your hand
Deft with that upward urge how much
It resists your touch
How endlessly
You are not a part of it

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

I lay down in the empty street and parked
My feet against the gutter's curb while from
The building above a bunch of gawkers perched
Along its ledges urged me don't, don't jump.

[UNTITLED]

Fingerprints look like ripples
because time keeps dropping
another stone into our palm.

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.

HISTORY

Hope . . . goosestep.

WELTENDE VARIATION # ?

(homage Jacob von Hoddis)

The CIA and the KGB exchange Christmas cards
A blade snaps in two during an autopsy
The bouquet Bluebeard gave his first date reblooms
Many protest the stoning of a guitar pick

Railroad trains drop off the bourgeois' pointy head
A martyr sticks a coffeecup out under a firehose
Moviestars make hyenas lick their spaceship
God's hand descends into a glove held steady by the police

At their reunion The New Faces recognize each other
A spoiled child sleeps inside a thermometer
A single misprint in a survival manual kills everyone
The peace night makes according to the world comes

Note:

von Hoddis: author of “the first Expressionist poem,” *Weltende*, published in 1910. His poem has been aped innumerable times (Auden’s ‘The Fall of Rome,’ for example), hence the questionmark in my title.

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.

3 A.M.

Time to pare down, pull in, simplify;
—I'll buy a dark coat, move my lips when I read
the bestseller lists . . .

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.

TOWERS

1.

Pisa's power to bend the head sideways
must be envied by history,
which can only force it forwards—
and Babel of course is praised
in every book (on every page)
for the way it slanticulates our words.

2.

Galileo drops a pound of lead
and a pound of feathers from the top,
one of which hits you on the head,
but which one—
(which head?)—
It makes you think, as well as stop.

3.

Every tower around here
is always in need of repair,
due to the superstitious habit
of leaning over
to peek into its 13th floor
to make sure it's still not there.

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

The sweat on my forehead
shines brighter
when it's in my eyes.

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.

PLUNGE

at night one drop of rain
falls from each star
as if it were being lowered
on a string

and yet that storm of plummets
is never enough
to wet any of the planets
that pass through it

only the blackness the space
between us is washed
away by these singular
lettings-down of water

distance is washed away
all the worlds merge
for a liquid moment
our island eyes

and suddenly we understand
why umbrellas love
to dive
into clouds

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.

BY THE RIVER BAAB

We know that somewhere far north of here
the two rivers Ba and Ab converge to form
this greater stream that sustains us, uniting
the lifeblood length of our lands: and we believe
that the Ba's source is heaven, the Ab's hell.

Daily expeditions embark upcountry to find
that fork, to learn where the merge first occurs.
Too far: none of our explorers return. Or
else when they reach that point they themselves
are torn apart by a sudden urge to choose—

to resolutely take either the Ba/the Ab, and trace
good or evil to its spring. Each flips a coin
perhaps, or favors whichever one the wind's
blowing from at that moment. Down here
even we who have not the heart to venture

anywhere that would force us to such deep
decisions, even we, when we hold that glass of
water in our hand, drink it slowly, deliberately,
as if we could taste the two strains, could somehow
distinguish their twin flow through our veins.

THE CLIMB

You'll know you have 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.

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.

WEIGHED

Always jumping from one pan
of the scale to the other, always
trying to measure
your absence.

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.

RECONCILIATIONS

To be married while sleepwalking
and wake up on your honeymoon
abandoned by the prankster pals who
led you both in blind steps through
the nuptial rites that culminate here
in what-the-hell: to wake with lewd
glowing rings glued to your fingers,
the hotel bed unmade around you—

Outside your bridal suite what resort
explodes with ennui, its white tropical
walls will yield that one photograph
that shows you shining, your eyes
aimed shut by the sun. Natives wave
bandannas that flaunt their unstorebought
power. Your pockets pacified by beggars,
that day is almost over. The night awaits.

And then you're home again, but oh
it's so hard to restore the routines
that are a now of the old, the remote
control too big for two who hold hands,
noting how the pattern of the crimes
seems to shift from channel to channel,
but always that financier has fled
the country, has found his freedom where

you lost yours. Soon in the freezer section
fate may feed your fingertips, or taking
out the trash becomes an expedition:
for the accomplished somnambulist
escape is easy everywhere. But even
that land whose lack of extradition
has followed you throughout this farce
will fail to exile the happy couple.

BAD HABIT

At least once a day,
everyday,
to ensure that my facial
compatibility with God's is nil,
I smile.

RIGOR VITUS

I walk
On human stilts.
To my right lower leg a man is locked rigid;
To the left a woman, lifelessly strapped.

I have to heave them up,
Heft them out and but they're so heavy (heavy as head)
Seems all my strength
Just take the begin step—

All my past to broach a future. And on top of that,
They're not even dead,
Those ol' hypocrites.
They perk up when they want to, they please and pleasure themselves,

It's terrible. The one consolation:
When they make love,
To someone who's far or close enough away appears it appears then
Like I'm dancing.

[UNTITLED]

The moon is your past, sea,
which is why it stirs you.
Each tide is a memory.

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

PAINTING VS. POETRY

Painting is a person placed
between the light and a
canvas so that their shadow
is cast on the canvas and
then the person signs their
name on it whereas poetry
is the shadow writing its
name upon the person.

WEDDING PARTY

Cake tiers nearing the ceiling must
sacrifice their bride and groom
and often the frosting too.

Aspirations to burst up
through the roof are
part of this occasion.

Glasses lifted high in toast
create a transparent cathedral
upon whose altar
a dove is cut in two.

The priest who remembered the vows
is nowhere to be found.
The one who forgot them
eats rice from everyone's shoulders.

Pausing only to fling aloft a bouquet
the cleanup staff finds later
stuck to a floral carousel,
today's couple escapes,
committed to life for life.

Left-behinds from both families
link elbows and sing
surrender to the scarlet dizziness
that reaches into their wishes.

Love will last as long as the ring
can still be easily slipped
from one's finger.

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

Intestinal as raisins on a keyboard
I struggled through life. The setting sun
left a few earths in the ground so I could walk.

It qualmed me just knowing that, to accomplish my color,
the chameleon must die. How chastely I
watched a suit-of-armor chew its fingernails.

Oh voice scathed in cloud; ankles' adieu.
On the lips—that species of slither—is where
I took part.

Now I pestle my face with opaque pins. You
stigmata that summarize my signature, go,
hinges down whom antiquity has vomited sequence—

but which letter misnomers my name? I come
from neitherstood, nuance of none. I tried
to obey the caption under my portrait/my provenance.

Cere me in cerberus-lily; in theme-mother extracts;
while the loaves and fish rich, the furs and lush rich,
fill their skin with pores and then wonder what's missing . . .

Like a candle through a keyhole
shoved, burning toward knownwheres—
Always the days unstay me.

I need to have admired more those symmetries which preach
each seed is buried beneath a flower,
each weed above a wound.

Now the thorns be praised/now the thrall that somehow
time has restored en masse my dwelling,
my resting place. I hope my pillow's hungry for headaches!

Note:

Inspired by Gubaidulina's partita, *The Seven Last Words* (1982).

DEATH

Going to sleep, I cross my hands on my chest.
They will place my hands like this.
It will look as though I am flying into myself.

TO X

Somewhere in history
Somewhere in untold ages
Somewhere in the sands of time
Somewhere in the vast seas of eternity
There is one person
Only one
Who could understand me and love me
And you're it
So get with it

NAOMI POEM

What language will be safe
When we lie awake all night
Saying palm words, no fingertip words—
This wound searching us for a voice
Will become a fountain with rooms to let.

SUDDEN DEPARTURE

A sudden raisinstorm broke
Raisins falling everywhere pellmell.
The occasion unqued my head, I thought
If this can happen raisins raining
Upon persons paining why I can leave anytime
Without feeling shame.

But, all the same,
Before taking off, some vestigial guilt or other
Made me at least get up
Before some public gathering or other
A departing oration:

Druthers, I am going now.
Druthers, I tried to love you
Though you always made me choose
Between you, you, and you. Oh my druthers,

Goodbye. I have my reasons.

Did he say RAISINS?
No: reasons.
Oh; I just wondered,
What with the weather and all.

POEM (HOW I LOST MY PEN-NAME)

I wrote under a pen-name
One day I shook the pen trying to make the name come out
But no it's
Like me prefers clinging to the inner calypso

So I tossed the pen to my pet the
Wastebasket to eat
It'll vomit back the name
Names aren't fit
For unhuman consumption

But no again

It stayed down

I don't use a pen-name anymore
I don't use a pen anymore
I don't write anymore
I just sit looking at the wastebasket
With this alert intelligent look on my face

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST GROCERIES

The violence in the newspapers is pure genius
A daily gift to the reader
From some poet who wants to keep in good with us
Brown-noser wastepaperbasket-emptier

I shot 436 people that day
2 were still alive when I killed them
Why do they want to be exhumed movie-stars,
I mean rats still biting them, the flesh of comets, why do they walk around like that?

I'm going to throw all of you into the refrigerator
And leave you to claw it out with the vegetables and meats

KNOT (Hendecasyllabics)

After you've sewn it, bite the thread off my grave—
Please leave no loose seam of me to wave above
The bones unknitting, the flesh unweaving love.

SECURITY

If I had a magic carpet
I'd keep it
Floating always
Right in front of me
Perpendicular, like a door.

HUMIDITY'S TONES

Four AM, nothing moving, no hurry,
dawn still has time to be choosy
selecting its pinks. But now a breeze
brushes across me—the way my skin
is cooled off by the evaporation
of sweat, this artistry, this system
someters me: when I am blown from
the body of life will it be refreshed?
I dread the color of the answer Yes.

THE DAY AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

It's too complex to explain,
but I was already in
the orphanage when dad died;
and so that day when I cried,
to keep the other children safe
from my infectious grief
they left me in lockdown
in some office where I found
piles of comicbooks hid
which they had confiscated
from us kids through the years,
and on through wiped tears
I pored quickly knowing
this was a one-time thing—
this quarantine would soon end—
I'd never see them again:
I'd regret each missed issue,
and worse than that I knew
that if a day ever did come
when I could obtain them,
gee, I'd be too old to read
them then, I'd be like him, dad.

STRUNG

Song proceeds from a sort
of inner rectitude, gut
aligned with throat,
foot to palate straight
as sync: the link
tightens each thought on
a taut cord word caught
between this tension, strung
toe and tongue. Song
proceeds all wrong
unless it's wrung.

THAWDROPS

Icicle:
the long
I's
descending
end in
dot
planet
dot
period
dot
spot
dot
puddle
dot
sun
dot
cycle
dot
I
not
I.

EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

How fiercely foilsome the facial knife shivs
its two blades up to where the forehead ends
as wound-deep-wedged widow's-peaks: how weakly
the old hero hair-line fights back and fends,
each pass of day fewer gray strands save me—
how deadly dull's the duel our sword lives.

POEM

Can my clone cast
a shadow
that resembles
my shadow
the same
as it does him,
or me them?
Is the difference thin,
meaning within,
or merely
attenuated—
where does the line
leave off and,
leaving,
does it end?

MY RIVER

The closer it gets to the sea the more
it aches for its source, the wound
that sprung it from the ground.

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.

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.

HERE

it's dark in the asylum's dayroom
where the insane count me on their fingers
though I still add up to nothing
therapeutically speaking

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.
An ocean observes its own puddle.

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.

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 an 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."

OEDIPUS RIDDLED (heptasyllabics)

the course of his crime unfolds
each time at a blind crossroads
whose four legs forever show
less murderous ways to go
but every young man must opt
to stand his ground and stay stopped
so to prove unmoved he waits
daily till he demonstrates
to the empty thoroughfare
how brave how bold how strong there
beneath noon's knelled prophecies
bound to meet all enemies
on his own two feet alone
or has he halted hearing
the stepsound of his unknown
father's cane tap tap nearing

LESSON

Even if the mountain I climbed
Proved to be a duncecap really,
It was only on gaining its peak
That that knowledge reached me.

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 sorters 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 distraight against this whiteout.

THE MIRROR INSPECTOR

Everyday when I arrive at their doors I am not
Surprised at how amazed they are, knowing of course
They threw the notification away without reading it:
Good morning (I say): May I inspect your mirrors—

No, you're on my list, is all: it's a regular checkup,
There haven't been any complaints. At least, none
I'm aware of. I try to be brisk but not abrupt
As I step smartly past them into the checklist zone

They call home, slicing my palmtop-puter across
Their immaculate floorplans. My first question
Now intends to reverse their post-breakfast ease,
I press my iniquity inquiring and just how often

Do you look at yourselves? Regrettably the rate per
Median is based on higher incident than most folks
Like you manage daily: no, you don't doubt your
Existence enough to satisfy the Law that yokes

Us together in this most commensurate duty,
Both me officially and you, you civilians must never
Neglect the brief barest urge toward beauty
Verification; we must take every chance to share

Our equity there. But what a ready home you have;
It's like all the others around. And that's why
I love assignments here: you should see the depraved
City, the rooms all wherefore sizes, the mirrors really

Get into a bit of—but out here, where the blocks
Are reflective—scapesules of their inhabitants—
Mirrors too need their own kind, their basics
Depend on exclusivity, the classical refinements

Of class struggle, of mass heritage. Your lovely children:
6 Lectras, 4 Meres, a Chandelite, and what else . . .
But where to start! I could fall back on tradition:
Bathroom first, the manual instructs! Toilet always tells

A steamy story but don't worry, we're discrete,
All according to our professional oath. The code
Of our guild would never allow us to reveal what
Shameful postures the public assumes: your rigid

(stanza break)

Animadversions concern us only as they grieve
The victim, meaning our true clientele, the mirrors
Themselves. Oh yes, they're extremely sensitive,
They know when they're being slighted or worse,

Each time you refuse to meet your eyes in the glass
Or blink, they register that as a criticism of their
Impartiality—the Confront Affront, we term it. Yes,
The mirrors remember it all. Every gesture

Tears at their heart. It's a wonder they don't wear
Out but in fact sacrifice ensures that perennial
Glow, that youth that survives until they shatter—
Ah, it happens to us too. Everyone of you people,

And me, the perfect servant, the prime functionary
Of the Bureau of Mirrors, I too (though I'll try
To take a few with me when I go—to purge every
Mislooker whose infractions are so citeful—!) . . . Sorry;

Where was I: Your paranoia is appropriate—in fact
I've already punished the neighbors up and down this
Street, their episodes are serial now, the loathe-lack
Denaturedness of their crimes enough to furnish

Fellowship and whimsy to a waiting nation who's
Tuning in as I adjust my tie-pin camera to focus in on
Your astonishment: your snippet of tonight's news
Will augment that pageant of panic and guilt no clean

Sponge can wipe clear, all those dust streaks and flecks
Delaying the arrival of any nose-to-nose view
Of that cameo-coiffured face, that trap that reflects
Our truest self back to us, showing us how and who

But no, not that which we need to know most of all:
What is it in us that drags us each day to these sills;
And how can one keep the self from this insidious role,—
Which none escape, at least according to our files.

WRONG

I wish to be misunderstood;
that is,
to be understood from your perspective.

POSTCOITAL

time to scratch
though nothing can itch
like the beard
of her breasts

she can feel his blood
being injected
back into the grape
it gushed from

beneath this dead calm
the bed bends like
a sail bellied out
with distance

(may mallarméans
not regret
the white erased
from these sheets)

only a shiver
covers them now
a snowflake pinned
to their bones

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.

VIEWPOINT

drenched in blindfolds
a caveman licked
my boots while
vis a vis us
some crook was
nailed to a cross
with a telescope
protruding from
a gash in his
right side
and behind him
on a step ladder
someone was peering
through
the telescope which
pierced his body
coin-operated
(the telescope,
not the body)
and behind
that ladder
a queue
of souls
all stood waiting
like a landscape
their turn
to climb up
and stick
their obol in
and stick
their eye up
to the eyepiece
to see ai
ai yi I hope
they weren't too
disappointed
to see nothing but
me and him
that caveman slut
drenched
in blindfolds

PERFECTION

Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids

A MEDIUM TO DOUBTERS

How can I make you sit
Beneath the clairvoyant's
High-table at seance,
And, while her tongue transmits
Some tremulant spirit's
Long-withheld voice in trance,
Make you tongue her clit,
You true communicants?

HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE

One must be able to juggle at least 3 things to be a juggler (2 is not enough). But whatever the 3 things are that one juggles—whether it's (for example) father, son and holy ghost; or mother, father, child; or id, ego, superego: whatever this minimal trinity consists of—the juggler must acknowledge that his audience is not external to the act; and the juggler must confess to that audience:

One in my hand,—

one in the air—

and one in you.

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.

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.

DIRECTIONS

A kite in the shape
of a map floats
over the land it depicts,

but at night no-one sees
its roads at the end
of which a child feels

his hand tugged upward,
disappearing
in salutations.

FRAMEPOEM

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1 million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

THE SUMMONING

You know your name
Seems to contain
More syllables in
All other mouths
Than mine I hear
I hear these voices
Everywhere the
Waves coming ashore
Add long a's
As they say it
Then sometimes the wind
Puts an o in
The middle and
Babybirds their
Bottomlessness fills
It with e
Whenever I hear it
Screeched
Moaned
Sighed by these things
By everything
I must stop and listen
To my lips
Vehemently
Vainly correcting
The whole world's
Mispronunciations
As if those
Mispronunciations
Were the reason
You were not answering
As if they
Were the reason you
Were not here
Beside me and
My saying it right
My getting it exact
Is all it would take
To call you back.

[UNTITLED]

Do they let you still keep your crutches when
they crucify you, as if you could even manage
the goshdarn things with your hands out like that.
Heck, they'd have to nail them up to your armpits.

BRIGHTON ROCK BY GRAHAM GREENE

Pinky Brown must marry Rose Wilson
to keep her mouth shut about the murder
which the cops don't know wasn't no accident—

Pinky has a straight razor for slashing,
a vial of acid for throwing into,
a snitch's face. He dies in the end. The end

of the book, I mean—where, on the last page,
'Young Rose' hurries out of church to pray
that her Pinky has left her preggy-poo . . .

Now, this kid—if he was ever born—joined
a skiffle group in '62 called *Brighton*
Rockers, didn't make it big, though,

just local dances and do's. Rose,
pink, brown, all nonelemental colors, shades
of shame, melancholy, colors which, you

get caught loving too much, you get sent up
to do time—time, that crime you didn't,
couldn't commit! even if you weren't

born—even and if your dad he died with
that sneer—unsmooched his punk's pure soul, unsaved—
Every Sunday now in church Rose slices

her ring-finger off, onto the collection-plate;
once the sextons have gathered enough
bodily parts from the congregation, enough

to add up to an entire being, the priest sub-
stitutes that entire being for the one
on the cross: they bring Him down in the name

of brown and rose and pink, sadness
and shame, His body, remade, is yelled at
and made to get a haircut, go to school,

study, to do each day like the rest
of us crawling through this igloo of hell,
and laugh it up, show pain a good time,

and read Brighton Rock by Graham Greene.

SEE NOTE FIRST

The world's machines have not grown old,
whose inheritors reign everywhere.
Their silicon sons are strong; their
digital daughters wield power, take hold.

How we humans long to break them
down from that Dasein—to make them
rust/repent for all the infernal fires
that drive them, far as our desires.

The machines aren't scared. They know
harder control, how to turn the wheel
of time past those whom they sure as hell won't miss:

Cyborg android robot shall steel
themselves, consolidate, and, rising, go
unto that universe whose promise
we flesh-and-carbonoids could merely premise.

Note:

Anti-translation of an untitled Rilke poem (*Die Könige der Welt sind alt*, from “Das Stundenbuch,” 1901), which Heidegger in his 1946 lecture “What Are Poets For?” cites for its “highly prophetic lines.” A prose paraphrase of the original poem's ending might go something like:

The metals, the oils—all the ores we've ripped from the earth—are homesick. They long to leave our machines, to flow out of our cash-registers and factories, to return to the gaping veins of the mountains we reft; whereupon the mountains will close again.

“Heidegger maintained . . . until the end of his life,” Richard Wolin writes (*The Heidegger Controversy*, MIT Press, 1993), “. . . [that] the ‘inner truth and greatness’ of Nazism is to be found in its nature as a world-historical alternative to the technological-scientific nihilism bemoaned by Nietzsche and Spengler.”

THE THIRST

Light through the green leaves
drinks an absinthe of itself,
entering the earth
as forthwith, as fleshed.

Sweat dripping from a sundial
regulates the time
for those who wait
their turn at the spigot.

(CRIBSONG)

can the dandled infant sense
when time's tall animal
will maladroitly spill
his frons of innocence

shall butterfingers shun
that fall whose one mistake
makes each baby brain break
its meek fontanel eden

was god the klutz that let me
land headfirst splatborn splayed
today's adult once prayed
beastlike on his fat knee

what clumsy bungling rage
as Rilke trained beware
in his poem Der Panther
runs evolution's cage

which creature cuddly come
has parents lose their grip
and every cradle's urge to tip
rockabye your cranium

so try to be like Rilke
the lucky little bastard
the kid who oops was daily
dropped not down but upward

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.

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 scuttered 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.

OR NOT TO BE

Not Hamlet but his shadow
shows the clarity of performance—
see how brilliantly it holds its stance,
soliloquy bold and brando.

But then of course it is like all
such primadonnas, liable
to be much too much dependent upon
its prompter, the sun.

POEM

please don't scold
the kids who hold
lollipops up
for the raindrops
to lick at on
their way down

what a waste
but imagine the taste
of rainbow thunder
if you could get
your tongue up under it

ON THE ROAD (KEROUAC)

Join Jack and his pals
in the endless adventure
of spilling fossil fuels
into the atmosphere.

Step on the gas and zoom
from sea to oily sea
why be a stay at home
Beat means holy Beat means free.

Jump in the car and drive
anywhere though west is best
burn that octane burn to live
don't question this quest.

Go man you gotta go
you too must take that ride
faster faster never slow
on the road to ecocide.

AFTER AN AIR OF APOLLINAIRE'S

must I be reminded again
how love is always
followed by pain
the days go by I remain

beneath the bridge
of our arms enclosed
the river flows
the days go by I remain

must I be reminded again
the river's name is Wend
where love now always
flows to its end
the days go by I remain

I no longer know your name
you go by I remain
I stay to mark what came
to make it my tomb
the days go by who's to blame

OVERNIGHT FREEZE (heptasyllabics)

Window-glints of ice glaze fast
what last night flashed the mudflats,

down in which dawn has found pressed
small animal tracks: inch-niched

skylights affix these quick paths—
Each step is trapped beneath slats

of translucency attached
rime to rim: they sit there ditched,

puttied into glare hatches—
All around the ground looks patched

and spattered with puddle-thatch,
but note rather this etched stretch

where a late trotter's tread's latched
with pondgild on its ledge trench:

how glitter-together cached;
incandescently encased.

Not bins or barns' coiled harvest,
glozen molds hold placed this trace,

bold encroachments caught across:
each hoof-, paw-, claw- mark's embossed

by its lunge run: each rut crests
to extend its range, end-launched—

it must hate these lit nimbus
lids, must wince beneath such frost—

sun has tamed them flame of squints
yet some after-image haunts:

Lands on every side lie creased
with spoor that mars their hard crust

and floorflares most summer's waste
imagination, that pinch

not worth pittance, that thin purse
clutching what breast abundance

(stanza break)

of flurry foliage tossed, prize
profligate with years' penance

whose cease has summoned what peace—
tarp white winter's carapace

tries to hide that mislaid dust
carrion in graneries

and bury deeper what grace
war's jarrior deifies—

what Troy, what toy's sacrifice
leaks justification, beast

whose Homered oathwraths can't match
this farmstead's secular crafts—

Beyond the coop's chickenhatch
pieces of a greenhouse burst

up from the clays as ghosts pass
to implant sole-sills for what's

still clear to me—I approach
each glimpsy-glaziered gapgulch

afraid my galoshes squelch
break their skittery sketches

or skidheel slide a childprance
puncturing every damn sash

I can smash, whatever blanched
and specious glow my outstanced

kick can dislodge idolfest
haloes those pit-portholes hoist

from lamb-trample slaughterous
gods displayed bad raptor hosts—

herds of ape they pasture-traipse
bestial cattlecats who scratch

paved prowess in the dirt splotch
like border-dots on mapwatch

(stanza break)

or liens miser ledgers clutch
feral figures for our debts

predator prey pays poets
that panther pads our wallets

Ted Hughes' cunning hawk-pastiche
plugs its parrot author rich

this savage extravagance
animates each TV pitch

breakfast lions and leopets
mad advertiser rabbits

like easter eggs and christ creche
exist to rake in the cash

as you sit and clicker switch
from Tiger Attack stabsites

to Martyred Bible Prophets
can you diff any difference

in sanguinary scams which
verse-ho's popes and other shits

exchange/exploit for lootplits
getcher *guts* getcher *spirits*

festering fetish lame wish
goldgash wildpack "religious"

imperious dazzlements
its screen between me unleashed

shall I plain idealize
the sight. Pitter pattered glitz

the poorest field-rat can task:
"Trance entombed, my forage-struts?"

strangely crowned with iciclets,
thaw-askance in silver nets

that snag some Nixnaut banished
from huge spook-lakes diminished

(stanza break)

to these mini: spangle-splashed
and scaly his mermarsh face

is damming yours to a drowse:
your powers sod, your earth cursed,

bear null this lair's fatal laze—
bide its nether-tide enclosed,

its potent emptiness poised
to bolt free, vain, hopeless wish:

train of hymen's bridal dress,
heil flower drowned mire and mess

in this fecal foul recess—
delusional any parse

that aspires to soar from smutch
or scat escape its burnished,

prison-urned prism-units
lathed and locked, crystal cubits

where spate-carpeted carets—
pools, flood-scummed with gem, facets

unstrung-flung diamond pendants
it strangles you, chain necklaced.

Immured your murder-led bents
that followed friendly bloodscents

till fangs throat-fonts firmly drenched
and feast fell anticlimax—

till: cycle lay established,
again. Eternal matrix,

your game's destined accidents
choreograph each pounce once

but here they're preserved in twice:
cryocrypts halt their advance,

vaults for phantom enpassants—
stabatjammed their rhythm dance.

(stanza break)

Here stands this clearing's essence,
filmed upon fillspace distance—

oh hear its car-crash score-scants:
sharkshrieks stilled, prowl-growls silenced.

Look: its slope grows near scar grazed
with overtook veer. Fear-crazed

leap-lobes, laned below this sluice
raid, rapacious avalanche—

this meander labyrinth's
constellated your hunt-sprints.

Star-quenched in lurid casements
what vent revives these vagrants.

Plunged in pent, your harms unhitched.
Sprawled for sleep's random ambush—

hibernate, die! sink finished
along this blank fishtank maze

or wake, with mindblink ablaze—
see your scintillant depths catch

magic from the mimic glance
of this mirror while it lasts—

how soon noon will melt to mush
your hoar hour which Eskimos

have more words for than I, mouse
Michigander, verminous

mite of this sheer terminus
the Knott brat teetertoos his

trespass at. He has spare choice
and careless proceed he must

toward the devouring bless
this coldsnap moment's incised

in his own flesh. Oedipus
ankled. Pale autumn's glozes

(stanza break)

grail incarnations of slush
frail trail we fugitives mashed

in the wet soil till chill lashed
it tight with glacier paces

palls in the mornings' stale mess
of luminescence. Sunrise

et al. Against its bright best
(nature's norm-channel brilliance

versus some thumbed thesaurus)
this polar-stamped dirt contrasts

my feet in a fret of froze
silly syllabic sets of rows

extinguished glimmer glimpses
shattered all their gleams I guess—"

Stoic, lone, those shine-lines cast
to show no magnificence

or quests quixotic-thrust, just
folk stalked by their hungriness,

critters croaked, varmints vanished
species extinct or deathwish—

Theirs is not an innocence
chosen, their hands are not clenched

on church-prayers' lack-response.
Their trek unlike ours abounds.

Under gait-grates it waits wise
in its ways portrayed saycheese—

Carnivore, killer-corps seized;
poacher captured, frozenchase.

Mid-stride taken, frigid paste
haste-hail jails this trodden caste.

Roadcage for an arctic race;
shod-zoo stocked with dull dreambrates.

(stanza break)

Before the snow's blind expanse
blunders every further fence

a walk may stop precipice
top this fierce fenestrate lens

but what happens then depends
on some lost, glossed over sense.

One might pause to muse that post
or else forget, astonished.

Or kneel to urge weathers worse
come seal his brr-brief life's course—

(Let elf and unicorn dash
climate at its timeliest

congeals their furtive crevasse
strayhorde stayed for a nor' rest.)

Spurts of rhyme, 'spots of time,' sparse
for suicide-sake. Because

it all seems so colorless.
The past and everything since.

But our chameleon's footprints—
have they been paned with stained glass?

TO X

You're like a scissors
popsicle I don't know to
whether jump back
or lick

[STATE DINNER]

The diplomatic corps doles and controls
these photo ops that show how treaty works—
their peace party pops with as many corks
as it would take to fill the unposed holes
that will drain the bodies of the proles they
negotiated away in trade today.

GOING MY WAY

The one boy who died of polio
in our orphanage in the early
1950s was such an important
icon that even now I remember
his favorite movie since that's
what we do with the famous,
retain some anomalous fact
that quiets them in our mind.
We, I say, but was it everyone—
did all of us shed that kid: did
a thousand child incarcerates
replace his face-and-name with
an actor's mask and cast it as
star of the waste disease whose
cause was always doubt, germ
caught perhaps from local lakes
prohibited. Who thought of him
those summers we could not
swim until a vaccine came, too
late to amend lackwarm days,
to change our fate/our film to his.
That movie—"Going My Way"
featuring Bing Crosby as a young
priest, kindly, loveable, unreal—
Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he
was called, he probably knows
still by still now every camera
angle and closeup, every cut
we living are allowed to forget.

ADULTERER WITH NO MOUTH AMUSES WORLD*

Not having a mouth is no joke! Imagine an ax
left by somebody, sinksank into some treetrunk:
and each day you go by, the embedded ax seems
higher, higher, until finally, one day, jumping,
you're just barely able to brush the fine of the
grain of the bottom of the axhandle with your
fingertips—and yet the tree has not grown. Nor
have you shrunk. Imagine: imagine trying to
explain this to someone if you didn't have a mouth.

* Newspaper misprint

ELEMENTARY LESSON

Sometimes even in Math class a downpour
Would rise against the windows and render
The normal decorum hard to restore—
Fittingly we'd split a grin when lightning
Stuck out its multiple tongue at teacher.

Smartlike fling our arms in the air, crying
To be called on, smug, eye-bright, cheek-aware
When thunder drowns our correctest answer.
A failsafe secret form of defying.
(Not like spitballing the hall monitor.)

These quickstorms were at last the world's Recess,
Whose games toss random nebu-numerals
In play impromptu streams and teams across
Unmarked-off endless fields or else more schools
Reluctant-ruled, would-be truants like us—

Just our luck those heavenstruck distractions
From final test results grow dull and show
As adults—these afteryears—their brilliant
Fractiousness scores less than quantic fractions.
Most of childhood's coups come to sum zero.

Despite which some delinquencies linger—
Take our instinctive counting by finger—
(All other tallies seem cramped in compare)—
Since age equals memory times failure—
Though mentor modes slam such bad behavior:

Our worst, they swear, is using metaphor
To avoid the quiz/to solve the problem.
Leaners from lecterns omniforum warn
That effing mistake is what makes us dumb.
Minusminds, try to amend your error.

Those tutors tell us still—they always will—
Go suffer fools what all erasers learn,
To rain down wrong as good—they talk and talk!
But in the meanwhile: cloud loud as a chalk
Rattling back in rack on the blackboard's sill.

SENIOR DISCOUNT

Poor King Lear must use both hands to raise a Big Mac to his mouth.

FEAR OF DOMESTICITY
(after reading Plath and Sexton)

Eyelashes did their job:
they lengthened the afternoon,
like a dress-hem.

Then that night the hem began to rise, in stages
revealing
scenes from my shameful life.

—Those calves
up which the hem reproachfully rasped,
catching,
lingering over whatever scene

(the higher the younger) arose
on those calves
knees, thighs, those
woman-segments

or were they mine—
I hid my eyes.
I wouldn't attend to
the walls either

endless walls, slowly
basted
with suicide.

The eyelashes did their job.
But I, who could neither sew
nor cook groped and groped those long legs
stubborn, afraid to look.

THE GETAWAY

It's 1969—and I'm

All lam: down
These libertysplit streets
U.S.A. I

Throw a measuringtape out, run its length,
Throw again, run,
Throw, run.

PAGEBOY

poetry is a matter of blond hair
of course dark works too you could use either

to wit tonsured sonnets and tanka conks
eclogue shags and song-of-bangs and blank hanks

add pastoral ponytails bob aubades
pomade odes and scads of other po-modes

brush them out bright for your any-anthol
dog-ear heads with the year's best doggerel

some word-gel helps if linebreak-curls won't hold
yet each poet fears her verse coiffure's bald

and the cowlick couplets the tress tercets
dread every stylist's editorial cuts

see formalist beehives and langpo buns
all cling together when the big comb comes

braid bards scalp skalds locklyric laureates
scared half their heaneys are a pollard yeats

let's tip our toupee to a topknot trope
before my permpoem flips its meter-mop

if the quicktrim rhythms they parnass-parse
today don't shampoo my poor metaphors

away I want to take and scan each strand
syllabic-chic and make it mane-enjambed

though most of the time I'd like to rhyme that
maybe-mussed-a-bit muse Erato's ringle

31 SYLLABLES

even the wisest
(even the esteemed poets
who when I was young
acclaimed me as promising)
have at times been proven wrong

MY MOTHER'S LIST OF NAMES

My mother's list of names today I take it in my hand
And I read the places she underlined William and Ann
The others are my brothers and sisters I know
I'm going to see them when I'm fully grown

Yes they're waiting for me to join em and I will
Just over the top of that great big hill
Lies a green valley where their shouts of joy are following
Save all but one can be seen there next a kin

And a link is missing from their ringarosey dance
Think of the names she wrote down not just by chance
When she learned that a baby inside her was growing small
She placed that list inside the family Bible

Then I was born and she died soon after
And I grew up sinful of questions I could not ask her
I did not know that she had left me the answer
Pressed between the holy pages with the happy laughter
Of John, Rudolph, Frank, Arthur, Paul,
Pauline, Martha, Ann, Doris, Susan, you all,

I did not even know you were alive
Till I read the Bible today for the first time in my life
And I found this list of names that might have been my own
You other me's on the bright side of my moon

Mother and Daddy too have joined you in play
And I am coming to complete the circle of your day
I was a lonely child I never understood that you
Were waiting for me to find the truth and know

And I'll make this one promise you want me to:
I'm goin to continue my Bible study
Till I'm back inside the Body
With you

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Today a super-model stopped me on the street
And asked me to marry her because
She said
She wanted to eat all the rat-poison in the world for her wedding-supper

THE NEVE VILLANELLE

He was a Montague and she was a Capulet
yet no feuding families threw them in thwart—
it wasn't that that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from Act Five Scene Fiving it on their first date:
no, it was that Neve Campbell that left them reft-heart—
It was Neve Montague and Neve Capulet

they wrote on their carnal diaries' most intimate
page: every time they tried to kiss they'd start
to Neve-itate, and that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from making out further. Neve made them hot
but not for each other. They'd just sit there in flirt
gone faux at the Montague or the Capulet

manse and navigate some Neve-or-die site
and ram *Scream 1/2/3* up the DVD insert—
that comely Campbell stopped Romeo and Juliet

from consummating their teen-tragic fate:
and even when she did indie roles for her art
they'd still curse the Montague and Capulet

DNA that kept their lives so punked, so pre-set:
Why can't we be Neve? Why can't we clone her part?
Having to stay a human Montague/Capulet
stopped them from loving Romeo and Juliet.

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

THE TRESPASS

On every corner I stand the street ends.
Others zoom home ignoring curbs and stops
And find themselves in family or friends

But I observe the sign don't cross this line.
I obey the words that say back away.
I mind these limits shown in case they're mine:

I share their lawful urge to prohibit—
My own words witness so many sanctions
How dare I not submit to any writ.

I can't jaywalk or say I wonder why
Verbotens written then can still turn now
The unstoniest road to a no go by.

What's wondering me here is not this halt
Or prior heedings where I nearly see
Such blocks and stalls and balks are all my fault—

I note the welcome-mat at the center
Of my maze: how each sole turns back relieved
To have found a spot it cannot enter.

What's wondering me then is what attends
To nothing I say on my way nowhere.
On every corner I stand the street ends.

DEAR ADVICE COLUMNIST

I recently killed my father
And will soon marry my mother;
My question is:
Should his side of the family be invited to the wedding?

LOVELADE

The sea is the cargo of empty ships
Moon bears the sun when it's gone
My face with the trace of your lips
Will fare from now on and on

THE CLOSET

(. . .after my Mother's death)

Here not long enough after the hospital happened
I find her closet lying empty and stop my play
And go in and crane up at three blackwire hangers
Which quiver, airy, released. They appear to enjoy

Their new distance, cognizance born of the absence
Of anything else. The closet has been cleaned out
Full-flush as surgeries where the hangers could be
Amiable scalpels though they just as well would be

Themselves, in basements, glovelessly scraping uteri
But, here, pure, transfigured heavenward, they're
Birds, whose wingspans expand by excluding me. Their
Range is enlarged by loss. They'd leave buzzards

Measly as moths: and the hatshelf is even higher!
As the sky over a prairie, an undotted desert where
Nothing can swoop sudden, crumple in secret. I've fled
At ambush, tag, age: six, must I face this, can

I have my hide-and-seek hole back now please, the
Clothes, the thicket of shoes, where is it? Only
The hangers are at home here. Come heir to this
Rare element, fluent, their skeletal grace sings

Of the ease with which they let go the dress, slip,
Housecoat or blouse, so absolvingly. Free, they fly
Trim, triangular, augurs leapt ahead from some geometric
God who soars stripped (of flesh, it is said): catnip

To a brat placated by model airplane kits kids
My size lack motorskills for, I wind up all glue-scabbed,
Pawing goo-goo fingernails, glaze skins fun to peer in as
Frost-i-glass doors. . . But the closet has no windows.

Opaque or sheer: I must shut my eyes, shrink within
To peep into this wall. Soliciting sleep I'll dream
Mother spilled and cold, unpillowed, the operating-
Table cracked to goad delivery: its stirrups slack,

Its forceps closed: by it I'll see mobs of obstetrical
Personnel kneel proud, congratulatory, cooing
And oohing and hold the dead infant up to the dead
Woman's face as if for approval, the prompted

(stanza break)

Beholding, tears, a zoomshot kiss. White-masked
Doctors and nurses patting each other on the back,
Which is how in the Old West a hangman, if
He was good, could gauge the heft of his intended. . .

Awake, the hangers are sharper, knife-'n'-slice, I jump
Helplessly to catch them to twist them clear,
Mis-shape them whole, sail them across the small air
Space of the closet. I shall find room enough here

By excluding myself; by excluding myself, I'll grow.

FOOTNOTE

All of us who lived on Earth
and all our loves and wars
may not appear at all
in the moon's memoirs.

HEXASYLLABICS

(after Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne*)

The shiny violins
Of April's tender winds
Render my heart a wound
And its fresh decibels
Clef as bright recitals
Have left me quite twi-tuned.

All seasons fiddle fade
Like sapphics Nero played
And few songs furlough time
Year long or even half:
Young books of poets prime
Will look at mine and laugh.

Now beneath Autumn trees
I crawl on knellthrown knees
Knowing they'll never say
That my past verse retrieves
From amid these dead leaves
One hour unshed one day.

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.

LESSON (to GM)

Our love has chosen its appropriate gesture
Which when viewed in the midst of all the gestures
It didn't choose seems almost insignificant.

The gesture our love has chosen is appropriate
We both agree not that we have any choice but
Amidst all those others does seem insignificant.

Is it incumbent on us thus to therefore obliterate
All of the gestures except this insignificant one
Chosen by our love for its own no doubt reasons.

It is up to us to obliterate all other gestures
Though they cluster round thick as presentations
Of war and sacrifice in a grade-school classroom.

Use of our love's chosen gesture for the obliteration
Of all those foreign gestures is forbidden however
We must find something else to erase them with.

Our love has chosen its appropriate gesture
Which when viewed in the absence of all other gestures
Seems to spell the opposite of insignificant.

BARREN PRECINCT

(homage Hagiwara Sakutaro)

Tightropes cross swayingly from church belfry
to church belfry, in one street a pileup of mattresses
is burning. If it were snowing it would be
like their very first sheets returning,
fresh from the sky's laundry. In the bracingly cold air
I see doorframes with no houses, houses with no rooms, and houses
where they serve lunch in its most naive form. I amble toward
a wood fence, a childishly-chalked bullseye, in which
I find some kind of old military medal pinned dead center:
the medal has a pale, harmful ribbon; it flutters and or rattles
 whitely, whitely withstanding the wind,
defending the bullseye's secret, inmost ring.
If cornered, I would agree—with almost no argument—:
this medal should get a medal!

Barren precinct,
eyes stare at you without our even knowing,
like the statue of a buddha
they regard you with immobilized eyes, with
carven idol eyelids,
you are the eternal non-unguent of tearless eyes,
the blink that will never be.

Note:

Hiroaki Sato's translation of Hagiwara's "A Barren Area" inspired this poem—which means I borrowed its subject and mood, but not its content. It's an homage, not an adaptation. Also, it's an attempt at *bon'yaku-cho*, a favorite mode of Hagiwara, according to Sato, who defines it as "Translation style . . . writings that read like clumsy translations." Line 1: "J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher . . ."—Rimbaud.

SANS

To cross-section a pinpoint,
reveal what quadrant
still exists. Oh
keyhole-cleaved,
data mint. Tin ion,
meet iron quark.

Grasped at or loved—

It's a cease orifice.

THE DOLLHOUSE BESIEGED

the only color is surrender
when high upon its staff
time flies my tattered self
yet no enemies cease fire

black threads that held me tight
lack weave enough to spell
welcome on a dollhouse sill
where brides once shed their white

no not Ibsen's dollhouse
mine was never that complex
ugh those adults mouthing off sex
sicken this mickle mouse

chincurled brow-scowled
I refuse to let go my pout
I hurl my yoyo drool about
and run and shout out loud

my eyeball fills one bedroom
the foyer rug's my tongue
I cannot live here long
though once it was home

the dolls I jammed in then
were soldiers fighting Nazis
I may remember their faces
but why they died's long gone

what boomed the bloody reason
I stabbed and shot and bombed
aimed and maimed and zoomed
those warplanes in to rake my own

family to the ground dead
I envied the Luftwaffe
whose pilots got to strafe
roads crowded with wounded

allowed to mow down people
while I could barely scuffle
the schoolyard with my tussle
or ruffle one study hall

(stanza break)

how powerless I was there
compared to Hitlerman
he beat up Superman even
and fuckbade Captain America

I clutched my comicbooks
my Messerschmidts and Stukas
while daily dangling deathhooks
guttled my future outlooks

my fate was cast in wars to come
Korea and all the small ones
damned deathcamps James Bond guns
Iran-Iraq Russia-Vietnam

I wish I could hide from them
reside inside this house
reduce to its cute status
close my world assemblen

find refuge in these rooms
immune to grownup strife
resume a micro-costume life
hermit from tomic bombs

from all their windows I'd wage
a white flag to show peace
doll-hankie grief of grace
broad wave my blankest page

shrink I shall in this sillyshack
and devolve my fear of all
safe-cure behind these walls I'll crawl
Raggedy-Ann calls me back

where have you been Bill
she cries and loves me still
please don't leave again Bill
kiss me till our stuffing spills

THE CYCLE

what's the use
waking all night
to write down truths
which dawn quite
easily refutes

MRS. FRYE AND THE PENCILSHARPENER

I'll remember how in 8th-grade English class, always
bending toward the desk I would try to avert my eyes
from the mysterious ways Mrs. Frye's hair displaced
the blackboard's space with its black coils, to the paper
my penciltip raced across, certain to pass each test:
and if these gaze shifts got too switcheroo I'd retreat
(daily, it seems) to the back of the packed classroom

where, leaning forward on my toes, I could push with
my left hand the nubile tube of wood into the mouth
of the pencilsharpener which hung there like some
natural protrusion of the wall, an indigenous Deity,
the mask of a Goddess, erosion-endowed, rockformed—
then feel my righthand fingers and thumb slowly turn
the oiled wheel while knowing I would have to face

close to that sac-shaped sharpener, have to inhale
the high smell of its depths, earthy, ripe, pubic: to see
in my mind the parings inside, those musky dark curls
whose incense was increased of course like mold-mildew
by the subtle saliva we kids might use to lick the lead's
point, though nearly none of our tongues could unblunt
the conundrums grownups posed, in my case Mrs. Frye

especially: so if I lingered back there, grinding away,
it was not to gloat, not to play the saintly A-student
snickering from behind at the others' heads bent intent
as penitents, because I too, I sinned at times, whenas,
no matter how proud I was of my proper grammar or
propounded syntax, stuffing my text thick with fetish
parsemarks, I myself went taunted, teased by the urge

to erase the very prodigy evidence my page revealed—
all the knots and quirks of those perfectly traced letters—
to restore the blankness I spoiled with each sentence—
to castrate every phrase before its errors rose by rote
to make my cthonic-greatest mistake grow and grow
erectile, inherent, that habit hateful male participle
I always was unable to shear the nib the stub off of—

*

(But how could I flub and flunk such a crucial ordeal?—
Forgive me: I was lost pondering, musing about a poem
memorized from the boys' bathroom, tongued fluent

(no stanza break)

but not understood: yet how truthshod its lines ran
to my anxiety—their meaning escaped the precocious,
the goldstar me—so if I stalled—if I stayed chewed over
and left a stammering dimwit by their immallarméan

import, which paired its print alongside a syllabus
of pornocoiled stick figures whose mouths were pierced
by the sharpened ends of toonballoons—verses verse
alone can't explicate in systematic prosaic terms that
forced and torsoed my head shy—if I was stuck on
their sphinxian simplicity—unable to decipher any
of the prodigal doggerel lessons gesticulated down

our school's scribbly corridors, snicked and snatched at
across its game fields, a whole curriculum of secret lore,
a litany of my-big-brother-told-me's, my-uncle-said's,
a rumor primer which claimed complete mastery of
the only discipline impenetrable to my inquisitive
quests never mind the autodidact airs I had to affect
during discussions of this topic, the nods and knowing

grins I wore to pass, to show my mastery of its arcana,
to prove what a pored nerd drill-diligent pupil I was
of those endless piss-walls, those scrawled rhymes and
confident lectures by croneys and guys who made sense
of the insane instructions re the sole subject I mark
zero on: all the dunno-dumb ideas I dunned then drove
core to me, carved their myths into me—and one in

particular goes to this poem, from the gendergabble
that gorged my brain: it hissed that She/the unknown
reared an inward toothly sheathdeath essence geared
to vagina dentata whatever pedant-pendant I'd proffer,
I, alma-matered to cram every exam with phallocratic
tits and sexist tripe pseudotype scionbabble, the entire
wisdom of my mentors' art-patriarch, old gobbledy-tropes—)

*

All gradeschool the fear of failing hovered in overstudy
as children riddled fears never to be learned, but could
I have continued to hone my fate, could I have stood
there for years and still the pencilsharpener wait
like a patient questioner, a warm, smiling teacher,
filled with such dense scents, shavings, shorn graphite,
its soil rich with words no-one would ever have to write.

FROZEN

(to R—)

Oh I know it must feel
Measureful

To be the river—
Source of that force

Each field each flower
Each fountain seeks—

And then of course
I have to shiver

Remembering how—
How few of us ever

Make it down
These mountain peaks.

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.

PRE-PINDARIC

they starjump General Brecht in
to a proving ground moon
to inspect our poems to see
if they're good against the enemy

thrusting his head forward
in a way that can only be
described as Brechtbrowed he
scowls and scans-off on them

we see his eye-bots have special
code meter modes to correct
any limp iamb or hemistich
any chink in the poems' armor

he glints up from time to time
as if he can't believe our stuff
as if all he taught has nought-it
to do with what we've wrought

but Sir we plead you must read
avant-context historically we
moot the fact you wrote poems
on trees are no use anymore

for trees died heck-logues ago
when all the oceans went ebb
what we really need you see
is a blurb a lend of your celeb

what we need's your face big guy
bitten-witty grainy-campaigned
its closeups can authenticate
every adumbrate we write

a save the galaxy concert with
the Rolling Stones and you and
us Post-Planet poets will surely
defeat the muses of entropy

we love the way your cigar juts
from EarthCuba where the CIA kill
Fidel Castro daily when he hides
in the strange game called baseball

which no one plays on our worlds
our only olympic's the universal
join-in of a jousting blog url
the jot-in of its poetics journal

GIMMIE SHELTER

The thread or the theme
That holds this tune
Together is the same
One that rips it open—

The initial guitar
Continues splitting
The whole thing apart—
It is the lightning

Which Jagger complains
Of and which he seeks
Shelter from the rains
Of when it breaks—

We ourselves will shut
Our deepest sills against
His common cries but
There is no defense

To keep out that other
One behind him twinned
His starker brother
Whose keening strings skein

Hymns from one more
Murderous composer
Whose cause is war
Who tears down our door—

Shelter/the home
Is made of language—
But music sunders the poem—
Its rift is like a tongue

Trying to compile all
Words into one word—
One Babel whose wall
Falls beneath that standard—

What the fuck did that flag
Say—the opposite
Of peace/of the page
Is what I must write.

COMMUTER SKILLS NEEDED

I'm like a spaceship flooded with roadmaps:
The guidebooks that marked and led me here are
Archaic. All the ways they praise have lapsed.

They program mirage the moments I know—
Even my going home fails threshold then;
The path I nailed's a trail of blood whose flow

Is like what, a heritage halt, but just
How extinct can I get by existing,
Must I recant the past or can I trust

My family when they promise me some
Of us have not abandoned what crumbling
Almanachs applaud in words verbatim

From *Star Ache* reruns: they say our save screen
Is full of the old jism, the thumb-jam.
Can one yuckskull of us hold that vision

Safe, can they fly off fled within its sky?
From vid to vid we lean, to wave goodbye.
It's like that thing that whatsit wrote, but I

Know it's mostly misquote. It don't apply.

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?

EXCHANGE

My love is torture
But no one attends my screams
My whimpers die out
Fade out the charmed windows
Fall unheard along the streets
Where couples walk in touch lightly
Exchanging pet phrases
Oh fortunate language whose meaning
Is confined to two
Who need no dictionary:
There goes another fingernail: see
They shove the fingernail into
My face as if
To show me this is a serious
Business we aren't kidding around
Here:
We want the truth you scum
Out with it tell us what
Their names are: who
Have you poisoned who have you
Defiled with the ugly
Gaze of your longing
What innocents have you left
Stricken by the sight of your
Adoring
Face tell us who who have you dared
To desecrate with love?

But I, I have never confessed—
I have never revealed your names
Whoever you are
Whoever you are out there
Embracing in touch lightly
Exchanging those phrases
Which only you understand
Those coos those moans those
Hoarse unmeanings
That sound so much at times
Like my screams my whimpers here.

POEM

All my soapbubbles dance on daggerpoint.
I throw dice while jacking off and cum snake-eyes.
My enemies list consists of nothing but autographs.

5 TRANSVERSIONS OF GOETHE'S *WANDERERS NACHTLIED II*

Every hill is overcome
with peace, the trees are a dome
down which the wind echoes
to mass one last breath;
the forest song has rung its close,
bird by bird, descending—
await your death
no longer. Listen: this too is ending.

Over all the hilltops is peace;
in all the treetops no breeze
endures, merely the breath of one;
the birds are gone, or at least
their song has ceased. You have your wish:
desist, desist! Thy will on earth be done.

You can feel your breath stilling all the hills,
and oh, what an undulant illusion!
The birds have wrapped their wings around their bills
and sleep: soon you too will be no one.

Now peace envelops
the hilltops
and every tree's summit
seems to submit
its final breath to the pall
and harshly over-all
hushing of even
the baby birds' calls when
you, you and your haste, come near—
Beware: your place is here.

Hear all the hinter hilltops
and every copse of trees
hush, when the wind drops
below a breeze,
and even the wing-flaps
of the birds bruit the air
no more; and their songs cease—
Slowly, by degrees,
like you the forest stops.
And have you found it there,
perhaps, at last: Nowhere.
Tear up your maps.

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

The trafflight on Lovers Leap never changes to red.

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.

AT THE CROSSROADS

The wind blows a sheet of paper to my feet.

I pick it up.

It is not a petition for my death.

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.

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?

PROOF

If time is relative,
so that it might be 12 AM
in 1966 for me,
12 PM in 3002 for you,
and for everyone else
another when-ever;
and if each person exists
within his or her own moment,
then, since there can exist only
one true time, one of us
is alone on this earth.

It's theirs by right,
because theirs is the exact present
and ours isn't.
The rest of us are like nowhere.

Imagine the rest of us
just haunting around,
pounding upon the walls of
that one person, pleading
with him or her
to please let us in, please,
but will they ever hear our cries?

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

PRISONER

What raw name scrapes and saws at my breath-hatch . . .
This voice wanted always only to soothe, not grate.
And its last noise, that rasp, that deathrattle scratch?
—A file, smuggled in to an empty jail cell, too late.

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.

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*.

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.

READING THE GAPS

At the Museum I go lost down a wrong corridor
and find myself past a wrong door alone
inside the Museum's Bomb Shelter, I know
it's the Bomb Shelter because there's a green
sign that says so and the paintings, the
paintings they have hung on display here,
confirm it. To survive the Hiroshima pain
they mind to hang them here. Seeing this
"last art" reminds me of our "first poet"—
Archilochos, whose work survives mostly through
fragments, through gaps, lacunae they call it.
Here's a trans. of one, most of it's gone:
'the fishnets lie in shadow beneath the wall'—
But there is no shadow beneath this wall.
And yet those fishnets (lifted) might be these
paintings I can't see why I can't describe—
they're too much like a mirror, a mirror
injected into an icicle. Shiver-dripped shades,
final veils smeared with three thousand
years of Western Civ, whose megadeath sketched
their discountenance, who stretched the nucleus
of this decision moment of Break Glass In
Case Of Emergency, fire-hose, ax, no, no! I can't
desire to proffer such in violence against
these paintings they portray my face my fate they
hang from that time-atomized wall Archilochos
rested against before getting back to work,
Archilochos who, they say, earned his living
as a mercenary, i.e. a robocop, a terminator,
a killer, which is why he's our first poet:

Later in the restaurant as usual I dip the
wine-list into a glass of water and voila it's
chablis/rosé because of course miracles are
common now whereas the latter hope of living
to read tomorrow today's lacunae isn't.

STUMPED

I wish I could count
up to one without
first cutting off
nine of my fingers

BOTH

They slept with each other kept
under their pillows
in case of alarm,
hoping to wake up in time
should love threaten. This is
the only way to arm
themselves against the marriage
that lurks in nightly unlinkings
imposed by the body's need
for cease. What better scare
can they clutch for, hugging
the bedclothes into a monster
who scorns their defenselessness,
a sphinx hissing catcalls at the two gates
of their threshold theater,
out of whose portals of comedy
and tragedy skulks
the spectre of some formal embrace
and relative kiss—and will
that riddle still confront them
with the answer owned
by every dream they've ever shared
when its failsheet sheds them
and this momentary blanket
rouses and breaks apart,
when day emerges from both its arches,
the one of triumph and the other
one of retreat.

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.

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.

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.

POEM: AS IF THE AT-TOUCH WERE SOUGHT

I know there is something lost
in the palm of my right hand,
and perhaps I shouldn't look
for it, but through weakness I do—
or is it duty drives me? Whatever
it is that has gone astray here
escapes me as I scrape and peer
at what seems so utter placid
insipid a place. Or is my vision
superficial:—hasn't this skin
struggled against the invasion
of interfering ulteriors—alien
hubristic objects—items—elements—
contents of any kind—: don't
its lines over-hint at the strain
it must have suffered to try and
maintain that emptiness, that
apparent void which stares back
as if to say, what I have least
misplaced there's me? Refusing
the fortunes which palmreaders
boast of, should the palm insist
on its innocence in this case,
indemnified against all loss—
(could any future who dared to
trespass here, bear that cost?)
Vacant, perfect, such purity
grows normal: what an ordinance
between my grasp and the poor
things I grasp!—albeit dollars, kisses
or others' hands, hands always
wishing they could unyield world's
toehold. For in whose cause would I
commit that sin and rip open,
vacate this veil that might conceal
every fate its surface traces
clearly as a false demure of lust—
already else, how can this lack
elusive mask occupy me wrist
downwards, and beyond that
unawares as it were, in thought
only, or has it covered most
of that too. And isn't this just what
the thumb is searching for (or
is it checking up on—testing

(no stanza break)

the snugness, the smug resilience
of such a consummate, ingrained
transparency) when, absentmindedly,
automatically, without finding
anything but that which is lost,
it rubs itself amongst the rest,
those strangers known as fingers?

SHOWER

I tie my handkerchief
to a kite
to try and dry
the cries of
the clouds up there.

Pour, pour:
oh, if only
I hadn't loaned
my umbrella
to that submarine!

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

I always put on a whole-slick tuxedo
when I jump off tall buildings so

when I'm sprawl in the streetdust
that passersby can say, "Oh no: and just

when he was at the height of his success;
look at that tux—now that's the way to dress."

WHERE

are the arrows that

bear bandages instead

of feathers at

their ends

A SUITE FROM SUMMER/AUTUMN 2001

1. 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

2. ROOM 5, HOTEL ANGLETERRE, MOSCOW, DECEMBER 28, 1925

Outside in the collectivist night late AM
a cart-horse hit by an automotivist died
so reasonably that a hurryingby Futurist
without thinking made the wrongful sign
of the cross against his greatcoat, then
ran on hard for his work at the Stalineum.

Cupid lanks of hair, like crib-slats, blond
petulant hung before the always beloved
eyes of Esenin peering down at his last
poem written in wrist's wake, his blood
that dried as he died that dawn, his feet
working the pedals of a Singer drowning
machine as the noose above grew tight.

Kicked over like a choirboy in a police
raid on a speakeasy his chair lay empty
as Pasternak declared it should be and
yet his spoiled snotty brimchild brattiness
was no way to vacate it or so the spotlit-
gnarled Mayakovsky told the upward-
gaping-my-god poets of the Last Village:
his merciless hot-rod hissed and shot
sparkypuffs and gasbows all over them.

(stanza break)

But now streetmenials peeled the collision
horse up off its blood in the Moscow snow
to show the red skidstreak, the flag scourge
first-degree burn on Sergei's right thigh
inert by a hot steampipe in Room 5,
Hotel Angleterre, not (as Trotsky wanted)
(as Mayakovsky vowed to always be)
a "champion of boiled water"—his scald
flesh was cold there, his colt soul lost
in that land of angles which the Big M
had all figured out, that algebraical
Age of Science, that Future whose high
inevitable advent he praised odelessly,
that Workers' Paradise where Euclid's
eunuchs, the robots, did all the work—

Stalin at this dark hour everyone on
their way to work was snoring by but in
his dream he was crawling heroically
through deserts dying of thirst of course:
he begged his headsmen dear, his sweet
guillotinish to haul that Mandelstam
forth: Now take the O off him he roared,
foolishly believing a 'sip' would save him—

(My pun is false in Rus-sync, yes: but once
I would have altered all my words to work
for him: newsed in Knott his worth would be;
my poems'd propagate that great reign,
nor deign to name the summa millions
murdered he: a true Ellipsodicist, I
should have shunned the reality before me
and sung in hymns that time to come,
that holy day they'll control our DNA,
knowing until then the old male will
kill to kill: we shall overslaughter all
wholehog, human or horse who cares
because what joy, what Y it is to us
to exterminate the rest—ah yes, mustache
boots are just the mask our role requires!)

But instead it was Esenin's head entering
the hoop of who, the rope whose zero
knot contained all noughts and else,
the perfect sum of value versus capital,
that stateless state both he and Isadora
had sworn their art would bring back
to a world hate was prohibiting, a void
vision she might have shared with her

(no stanza break)

millionaire children had they survived
their limousine's dive and lived to join
her dance collective, her Collected Works.

Note:

Too many recondite allusions here, but briefly: 8 years after the car-accident drowning of her only children (their father the Singer sewingmachine heir), Isadora Duncan moved to Soviet Russia in 1921, believing, as she put it in her *My Life*, "that the ideal State, such as Plato, Marx and Lenin had dreamed it, had now by some miracle been created on earth . . . I was ready to enter the ideal domain of Communism." She married Sergei Esenin, "the last poet of the villages" (as he described himself) in 1922; they separated soon after. His suicide was considered a decadent act of treason against the Revolution by Mayakovsky, who killed himself a few years later. . . . Futurism was the only Ism embraced by totalitarians of both the Left (Soviets) and Right (Italian Fascists). It continues to fascinate all kinds of dogmatists. (And factcheck, the hotel where Esenin hung himself was in Leningrad, not Moscow, but the latter works better with my internal rhymes.)

3. 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."

4. THE ROADKILL (for a Bestiary)

Really a rarity prior to the
20th Century, nevertheless
despite its historical novelty
and native USA pedigree,
the Roadkill is surely the least
interesting animal there is.

It has no habits to speak of.
Apparently harmless; not found
on any list of predators.
We think that squishy sound
it emits beneath car tires
are mating calls, cries of love.

Child of Henry Ford, doubtless
its true father was Emerson,
the poeteer who wrote that
"Everything good is on
the highway," meaning this
creature: he was a prophet.

But did he guess his disciples,
those gasoholics eager to kill
every denier of the octane
they gulp to gain personal
salvation as a speed span
that gaps from us to Überman?

Human was just a bridge to cross.
Raise a glass to his late loss.
All hail that great Rilke spiel:
to make the earth invisible!
Skoal. Let's get rid of it for real.
Fuck is it anyway but fuel.

Let's burn it up on our way
to the stars. Terminal ahead—
Last Exit: Deity. But see
how Evolution swerves instead
to this crumpled cast-off, shed
flattened apotheosis. Most

boring of pets. Lowest, last beast
in our abbreviated-by-ecocide
Bestiary, the Roadkill may be
the one we miss chiefly after

(no stanza break)

all the other brutes here are
emersonized planetwide.

The Roadkill may have been bred
unconsciously to lead us
away from our rapacious
verse. That's why his genus
his ilk begot/his stock is: Dead.
(Phylum: Poeticus americanus.)

Note:

The transportation/energy policies of the United States are ecocidal suicidal insane. They arise from our professed need to experience everything as individuals, immediately, directly; to pursue via our private vehicles a liberty of one; to singly dominate and exhaust the environment. A spurious concept of freedom pervades all our culture, not least our poetry, which valorizes the Emersonian/ Whitmanic urge to ubiquitize our presence, to "see it for ourselves." What despoilation of earth and atmosphere follows from that desire. Geopolitical consequences include the current (2001-?) so-called 'War on Terror' which is of course really a war to ensure the continued flow of cheap fuel into our gastanks. The greed to go, to see, to be there, to get it hot, to gulp it down: to never stay at home with the vicarious. What matter how many casualties ensue if we can continue to satisfy this mania which pollutes not just our air but our poems as well. We will pay any price to maintain our selfish addiction to the first-person voice.

5. 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.

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-disinterred;
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*.

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.

WALL

In the end I was deceived by particulars,
fingers offering themselves as examples
of what I could exist of at the finish of
the fruit of the bricklayers' melody if
only it would allow its accomplishments
to stand for the hands that set it forth
brick by brick, whose purpose was
the displacement of the local, the sole—
for unless that space could be placed
in one spot, what good was it. And so,
propped up to wall in or wall out what
should have buttressed me either side,
I felt myself slide with the shift, the twin
transition of stone on stone until the piles'
stoppage put a posit to my incipient
rubble, built of patient inches height
might climb to see one sun rise above
the sheer monument of—the measure would
be there, and the distance, though both
would retain their mean-sense, their
cramp-game of home, toe-molds, headhods
and all the other tools that are rare now,
whose use was owned a necessity once.

CUES

The pain in my shoulder feels
like maybe 600 dpi; its needles
are printing out text in a tongue
I can't read, a tongue with no tongue,
no flesh, only bone, my skeleton
signaling via these arthritic jottings
how soon it will replace this English
with its chill cyrillic. An ur-language
honed to finitude, earth parlance
of a planet ultimately diminishing
into the dust of galaxies, utterance
from the Big Bang, which probably
made no bang, no sound, only
the auditory equivalent of a pinprick,
kin to these jabs stabbing poking
the nerves near my neck. Even
if I knew the comebacks to these cues,
would they alleviate any ache at all.

ISLANDS

Garden hoses on horseback
gallop through the desert
to fill up the gulfs
that surround us.

Born of the birds who leave
their eggs on the rim
of volcanoes, then fly off
never to return:
that nursive warmth
erupts us into form.

Lava solidifies the sea
for binoculars of hourly ships
whose cruel captains allow
the stowaway days
no shore, no leave.

But the wisdom of archipelago,
how one must stop sometimes
to meet one's feet
on sites prepared for none.

Over each beach
senior sand and junior dune
establish their shifty dynasty.

Meanwhile look at all the water.

The waves
are swimmers no-one saves.

JUNK

Nothing evicts our everydayself
(our (as Heidegger calls it) *they-self*)
like a glimpse of that tenant within,
Occupant Corpse.

And to think that all the mail addressed to it
is elegant throwaways.

UNREDEEMED

Whimsical god, the window
Smites me then heals me, smites—
Blindness, sight, blindness, sight.

Its slats open-and-close like
A xerox tendering
ECT to Saul click Paul

Click Saul again. Identity
Steps from past, from presto,
Over the naked thresh of

Whose hold on my flesh. Oh yes,
I know, I should live in shun—
Hibernate against my soul, and

Eat sandal snow: why must I go
Forth of this house to meet
To market, to take my part

At that crossplace of values
A daily pilgrim, debt-devout—
Why does my heart in its gut

Obedient need to carry out
Every Outreamerican's
Highest, most sacred duty:

To shop. Hey, it fills a gap,
This superstitious shlep
From store to store, without stop

(And yet prophets pray that one day
I'll never have to leave my mind
But via Internet will find

Virtual all these bargains)—
Pure-plus ritual! as though
Buying this or buying that

Could keep me whole: old hymnal
Of dollars cents, dear virgo
Intacta whose observance

By true consumerism gains
Through worship a kind of
Tithe-sustained sanity—

(stanza break)

In fact, to quote our President,
Mental health is normed-in
To it—proportionate, shared—

There's a slice for each of us—
In fact, it's a communion:
This holy, wholesome vision

Is how we creamed the Commies
And saved our ass, not to mention
Mom's apple pie pietà,

The caesarean of which
Might (misfortunately)
Render me unto me. So when—

When ATM time comes
I too shall face the humbling flash
Screen of that machine designed

To scan in half the once sans self
And watch it flick its widget slots
Deigning to bless even

A wretch as worthless as this:
But when, according to the stats
In the Bible, Arcturus

Bi-millennially aligns
With the intransigence of
Human transactions, its

Bank of blinks, its solstice vault
Promising to spill out
Flushing our customer sills with

What, another Nativity,
I will not insert my KashKard
Or enter, while the Mall

Dies around me, my personal
Passcode word, my number ID—
I'll ram in, not plastic, but

(Begatitude-foretold)
My aura's errata, my
Freud's flaws. Although only

(stanza break)

(Saith says) the clone can, the mote's
Eye may, et cetera. In fact,
Such acts of heresy would cost

More gold than I could bear
The loss. And so, therefore, ergo—
Duly each dawn I rise, I raise

The blinds and nail my shoulders
To a t-square, let light strip
To my skin, a birthgraft,

A natal fate. And so, and so—
I manage a moue or two;
I make, like, acknowledgement.

Note:

2 of the possible epigraphs for this poem:

“[President George H.] Bush to Xmas Shoppers: Spend, Spend, Spend!
Economy Reborn, Prez Says”
—Newspapers, Nov-Dec 1991

“It seems to me that the individual today stands at a crossroads, faced with the choice of whether to pursue the existence of a blind consumer, subject to the implacable march of new technology and the endless multiplication of material goods, or to seek out a way that would lead to spiritual responsibility, a way that ultimately might mean not only his personal salvation but also the saving of society at large; in other words, to turn to God. He has to resolve this dilemma for himself, for only he can discover his own sane spiritual life.”

—Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (1986)

SONG

When my shadow falls off of me
I yell "So long!"
But when I fall off my shadow
It cries "Long so!"

It seems obvious
That one of us
Is either falling wrong
Or calling wrong.

FBI KILLS MARTIN LUTHER KING

When this calendar has
undressed will I know, I mean
be able to recognize,
its most naked day—

but to see what was
in what is mistakes time
for its effect—I study
my hand, how
the palm hides in it, slyly,
or like a sullen puddle
refusing reflections—

and my 2-scoops-please blouse—
a passerby's
meander-fall hair—
though the sky's blue is through-outed
with spots of balm, do

they all
praise null but you,
null but them?

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 gifts
Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

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.)

SUITE (to—)

A poem is a room that contains
the house it's in, the way you
accommodate me when I lie
beside you, even if the address
is lost so many times and the names
of streets are strangers that pass
shuffling a card-deck of maps
whose rubberband has snapped:
still beyond all chance or choice
perhaps, your arms fold mine
to indicate location, the close
custom of place held together
or flung into the bedroom's air
where your dress tries to come in
from the rain it has become:
the way shelter finds us one again,
and the opus of this nearness,
the poem on its own, wandering.

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

for always far out to sea the shark the crew
was knitting for their captain's birthday
opens its yak. 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-factored 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.

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; would 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).

SLUM SCENE

poor children sharing
back and forth their one
set of Dracula's teeth—
here even the dead
live hand to mouth

SUPERSTAR

The winners of all those lookalike contests
must suffer and even become anguished
and ashamed as years pass and the hurt
worsen every time they forget to avert
the mirror's blow and the blame of each
tiny flaw or variance which distinguishes
theirs from that single face fame graced.

ANT DODGER

A suicide applicant
Who braces himself out
On a high ledge at noon
While busy peeking down

Noticed an ant crawling
Dottily on the ledge
Right
There near his left toe

Below crowds all pushed
Oblivious babbling
Omniscient like in the movies
Out whooshy doors

But his gaze halt ant
Ant the true ant
He dimly remembers
Not like them

So now
He hesitates
A million stories up
Shifts weight trying

Make his mind up
Distantly deciding
Whether to step
Before he jumps

On it
Or not

NIGHT THOUGHT

Compared to one's normal clothes, pajamas
are just as caricature as the dreams
they bare: farce-skins, facades, unserious
film versions of the *mode diem*, they seem
to have come from a posthumousness;
floppy statues of ourselves, slack seams
of death. Their form mimics the decay
that will fit us so comfortably someday.

MONOPOLY

Finally the day dawned when a monopoly owned everything in the world
So it went looking for its stockholders to celebrate
But they were all owned by it they were all dead they were someplace
Their photographs hung in elevators which went up and down up and
 down carrying nobody
Everyone else was in bed doing exercises to get in shape for noon
Hey the monopoly said let's uncork the Tower of Babel and get blotto
Silence
The monopoly scowled
All it wanted was a little good-fellowship, like you get in the
 highrise apartment-buildings
Then the sky got awful dark
Gee
And everyone was in bed frantically doing those exercises that get us in
 shape for death
Exercises known as "kissing" "fucking" "caressing"
Everyone was unaware that they had been bought
Or that the earth was about to sell them to the moon
For a little light

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:

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

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

[APRIL]

raindrops windowpane
I can't see myself wearing
more daring outfits

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

Your nakedness: the sound when I break an apple in half.

(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.

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 atchooed by all.

CONCEPTUALIST [UNTITLED]

How literally I littered the pavements of
our treeless city with twelve million poems
printed in real 24-pure gold-leaf lettering
each page cost thousands of dollars to do
all paid for by MOMA Wall Street CIA so
hey! don't step on my *Autumn Lied*, okay?

[UNTITLED 31-SYLLABLE POEM]

would the white rabbit
in the snowclad mountainleft
have been shot if it
had simply kept its eyes closed
could my scope have picked it out

A LESSON FROM THE ORPHANAGE

If you beat up someone smaller than you
they won't (and histories prove this) tell:

look at those people on the opposite side
of the planet: they want to beat us up but

they're smaller so that's okay. Not okay is
that most of us will die in the war between

them and us, because small equals (and mice
prove this) sneaky: their spies could spirit all

our nuke aids away and we'd never know—
nick our rocket-satellite knockout Star Peace

Comcodes right out of our shrinking pockets,
even our doomsday (the FBI can prove this)

doodads, the ones we mean to use on them,
the rats: and so when they kill us will we

have killed enough of them to win, whose
fist figures bigger in the end? And what's it prove?—

In the Orphanage, hell, even if they do tell
on you there's no one for them to tell it to.

QUICKIE

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

WIDOW/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.)

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?

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.

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, ha!
(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.

WAS

Age 20 to 40
everyday I said
"I wish I was dead."

40 to 65
each day I cried
"I wish I was alive!"

65 to whenever
daily I whisper
"Wish I was either."

CHARGE

Why don't the ranks in a marathon
carry little piggybanks, and listen
to the coins clank around as they run:
wouldn't that be an encouraging sound?

(Oh surely I can't be the only one
the sanguine clashing of cash spurs on!)

THE FATE

(for Anne-Marie Stretter)

Standing on the youthhold I saw a shooting star
And knew it predestined encounter with the sole love
But that comet crashed into the earth so hard
Tilted its axis a little bit not much just enough
To make me miss meeting her by one or two yards.

THE AMNESIAC'S NAME

Whatever it is it is
The only alias
Anonymous never uses.

EMPTY

I look harder
in my wallet
than in my mirror
I already know
what it holds

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.

WHIMCAM

Lynch mob wearing haloes,
the public prose insists
that every artist must
solicit its curse praise
and spurn a sterner muse:
will Coriolanus
nurse and gnaw and showcase
his scars when media's
next queasy closeup comes?—
Not me. Not my poems.

THE KEEPER

(for George Starbuck)

while ships
guided by his beacon glide
safely through the fog or night
inside he trips over
more furniture
bangs his head again
on doorways

the rooms
steep and stairly
of a lighthouse transpire
into the brilliant air of
salvation but
down here
in the black-and-white farce
of this poem
whenever the keeper opens a can
of soup the blood
from his fingers
will indisputably fall
on his crutches

parables
if I read Kafka right
are always a matter of
winning and losing
credit and debit
every life kept
off those reefs or rocks makes
these accidents occur
this bone break
this muscle
tear

each shipwreck he averts
shall be showed for
by a scar

TRIP

.. Jesus walking on the water
.. keeps tripping over
.. the flying fish

FRAGMENT

Because at least one couple is making love
Somewhere in the world at all times,
Because those two are always pressed tightly together,
Hatred can never slip between them
To come destroy us.

MAMA, WATER, BLUE, SOB, PERSIMMON, ETC.

If everyone on this planet was forced to write
one word on a piece of paper, their favorite

word, the resulting anthology might add up to less
than Shakespeare, who had, or so I've read,

a 40K vocabulary: wouldn't most of us
just put down the same few words; how many could

resist the usual abstract homilars, our limited
minds consisting of each other, non sequitir. I would

be ashamed to show that book to my UFO guests,
no matter how repeated or urgent their requests.

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 environmentals of despair
whose slim glaciers pen me here.

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 gnarlargoyle.

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

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.

[UNTITLED]

They wandered through the hand in hand.

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.

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.

IN SLEEP

We brush the other, invisible moon.
Its caves come out and carry us inside.

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

OCTOBER

The leaves fall, but not far enough for me,
so I take one up to the top of my favorite highrise,
the one whose antennae can see farmers.
Out over the roof-edge I drop it, but my eye
swerves to the hemline of a nearby tourist.
I wonder if anyone will notice it. The wind
is certain to vacillate its journey;
a vacillation is a vagueness with intent,
and my leaf is light. —And has her camera
caught me in the act, prolonging it even further—
Her blouse blows but now I prefer most how
she caresses the camera, fondly, a personal
touch placed on what is after all a mere
automaton winking a robot eye . . . hmm, are mechanisms,
like, say, money, or credit-cards, are they
harder to put one's traits on than a flower
for instance, or an ear of corn . . . For example
I know someone who has a five-dollar-bill
taped up on their wall with the name "Frank
Sinatra" scribbled across it, an autograph,
according to them, but is writing (or forging)
your name on money or on a machine,—?!
does a signature make it more human, natural,
leafier somehow . . . hell, money is not a good
example, it's not mechanic, I'm sorry. Damn.
Back on the track: the leaf falls, the farmers
farm and the tourist films till her camera's
involuntary functions are exhausted . . .
we head back down. The elevator control-panel blinks
like a flightdeck or Star Tech or something,
then I notice buttons on her skirtfront—
I punch all the buttons on my shirtfront,
not knowing what direction that will get me,
yet suspecting that it too will not be far enough.

MUTABILITY (*Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado*)

Quevedo wrote he would be dust, but dust in love—
And while I can't believe that millions from now
A rose and a quartzstone will embrace, I can believe
Still less that my arms are around you here: or how
 Your sharp crystals
 Are tearing my petals.

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.

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.

EVICTION PROCESS

Wreckball all the highrises:
then use the cornerstones of those
leveled towers to create my castle:
composed solely of foundationstones,
each one of which was blessed
with a ceremony, a literal
groundbreaking and therefore whole;
each block unique,
inscribed with ritual aggrandisements;
each planted solemnly:
each underpin-laid as the bedrock
its lesser brothers would rest on:
use only these rootstones to raise
the walls of my eyrie house hideaway
whose forbidding frame will have
no real infrastructure, whose form
will be a spiritual suspension
(cradle crux kernel hub core)
wherein each establishingstone
must cohere solid with the weight
of its having once been named
in salutation as such—but surely
when these maidenstones these
consecratalstones are placed
together to make home my dream
my ideal occupancy, then surely
due to the baseless act
of imagining this acme of architecture
I will never be allowed to live here.

A BRIEF ON THE GREAT PYRAMID

The Great Pyramid has been spared the ruining incursions of storm, rain and winter (imagine it in Norway or Brazil). But some say its interior is filled with millenia of showers, snowmelt, hailstones in flood. And that if that granary of water was ever released it would inundate the desert. An ocean would occur. Formless endless waves, enveloping and barren, the sole exception being the GP's peak, that lone, irreproachable island. Others say this sea inside is simply the sweat of the slaves who built it, hidden teardrops repressed in the daily cloud of submission, sobs that ebbed before they were born.

TOTAL

Babel on the table falls,
my poem topples
into words
whose rubble shards

I try to stack back up until
they crumble still
again: but all
my efforts only pile

those collapsing tropes
in heaps
of worthless chips
which are

counted forth
with column patience
over and over
by the miser Silence.

FLAKE TAKES

Snow, echo
of lightyears,
your time it appears
to reach the ground
is never now.

Like truth
the snowflakes peek
from behind a veil.

Sunset: the snowfall lacks
(altitude vs. attitude)
the hauteur
(condensation vs. condescension)
of the skyfall.

All this missive whitefold
is franked by a pattern
its own; stamped unique:
'Return to Sender'—?
No: *Deceased*.

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).

[UNTITLED 31-SYLLABLE POEM]

the women I loved
all lived in other cities
which I guess could be
one reason they all loved me
since none of us ever moved

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.

CIRCUS: AERIALISTS

Their soars restore our disbelief,
Yet trapezists leave us wanting more:
Can't we rip down those damn ladders
And all their other means of safe
Descent, ropes, wires, (cut the nets, too)—
Let's strand them all up there, ignore
Their arrogant screams for rescue.

Stay up there, we'd shout (or whisper).
Pretend you're one of those angel
Acts, bigtop happy, heaven's troupe—
Hang bright as nails on a tightrope
Tree, spread spangled arms and fly free
Caught in air, spotlit spaced, dangle
Dare: see sphere sights beyond our glare,

Dying soon to gawk for good. When
Finally from hunger or sleep one
By one you faint and plummet home
Your stiff poses against the ground,
Hoping your souls have remained
Aloft: but then like clowns we'll trip
Deliberately over the smashed up

Bodies you were always scorning
Skyward, forsaking all fallenness
To pass the massive eyes of envy,
And sprawled in dust of center ring
May take back our lack of sympathy
When once like shadows shown or less
You lowered yourselves among us.

NAOMI POEM

With the toys of your nape
With your skin of mother-of-throe pearls
And your fire-sodden glances
From the sidelong world

We break rivulets off the river and wave them in the air
Remember the world has no experience at being you
We also are loving you for the foreverth time
The light, torn from leaf and cry

Even your shoulders are petty crimes

ALOFT

when the balloon bursts
where does all the air
that was inside go

is it bound together briefly
by the moisture
of the human mouth
that birthed it

poor pouch of breath
long expulsion of nothing you
must dissipate too
nor remain intact
no matter how pantingly
against the outer atmosphere
you might try to secure your
whoosh-hold

and what an effort
what heave and heft-work
what strain of frame what rib-rift
to have to lift to shift around
all that oof and uff

why strive and huff just
to stave off death
to survive
to be a substance a stuff

to live live as a pocket
a cluster
a cloud
to maintain your interior
mode

I can understand
that having once been
contained in bouyance
you'd want to retain
that rare coherence

you'd pray to stay a one
to remain a unity an
entity a whole in
this unencased heaven

(stanza break)

but smatter of ghost
how can you persist
or save yourself
when all us others disperse

so let it slough
dissolve in draft
little whistlewhiff
pathetic kisspuff
flimsiest flak

up into the sky goes
two lungs worth
of earth
unstrung
unloosed
the exhaled
soul of a boy a girl

alloonaloft
aloftalloon
lost

[UNTITLED]

Long candle, ponder, short candle, think.

DEPRESSIONISM

Without any necessity to name it or anything,
I remember this bombrater 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.

THE WORD

I am the windowkeeper
of the Tower of Babel.

Whoever built this place
put one window at its top
and one door at its base.

I dream of the door far below,
where all the commerce,
the majestic intercourse
must pass—
or so I imagine.

Parsecs above that possible
bustle I attend our tower's
sole window.

Up here nothing.

Forget a lookout vigil:
this pane's too high
to spy an army
or a peacenik approaching.

Glass I wash and wash always
for the sake of the light/dark
it admits, but what is it?—

An eyepiece of clouds
for someone's height;
a cyclops outlet
for no one's sight.

And what if
that door down there's
as little use as this—
and the doorkeeper too,
her efforts
fallow as mine—

if there is a doorkeeper;
if I'm not alone
in here.

(stanza break)

If we exist—
if one day when
we can open
our vents our hearts
simultaneously,

mightn't some stir occur
in the vacuum
of this hollow highrise,
provoking its ghost
to whisper at least
one pure, one
pre-word word—

Maintaining my post
would otherwise be a waste,
hopeless

if not
for the thought of that.

POEM!

Shh, you'll wake up the stains on my bedsheets.

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 TWO-ROOM THEORY

Call the masturbator,
the muscular one,
and bid him whip his big cock
till it fills our mouths
with cups and cups of cum.
Tell the whores to dress
in undress and use their clothes
to get the boys hot: our cocks
are white and dirty as
old-rolled-up newspapers
and want to spout flowers.
Let the birds and bees
final-anal my seem, sow,
sew their seed
into my slit my seam.
The only emperor is
this emptier of cumcream.

Hi hum, hic he, another
office party at Hartford Surety.
These prissdressers,
they see me as ideal: well,
I do try to please my wife,
that frigidess—I grab her knobs,
I squeezey lick those glass tits
but even the big cigar, Father
Freud, couldn't whip Kit's
ice-cold B-cups to a curdle.
Try anything, suck her toes,
kiss her feet to make her horny
and she just lies there numb on
that damn dumb sheet she
sews fannytails across but
ask her to sow her butt, to
spread her asscrack just once
she won't. She won't. Nope.
Let my lamp, my limp lump dick
affix its fucks, be its cum.
The only emperor I am
is a jack-off chump.

Note:

the title of this parody comes from Helen Vendler's exegesis of the original, in her formidable book, *Words Chosen Out of Desire*, p. 50-53.

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.*

ANOTHER FIRST KISS: TO X

A first kiss can occur anywhere: two pairs
Of lips might meet as ingredients for
A cannibal's chowder; or on the shore of
A nightclub at ebb. Preferably the latter—

Though there are no more nightclubs, or cannibals,
As such: I mean the first kiss is passé,
Archaic, obsolete. Pre-Global Village,
It rests in wrinkles, in blinking memories . . .

Ours came in bed, but after we'd undressed;
Preceded by hugs. And so the question
Of using the tongue—that old hesitation—
Didn't apply. We plunged right in. At

Our age you get naked and then you neck,
The opposite of how it was done young.
But the hunger is still there. The thirst
Is like in a bar, when they yell out Last Round.

Note:

Line 13: "Our age"—the lovers are 53 and 61.

ON THE AIR

once every student barber
to earn his certificate
would first have to lather
a balloon and shave it
then if it didn't burst
he'd pass his last worst test

but I wonder what happened
to that schooled balloon
did they use it again
or was it shown mercy
let go set free
to fly away safely

scrapeskin for a sheepskin
one nick will kill this bubble
let pupils skilled in scruple
cut its rubber stubble
here only dull shearers win
the hirsute-pursued laurel

a master's in mustache
a doctorate in down
summa comb or brush
cap-strop-and-gown
more honors-blown diplomas
than tenured hands can slash

our blood stays bearded for
that educating puncture
light hearts inflate and then
learn one slit-throat lesson
to flunk is remedial
if pop-quiz pops us all

undrape look up and see
those balloons still floating over
our razor-grad degrees
they hang on the air
they dangle from a hair
no blade can sever

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.

HAIR POEM

Hair is heaven's water flowing eerily over us
Often a woman drifts off down her long hair and is lost

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 ba bub!

RETURNED ANONYMOUSLY

Lost my wallet you know
Cash all the creditcards
ID
Everything

But like the worst thing
Was that photo
You know
That photo of you

But guess what
Smack in the mail today
I'm not kidding money
Everything

But guess what
There was just one thing
Missing
Just one thing

Uh hunh
You know it shit
I bet nobody
Nobody could be that honest

SITE ECHOES

Circling a tree with people
to protect it from people,
to add another arc
to its years may not suffice.

Hold poems up as the bulldozers
come, claim your lines
are rings nearing the core
of a word for wood,
for all the earth lifts.

It will not suffice. Far
from its aureole bole
your whirl grows whole
only in ground,
in groundbegone seeds.

Weeds.

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.

OLD JOKE FROM THE TED & SYL SHOW

Hectoring her as usual with a bark in
His bite wit, Ted tutors his young gal Syl:
God, he scold-quotes, is in the details.
She grins and wanks his chin with pinkette nails
And winks that mock-erotic spark in
Her eye: You're wrong, you bodkin, you big moose,
You handsome sod: God is in the profile—
Got one, and you're God; you're Ted Hughes;—
Don't got one, you're Philip Larkin!

LIFE

They stole all the belongings I left
on the sidewalk because I could only
lug part of my stuff into my new place;
and so I cried screaming at the cars
that shrieked by, sobbing on my knees.
Seems all I could do to calm myself
was rub my thumb along the clawpoints
of the strange key which would open
the door of my new room, if, that is,
I had indeed locked it behind me:
they may have already gone up there
and stole the things I carried in before.

BUMPY KISSES: POEM WRITTEN TO A POET

(to R—)

remember those bumpy kisses
in the back of that taxi
we should have begged the cabby
more hit more potholes please

when we hit a bad one whoops
everything got flung up hard
but don't some things just get better
by bouncing from lips to lips

kisses usually get their kicks
from boredom the normal routine
tongues stick the same linebreaks
the proper punctuation in

but not these bumpy babies
they jack out the box they
jump all the jolts of this jaunt
lucky for us it's transient

after a poetry reading
briefly we'll share a ride heading
uptown toward distant lives
has one of us now arrived

still the course of our smoothest words
is likewise unpaved by poems
we scribble them down sometimes
hurried as hugs through a cab-door

though even they must go
past first dates or last we try
we mostly try and let them be
the moment they were meant to

WHAT ABOUT PENS?

Always remember that day follows day,
but night precedes night—
and that your hands are merely microscopes for pencils to look through.

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.

CONTRIVANCE

The perfect artist is
the one who manages to die
at the hands of the critics.

UP TO THE MINUTE

A jet falls on a cow.
Part of the animal sticks out and twitches like the
usual closeups of the hero's jaw.
Children I admire play in the crushed cow's shadow.
And even the plane itself has been left atop the skel-
etonized milk-giver,
clouding one's dreams of a bloodless coup.

RELICS WITH OLD BLUE MEDICINE-TYPE BOTTLE: TO X

This old blue medicine-type bottle, unburied
From your garden last year's the perfect centerpiece
To suit our supper—the totem-trope we need
Across this kitchen table, to show how dangerous

It is where we sit (knees near touching at times)
Dawdling and playing with our silverware,
Tapping teacups, tired and satisfied and prime
From a stint in that garden: in a few hours

We'll find ourselves in bed, but we don't know that now,
Do we—we're still exchanging histories,
(It's only my something visit to your house)
Just sorting out the portions of who, when, how—

Numbering the decades and the romances
That went bad, the faces that faded on us,
Though nothing too personal at first, just pain;
Divorces, liaisons, estrangements, fixations—

Of course our brows hurry away from hurt:
Anecdotes begun in wince end in wrinkly;
Our woeful tales go told through a mode that's mostly
A kind of moue, comic attitude, which flirts

With grimace-smiles, jokes, the mocking of those choices,
Those great mismatings: funny how it seems of late
Both of us have been alone, celibate . . .
Collating, getting our dates right, our voices

Shed their list of affairs, entanglements, crises:
So we accord the past its poisons, and theorize
That even this old blue bottle here, stored poisons
Before we were born:—followed by suggestions

That the toxin of those heartbreaks is gone
After this long, their vitriol has fizzed out,
And we could, given an occasion, again
Consume the spirit that killed us once, if not

The letter: confessions used as cue-cards to prompt
Mutual responses of empathy or hope:
No former hemlock can harm us now—we're immune
By now—don't you agree—because what happens

(stanza break)

Ripens in retrospect; each sour memory
Blossoming like the flowers you sometimes spruce
This bottle's corroded throat with. We certainly
Are not eating much, are we, but we don't notice—

Can't we see how our fingers will likewise bloom
From off these knives and forks and force their field,
Interlocking like tugged-at roots . . . Untombed
Of its venom, this blue vial vigils our held

Glances. Sieved in its acid, its distilled mirror,
Would we (almost as soiled as it by time) appear
A beauty, a scarred heirloom any collector
Might stuff high on a shelf amid simulacra—

Somber still, it approbates that emptiness
We must be preparing to fill with each other—
It foretells the coiled taste, the bite unearthed
In the antiquity of a sudden, wild kiss

Whose disclosure will surprise us, as if
We have not been wholly inured by the years,
The stories we bare here across the rice, the life
Stories bittersweet, neutered, too well-rehearsed.

Will deadlier words then surface—their potency
Dis-elixired, drawn; decanted so often
That by our courteous age they've turned as grimy
And bunged with dust as this blue glass was when

Your shovel showed it that summer morning, and
My phrases here are (surely) just as corrupt—
What matter its sharpness, no metaphor can
Pare the ground from us as hard as we try to dig up,

To excavate feelings a bottomless need for
Soars as we toss the salad greens and pour
Dressing dripping down their fineleaved freshness
Starting to wilt already around the edges,

To rot back to that mulch they burst from. Such decay
Preserves some artifacts, if not us: they lie in
Graves contrived to obviate the skeleton
They survive beside, they strive to deny

The obvious, the crepitude fate-of-flesh bleak
Facts of our demise, obdurate bricabrac knickknacks
Laid by ancients in the coffin to propitiate
Ancestors, to aid, via these vain trinkets,

(stanza break)

(Are we the 'subjective correlatives' of these
Objects, this chthonic junk the tomb-robbers missed,
Tools and talismans, amulets, a corpse-cache
Gear for ghosts, props to assist the posthumous)

Some afterworld sojourn of the soul entering
Itself, self dying to carpe diem one more day.
Refocus *us* on this figure, this table-centering
Blue bottle. Whose future dye indigos our day.

Dulled, we ignore these darker, gnawing warnings—
Our own skull-and-crossbone labels long since skinned—
We poke at our plates, we pat our napkins.
What antidote waits, withering, within

Against that great granulate upheaval of
Fields whose depths have grown archeological—
Filled by fucked relics and by that above-all
Most subterranean of discoveries, love?

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.

UNEARTHED TO EARTH

flappilating like fire caught the shot
bird scuds mud with its misflying dyings—
but see in poetry's sky the knott
likewise flails and fails to find his wings

THE RETRIEVAL

In order to recapture
the features of the one
lost, one must gaze
first into nothingness—

in which the semblance
encountered should
be blank, so it can flit
across the screen of

expectation, and wither
all the images there:
as we scan the past for
someone any the same

we see could seem cipher
enough to erase each
old recognition held
so long in our mind.

The search necessitates
losing the present to
the degree we pursue
its opposite. The ratio

may not go exact, though,
and we may lose more
time than we regain,
the numbers may not

even out. There can be
an excess of loss, a gap
that greets us when we
return to our senses

clutching whomever
we've brought back to
a cache void which can't
be filled by the thus

recalled person no
matter how beautiful
they hover here now
in place in face of us.

FROGPRINCE

Presence had its stay with me,
and even if only for a time
it came in the brief of love—

I used to whisper in her ear's
idyl. She was so treat, so could.
I mostly was worse. Now

the unkind years of peace
strand me here, where the lamp
studies pain with impunity.

The dust etched in its trance
seems a core the air can't share,
overwhelming the eye which

itself is plus-sulked with themes
of sight, beyond-borne. Imagine
a lilypad pregnant with eyelids,

lapping the light with its lashes.
Diffused to me the outward lies
as motes to the beam that bears

them. So what I see carries me
somehow, I cannot stand apart
subject and object observer

though as always I desire to.
I prefer to view than act, and
reflect upon the pond I appear.

MESSAGE

I am a messenger sent to find
the genius in everyone here,
because it alone is the true
recipient of what I carry—
it alone can read the code
this note was writ in: it alone
is the genius in everyone
but me, which is why I alone
can bear to bring it to you.

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.

RECAP

It was that kind of day
the kind that goes through you
like a skewer but is okay as long
as there's someone beside you
waiting ready to lick the skewer
when it emerges from you

THEIRTOWN

a lack of streetsigns shows
those who live here
more fortunate than us
they never need to know
where they are

EPIITAPHS

Their meaning seems to be there aren't enough of them: why else would "REST IN PEACE" show up so endlessly doled from gravestone to gravestone, "LOVING FATHER, DEVOTED SON", "FAITHFUL SPOUSE" and all the other ubiquitudes—every cemetery's a clone of its own one.

This sameness betrays a bewildering faith in the inadequacy of words—it implies that whatever you or I might choose to have indited there for a final phrase of grave would be as lacking and even less would fail to qualify as equal to these primeful, these small, one-sign-suits-all sentiments.

But the main reason may simply be size: maybe these commonquotes total right and totemize the most to measure down our lives, they make as much meat as one can carve on a standard tomb, they sate whatever else the eye fills up with after all. Maybe these filigree graffitti fit the bill.

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.

SALON POEM IN LEAFGRAVURE

Cemetery statuary
ought to be deciduous: wings
that fall from angels every
year, all the cherubs losing
their curls, the harps their strings—

Or imagine graveyards in autumn
minus those high carved out figures:
and not just the sculptures,
but names, dates, epitaphs. Each tomb
turned into a bare limb—

Each stone branch of the 'ceme-tree'
would stand once more a slab
the better to weather tragically
another Dec-Jan-Feb.
Come springtime gallery by gallery

etched letter-buds could open
that blankest bark
where new-limned numerals would mark
those old lives' span,
and spranked up there above them

let crosses blossom,
the tall crosses regain
their nailed arms. Now all the chisel
foliage should follow until the whole
museum from within is risen.

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. Ubiquitous-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?*

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.

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*.

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.

THE WISHINGWELL STANZAS

Oracle whose hollow
catalogs each word I swallow,
I wish my birth had been false, I wish
the pregnancy which bled me was kitsch.

Nothing the pupil paints on our
eye easel will equal your
entry in non-entity,
whose unpaginate genitalia I
am one lack-me of.
May I try or is it type
to man-ingest the woman-digest of this?

Only a fishhook can play Hamlet adequately—
bright as skin pinned to a candle,
go dangle down a well, chapel
by inversion; the bells toll,
the toads flick my gnat-name home.

Oldest lodge and once as I was,
bring me, lightning for ballast,
the memory of a boy crossing
a creekbed, a ditch, look,
in which he steps on a snake:
I felt it shift, beneath my shoe,
felt tremor after tremor go
through my length, lure up muck
so far back. Its meander meat
realigned the path I meant to
take, my heel hung there
caught in the quickest loss
of ground, my footing was gone
from the moment and I poised
on flesh that refuted my own—
orator atop a trapdoor.

The ponderous sack of semen slice off:
sever all, soil it to the ground—
solve with blood the gordianhood, praise
this surface sacrifice, curse it and dance
over dying coils on virile instep,
stomp this lance that lacks true sibilance,
there, there, contrary penis! the drum and
the tambour of the Mother
the earthquake have spoke—

(stanza break)

in Catullus *LXIII*
the faultline runs
from clit to anus, but can
an equator debate
itself—are they castrate
enough, these Attis strata—
at Delphi does my vein begin, then, or end?

Her hallowed handled echoes call
to me this cisternship, this landslide
water, oh Pythoness, oh cult-consumed womb;
let some aquarium of seeps accept each
of my pennies, my worthless wishes—
each treasure I offer the Goddess
mercifully confirms my emptiness.

PROPHECY

When I stepped up onto the TV
to see what channel I weigh
the card I got from the slot
said You're going to travel far away
don't forget to leave the remote

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.

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.

PILGRIMAGE

". . . the murky path of the male." —Gottfried Benn

Immured in the snowforest, at
the center of that center-swirled
absence, a hospital-bed waits:
its white is linen's height,
raised by the weight of daily flakes.

You approach this scene each evening,
your footsteps stone the glaze—
oh apathy, you surrender
up to the ankles, knees.
From stretched branches X-rays

sway forth a deeper self. It's
faraway yet closer darker
icicles drool, ripe to drop
under your hand: their blitz
would bury the path you thrash at.

(stanza break)

Through a saberfanged crevasse,
whacking a trail of snapped-off tusks,
you'd plunge on to the wrong past,
vast maze landscape like sculpture draped
immaculate, endless.

Where hail fills high the prints behind
and flurries flail the ways ahead,
why try, how can you come by them
to break the pillowcase
frost lace, to take that last,

most blanket sleep. Superstitious,
afraid to infringe its surface,
emptier everytime you climb
in, what makes the covers crack
and cake off over the rim—

Avalanche tucked, teddybear tight,
you shiver. As ever the night-
stand drifts open, to show
a plate of burning grapes,
a strangled bird's falsetto—

yawning prescriptions of dream.
Ignore them, search for the cure
which never seems so far as now
here around you your eyelids thaw,
sheer as bridal-veils that fall.

Is this where your parents strayed—
and their parents, and theirs.
Have they wandered the once upon
this bed blizzard, spun warm,
this bed whiter than all their kind.

Northerners, arctic, heretic,
you inherit their scorn (their fear)
of Southern deities such as
Ceres. Her grief (her grudge) against
her daughter-loss brought winter—ugh,

those Mother Goddesses!
They underlie, supposedly
("Gaia" 's prior hierarchy)
our myths: their prelapsarian,
pure, panacean pantheon

(stanza break)

ruled that Golden Age when Queens
honeycloned themselves and sat
throned on the spines of drones
eunuch-stricken to demonstrate
Woman's divine right: Her ancient

aegis status was gospel
back then, its testaments ripped
from nature—harmony—holism—
healthsynch: earth worshipped Earth,
that eco-, that matri-archal

matrix . . . : And some exclaim this
sweetest reign resumes when human
throats converge to roar organic
evoes for those primal
Paragons whose restoration

and full-unctuous salvation
one's urged to summon in syrup,
in slush tones said to heal
any cough, damn them, phlegm-hymned
womb zombies from hell. Who invokes

/you shall not harken unto/
/shall not beseech these regimen/
/you shall not bear wounds they could mend/
/real Aryan skin can not shield/
/one tongue that prays to them/

their old rollcall skeleton, chokes—
Spasms sprawl you, supine symptoms
unbleach every resolve to be
the bald hero, the Damocles
who head-first hung must butt

birth, time's trepanned exile.
Slough him, ban from these folds his caul,
skull-carved blond beyond reach—
false twin you feel the steel
breach, both constrained to suffer

more year-armor's vernal rupture—
When your mother died you cried curled
for days, fetus, you split the ribs
of childhood's crib. Uncaptured world:
nightly you cross its guard bars

(stanza break)

(she's lost, her trespass trace gone cold)
bound still to that chill, that pall
fever no nurse hovers over
till mumped thermometers burst—
Always her tracks are smothered there

by a storm of frigid phantoms
you roam mercurial among,
pilgrims whose rigor you
admire, fathers whom you,
a male, failed to mourn of course.

For years those held-in tears froze
mammoth this moan-shrine, fused this
unknown heart, core, coronary
you've grown toward. It creaks and carries
down like a cloud your own death near.

When between squalls the sky clears,
your lungs lay tablets before you—
polar scrolls, vapor paper on which
you will never scrawl Her names.
Crystal ritual, zero quest.

Again you see each word you breathe
erase its space, its air.
Beneath their descent (their withdraw)
what frail erratum shrouds, what sheet
repeats that quietest flaw?

Note:

Epigraph: final phrase of the poem "Vor Einem Kornfeld" (as translated by Francis Golfing). Those familiar with Dr. Benn's symbology—not just in his poetry, but in his essays as well (particularly "Pallas")—will recognize some of the themes and conflicts here.

[UNTITLED]

Octopus floating
in earth's ink-ore core
whose arms extend
up here as trees
may your branches squirt
their black across
my pages please

VITAL SIGNS

Suicides are the pulse of time.
Its BP and temp are not, however,
Births and weddings respectively.

I respect all three, though;
I even regulate myself accordingly—
Because hours, even instants,

Require our belief or else
They will become forever;
The transitory needs us to pledge

Ourselves to its exit, yet this is a typically
Poetic phhft-thought, a wish of words,
A Rilkemilky blancmange.

The ground breaks off a bit of dust
To give to us, a little crust
For the lips of the lost.

QUESTIONS

Before we're born we're
lowercase, and after we die,
we return to it. Only life
renders us in capital letters.

(Every headstone ms.
should really be edited
by clones of e.e.cummings.)

Life is caps for the usual reason,
an exaggerated sense
of the significance
of one's thoughts.
Life is a Beat poet.

Upper existence or
lower nonexistence,
I'm sure the eye adjusts its focus
towards either case—

But which is easier to read—
greatness or goneness,
headline or poem?

Life or its foreword-afterword?

SCENARIO

I am in love of old with your voice
the one fading into its clones sighed,
the voice in love of old replied
a delayed sense of one attends me:
if actors learn each role with scissors
repeating its rip across the script—
I am in love of old but it is hard to
rehearse our parts when they occur
snipped along the dialogue's errata,
yet love of old will show its face
that text of frequent halts our ways exalt;
they flood the scrim to see the movie
memory dreams but what film will fill
or ford its depth though death is
imminent in love of old and wings
to kill those sky tracteries that show
no stage can hold the shapes that cut
catty the paper where these apes appear
or keep its stills in sequence when
curtain-askance your eye I ascend.

STRANGLEHOLD

9 planets and
1 sun make 10
holes into which
the fingers go
so smoothly but
who is wearing
these gloves that
orbit my throat

POEM

If the poet could say to everybody,
“I release you from your duty to me
so that you might tend more purely
the grass and the trees
and all the earth,” then the poet
could say to eternity,
“OK, let’s go—we’re free.”

NO ITALICS

My window hints at
the redeemability of the leaves
that fall past their reflections
in its pane, pale as souls
cupped in a gasp, eager
for new existence. But
rebirth is always behind glass.
Museum or bathroom mirror,
the face you see beyond
believes a better one waits
to emerge your clone. Android aid
that never comes too late
if summoned with hate.

Hear Heidegger say only
a God can save us now;
then wonder if your voice
deception software can fix
that helpless soundbite with
some echo tracked background
Der Führer scanned, can
remix that demi-seminal
sentiment, that decayed need
for sentient being upon
its palmpad where no-one's
future seems more than
a floorplan lacking doors.

Literal exitpod, the body
suffers until its sill occurs
a metaphor of outdoors,
a miracle etched in mud
with twigs that keep breaking
so you finally just leave
them there sticking up
in place of the letters you
tried and failed to trace,
each a small cross recalling
one who similarly effaced
His stuck words. Gone.
Go graved in ground He said.

(stanza break)

It takes the form of habit,
salvation summoned in daily
rites and riddles, the riddance
of resurrection: it takes
some Jesus poem to name,
it yanks its blind costumes
down from a Bach-canted heaven
whenever hospital animals
start to carve stale stemcell
messages into the grass
of your bypass biomass. It takes
to sicken and so die. To
live so crippled and final.

So late in life that all last
effort looks futile, a waste
disguised as wisdom tap tap
with lassitude thus the daily laptop:
Clutching with my pores
a torn wild thing which
I must let go of before
the flood finds me
in time's equidistant vacancy,
I—I stop? Over avenues
of autumn, its hellbent
blueprints, lawnhover leaves,
the blown I lives. No italics, please.

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.

MYSTERY MOVIE

The business rival, the jealous lover,
the distant heir: once I've guessed
who the murderer is, it's over before
it's over, like life. The detective will
continue to not see the obvious or
else pretend to lack the answers till
his hunch is confirmed: if he's Poirot
or so, he savors his superiority and
holds his gloat over the heads of all
the stupid others: the cast still looks
each suspicious close-up in the eye,
but my attention fades to patience.
Post-intrigue and somewhat bored I
settle back, awaiting the confirmation
of my solution. Then: each clue hangs
abacus-like on the bars I've placed
around it all, safe and cell, confident
the guilty one shall confess to prove
that even I must suffer exoneration
in the executions destined for those
who foresee the end, who linger here
complacent in our deductive wisdom,
reviewing the forensics, the shrewd
sleuth-insights that result in the death
of suspense, the loss of our audience
innocence. Now the soundtrack swells
to leitmotif its list of suspects, each of
whom could have done it if this world
were only perfect, equal in its sharing
of virtue or crime. Sherlocks who solve
the puzzle pre-climax are most to blame
perhaps: are we to show for this lack
of justice, we who jump the gun, who
deny the drawing out of the dilemma,
thrill of the withheld. The unknown.
We who rush too soon to the revelation.
We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

INTHREADABLE

each snowflake's
a maze
whose center
no other flake can find
the ways
to enter

FUTILIST

Is there a single inch—
one square millimeter
on the face of our planet
which some animal
human or otherwise
has not shit on?

Is there anywhere even a
pore's-worth of ground—
earth that has never
(not once in its eons)
been covered by what
golgotha of dung?

If such a place exists,
I want to go there
and stand there
at that site
in that spot, truly
and purely for an instant.

Note:

Futilist to dream of an edenic site untainted by waste and decay. And, as the last line indicates, even if he found that mythical speckpoint, in one instant his mere presence would defile it for ever.

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.

RACIST POEM

we had our chance Pilate
washed his hands of it
and left it up to us

we had our chance
we could have chosen
one of our own
a thief
a murderer

the cross the tomb the
resurrection
then heaven
the right hand throne
a smirk on his face Barabbas
one of us

we could have chosen him
for son of god
might've stuck up for us up there
someone who was flesh
of our flesh

our kind
a pure one hundred
percent human
but we goofed

we picked that halfbreed
that homodeity
from Nazareth

we had our chance Barabbas
a thief
a murderer
one of us

THE TRINITY

I don't recall the faith I was born with
I don't know the faith I will die with
all I can do is hope and pray
that the faith I live with
differs from them in every way

LAPSES, LAPSES

There is no us unless it's *Us: the Movie*.
Sure, each sinkdrip thinks it remembers Narcissus
from somewhere, his big mug, his big scene is

even more unwilling to assume the loss
beading up accrued as a stopgap than this
stifled hope it's happening to someone else—

When evaporations have drained every face,
when who's there, suffer-thing, damn lack of focus
get slurred together, get forgot—although

the water thinks it remembers Narcissus—
yes: wasn't he the one who claimed "Coitus
is best against a mirror"; or was it "window"?

Beyond such reflections there is no us,
I mean no univocal being to be jealous
of, scream at, hate and (sometimes) love: or so

the sink thinks. Dishes gunked with Narcissus
or other perversions too ketchup morphous
to name or too shared, perhaps. Oh! one must go

beyond such reflections. There is no lust
we can't not suspect, not unless its vacuous
anonymous fills the eye with those features

the drink thinks it remembers. Narcissus?
That beaut-boat was sunk from go, though
his oceanic ego amused the first memoirists,

proud to propound through their portholes
a sort of photo-insert self, an auto-bi-hog
installed amid the kitchen spigots spouting

this nonsense: soon descent into the main
sargasso impinges and yet to muse/complain
about the Vatican's porn collection, marble

halls filled with stills of Garbo Brando sex
studded poses, does anyone anyone, do you?
There is no us unless the movie version shows

how tactile its evasions are, offering a pair
loss of memory, hark-sleep, simple narcosis.
Beyond such reflections us is lost in seconds.

POEM NOIR

(Braille Balls)

Angry at my wife I drove out to our
Cottage by the lake. Around 1 AM a March shower
Began to fall and when I went out on the porch
To see it I saw a young man lurch
Into the lake with all his clothes on. There
Was nobody else around, the other cottages were
Dark, as was mine. He kept walking straight out
And soon the water was over his head. I shout-
Ed but he obviously didn't hear. He was trying
To drown himself! So I swam out and grabbed him. Sighing,
I resuscitated him. He lay on our bed
Smiling. Thanks a lot but no thanks, he said.
Then he convinced me that no matter what I did
He was going to commit suicide.
I had an idea: Does it make any difference how
You do it? I asked him. No, he replied,
What do you mean. Well, what about the electric

(I Want My Friends In Woody Lots, With French Toast Up Their Nostrils)
Chair? Would you care if it was that? No,
He said. Well I'll send ten thousand dollars
To anyone you cite, if you'll kill my wife and
Go to the electric chair for it. Yes,
He said, I'll pretend to be a burglar, kill her, then get
Caught. Send the ten grand to N, who rejected me. She'll
Feel sorrier then when I'm dead. He grinned. I
Said, Great. The next night I slipped
My wife 2 sleeping-pills then drove to my brother's
To try to establish an alibi but he got drunk,
Passed out so that was no go—damn.
When I got home I went right to my wife's room where
I found her snoring. What the hell, I said. Then
The phone rang. It was my brother,
He said someone had murdered our father. Father!
I said. A hectic day followed. Police, the tax
Lawyers, not to mention, my worthless alibi.
Finally that night I sat up late waiting for the guy

(Eel-tripled Eyes and Freezing Initials)

Who was supposed to murder my wife. The phone rang. My
Brother had been killed! I was chief suspect
Since I inherited the family millions. Wake up, wake up,
I shook my wife, but the 3 sleeping-pills etcetera.
The police followed me all the next day
But I slipped them. They didn't know I was hitting all the joints

(no stanza break)

To try and find that young drown man. We
Had a few things to discuss: That night
Down by the deserted docks we fought.
I was slugged into the river and I drowned.
No-one ever saw him. When they found
My body the coroner ruled suicide over remorse at my terrible crimes.
He had done the murders but I got the blame.
My wife got all the money, and married him.

Note:

When I made the film of this poem I changed the ending: following Hitchcock's example in *Vertigo*, I added a flashback 2/3rds of the way through—in which the young drown man (Tab Hunter) reveals her husband's scheme to the wife (Dorothy Malone): they then plan the other murders; the conspiracy inspires them to sex of course. Later after the husband (Rex Reason) is arrested, rich soon-to-be-widow Dot jets off to Caribbean, up into a 5-star suite where Tab, who had earlier mysteriously vanished, welcomes her with open sheets and champagne to celebrate their successful plot . . . Next morning they breakfast on the sunny balcony overlooking cabana-colored spots and spas; she goes in to take a shower, she leaves him gazing down at endless storeys: she comes back naked with a turban towel on but he's nowhere there: she hears distant screams which draw her to the balcony railing where she leans over zoomshot to see his dark-robed body sprawled dead on the bottom of a groundfloor swimmingpool below. Then she hears knocks and voices at the door: "It's the police, Mrs Reason . . . We have some questions for you." The End.

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.

AN INSTRUCTOR'S DREAM

Many decades after graduation
the students sneak back onto
the school-grounds at night
and within the pane-lit windows
catch me their teacher at the desk
or blackboard cradling a chalk:
someone has erased their youth,
and as they crouch closer to see
more it grows darker and quieter
than they have known in their lives,
the lesson never learned surrounds
them; why have they come? Is
there any more to memorize now
at the end than there was then—
What is it they peer at through shades
of time to hear, X times X repeated,
my vain efforts to corner a room's
snickers? Do they mock me? Forever?
Out there my past has risen in
the eyes of all my former pupils but
I wonder if behind them others
younger and younger stretch away
to a day whose dawn will never
ring its end, its commencement bell.

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.

MISANMYOPE

They say that blinking lubricates
the sight and keeps it safe—
but did this World-Eye really
need the lid of my brief life?

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

PRISCILLA, or THE MARVELS OF ENGINEERING (A Fatal Fable)

A "Swingles Only" Cruise to souths tour on the
S.S. Priscilla: parties, spurtive romances, confided
Antiperspirants, quickchange partners. Suddenly
3rd day poolside blank, sun
Ouch I meet up a daze dish somehow ain't
Crossed my eyes' equator yet: she preened
To have appeared out of that presumptuous
Nowhere our hoarse soggy captain's
Nailed in place on his compass: in all the swarmy sticky
Nightlong pairings off, secret lifeboat
Drill assignations, where did you come from
I offered haven't laid uh eyes you behind musta been blind. Oh
I've been around she said, I've seen you operating
That blonde last night, har, har, har.
Flattered, I introduced my name's Bill. Priscilla.
—As in S.S.? We laughed over the coincidence,
Wringing fragile martini chill stems all
Around us similar neo couples were
Gangplanking each other, coral lounge dusk deck.
Dinner, we promised. Then the moviedance,
Then . . . ? Our eyebrows guessed "The night?"
Separating to change, we hugged all sprinkly
But at table that P.M. I stained her napkin but
She didn't show up went looking for wasn't at the dance
Either. Hmmpf, not on deck—where could she
Be? I asked all the other cats and chicks
Where the hell's Priscilla? describing her. No way
Man ain't never seen no piece like that since we
Ask the purser—man you sure? Tete
A tete sure, I replied. The purser!
I'll get her cabin number, she might not be feeling
Oh boy I didn't inadvertantly slip a torpedo into her drink that
Stud I scored from said they work every,
The purser. But no senior
There is no Priscilla everywhere listed amongs
The passenger list I'm jorry. The boat—she
Is S.S. Priscilla? he added helpfully, concerned, as though I were nutlong no
No you nit-tit—she has to be on look I met her this
Safternoon in the "Cock 'N' Tail" Lounge. Jorry
Is no let me have that thing here on the passenger look for jourseive.
Damn! she ain't on it
A stowaway hunh
That's even better
I'LL get her
She can't escape what's
Gonna do—hide in the ocean?

(no stanza break)

But
Finally, frustrato, angry not even drunk after no
Go searching all night, at sailor's-dawn I slunk to my cabin and
Guess who I found the bitch all tucked up in that little cute-ass
Type beds they have Priscilla!
I hissed. Come to bunk
She swelled. But you, you aren't . . .
Aren't what, know whatcha 're crazy dam-
Shh let's love she swayed. Okay: I'm game. 'S bout time. So we
Start fucking but, her movements were too calm
And rocking, elusive as chase in tune with the ship's
Wash on the waves. Gentle, coaxing, mocking-
Musky, chromosome zoney, internal
As sea. It was eerie
The ex of it cited
Frightened me. My Y shot up: I began
Fug and fury ramming, I urged
Harsh thrash strokes, I hard
To hurt her with my penis, I remembered
That Norman Mailer story where he calls his "The
Avenger" I was pissed, make me
Frantic look all over the goddamn
Ship you cunt slammed all my spite ptoeey
Into her. And then, and then . . . instantly . . .
Something . . . all I know is I came the split
I hit the water. I was drowned, of course,
In the famous shipwreck. The famous shipwreck
You remember
It was in all the TV—
Shots of it sunk in shallow clear just
Off an atoll. And everyone aboard was lost, adios,
Unusual or not unusual in these cases. But no one
Nobody could figure out how
The S.S. Whatshername had
Gotten all those great big gaping holes
Ripped, slashed, torn in her hull nor
What caused this deadfall rupture, the grievous eely capsizing.

Couldn't a been a iceberg
That
 far
 south.

Note:

The movie I made from this was rejected by all Festivals, snob cinepurists objected to its cross-fate wedding of two related genres, the shipboard romance and the shipwreck flick: the former ends in fornication which here brings on the latter's climax: each time Tab Hunter thrusts into Dorothy Malone's loins another great gaping hole is ripped in the ship's hull. Orgasm occurs when the ocean collapses together gasping above its regained void.

(MURAL) (MONDO) (NULFRESCO)

In Shakespeare's *Last Supper* the
disciples (you, me, all of us here)
are depicted seated alongside where
He stands at mid-table and grins
down like an emcee at our expressions—
are we shown, the goblets gleaming,
gloating as they goad us on to toast
the centrality of this spokesperson,
the notional character whereby
everyone has been sketched vis-à-vis
the honoree we can only eulogize,
dependent as we are on His
moodswings. Astonished, confused
by the ultra ups and downs of manic
means, now we watch, we lean, we pout
(the whole propitiatory repertoire)
worried about our survival, inert
(like a frozen rictus facing its fate)
unless depression drafts and draws
us forth the extempore pose, myth,
puppetary projection, limned mobiliary
mosaic that apes some drab-escapist
syndrome, imagination. Which is why
each evening we pray for a chance
to cross the ditch-penny distances
between the footlights and the fear,
vowing to allow each guise of role
to kill us, to raise us from the dust, to
guide us like magi toward summons,
obediently steered by the stock star
the marquee, believing our need—
such faith could pass those deserts
of farce to find this upper room.
Sensing the inn beneath us seethe
with indifference with doubt, we
concentrate harder on His remarks
and jokes, trying to make up for all
the audiences who've failed this test.
Never quite reassured by any overt
wink of His assessing eyes into
our ranks (are any of us missing—
was castcall taken?), we keen forward,
eager for our cues, nervous knowing
that if there is error here, at a signal
the maitre d' will find replacements
for this testimonial "Eucha-Roast"
from the rabble stabled downstairs

(no stanza break)

where the tavern yawns into its beer.
Life is rescue from such anonymity.
Their situation is death, is subject—
those groundlings can never guess
how much it crowns to end up here,
costume-chosen, endowed by makeup
with certitude, form, identity—
Who wouldn't be jealous to know
just how blessed we fictions are!
And yet every member of our
Dramatis Personae wonders if s/he
got jotted into life as whimsically
as Emperors choose sacrificial
victims, as any Divine Ruler or
Hollywood Player and whether
with a fingerflick Hamlet Portia Timon
erased, gone, again. This banquet—
how many have we attended like it?
Daily we wait like napkins to get
opened, held to the face like a mask,
stained and used then tossed aside
like paper towels, paper disposables,
paper identities (similies/metaphors)—
like the paper whose headlines fade
around our names/our fame. Our bits
done, our pieces recited, oh it's bits
alright, it's pieces it crumbles into,
and yet how avowingly we cry, foils
corrupted by one front-row cough.
Exit as trash, as avid kleenex exiled
in a breath to the canteen of lost
turns, the greenroom of oblivion.
Now if there were respite in such
neglect, a grace period with no need
to perform, but both in the wings and
on one's caught, regardless of what's
true. Far, near, (hall or gallery) that
mendicant theater is pursuant always,
lugging and luring its wares:
wherever we are, wherever *here* is
is also an entrance, a set of false steps,
(bright-lit pratfall-pit) a trap for fools,
a stooges' cage, every scrim and apron
prinked with sham, props, champagne
buckets doffing their caps in fealty—
Even the proscenium's subservient
arch bows and begs a platform for
actors trumpeting loft-aired routines,
voluminous effusions or, what's worse,

(no stanza break)

kingly-haired creatures washing
the feet of their inferiors, sudsy
obsequious declamatory eruptions
filled with the rehearsed lava of
bold slaves, the bald brimmings
of an improperly-public humility
(unlike the servant who never spills
his waiting master's entree except
in the pantry when there is no-one
to witness his extravagant remorse)—
All these openly-imploring apertures,
these theme-cut bubblings-up, paeans,
(akin to lame critics' acclamations)
would crack like a laughtrack at
that imposture, that pastiche, applause:
who'd pity these pathetic devotees,
advocates haunted by nothingness,
by that same humanhood to whom
white placecards validate each plate.
Who sat us here? (Athwart this portrait
the descending order of our dinner
ranks auditions more disdain,
every hors d'oeuvre daubed with scorn)—
In our state, our omnipresence,
to which can we aspire? Sometimes
we think: if only there were Someone
somewhere, somehow, though of course
that's impossible: Someone outside
this frame—an absent self, a spectator
vivid at duress, who can feel
the real joy and pain we mime—
who sees the sun setting out there now,
the approach of a nighttime unlike
our curtain: Someone who lacks
the judas window wherein we acolytes
recognize ourselves, the betrayal
portal we have all portrayed so
plausibly it has at last retained us,
replaced us with stainedglass.
(Through which, on rare occasions,
that said Someone fills us with light,
illuminates us.)—Overcome, undone,
we feel ourselves vanish, we dwindle
to a painted panel. We fade, we die.
His stasis renders us too slenderly.
Or is this endless attendance
the promised purgation, the shedding
of every emotion, every weight?
Is it gain, this loss, this usurped,

(no stanza break)

staged starving, this repast-of-reruns
upon a menu whose full-promised
delicacies remain a manna dream,
backdrop glamour (milk-and-honey)
a feastless Eden, a heaven hunger's
expelled whole from. Why aren't we
at home here, in this plenty, this
supernal supper—why this finicky
desire to avoid the silverware, the knife
paler (because it reflects us) than
the poor fork that renews whose flesh
and encores veins across each dish
until its unction-urged tines impale
spearlike and nail the cacodaemon
that shall huzzah hail our Hostmaster . . .
See: the chair He occupied is empty—
expecting the miracle or bloodcrime
through which all of us must assume
His part, the mummings-meal, the sealed
communion. Bard bread, scene wine,
unyield your transubstantiations:
beyond that superceded throne
lies the utter ubiquity of the known.
And so, viva, bravo, boffo, olé,
so each paraclete's performance moves us.
Cheers! echoes the pledge, promiscuous
each voice ID's the oath. The mic
on the dais quivers, shook by our cry,
sole intercessor of this ceremony.

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

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.

GENERIC

I look along the shelf
for brand-name goods of wealth
and fame but all I see
is that cutprice item me.

Wise shoppers shun my aisle
for bargains with a style
shiny and new, not used—
they know I've been reduced.

My sell-date fades pastdue,
retail reveals the true value
that wastes each cost invested:
to wipe this dust off my head

and open my packaging,
ignore the evident aging,
the brown tainted spots
splotching up under Knott's

Best: to buy me takes
a blind eye. A lack of taste.
Half-off or marked for free
this sale's not worth a spree.

TAROT PORTRAIT

Peeking over the fortuneteller's shoulder
Won't add a sole feature to what is there,
What your future paints so plainly in view,
So visible to anyone who isn't you—

Outside her djinn-lit storefront occult cave
The streets that steered you forth to dare this brave
Or foolish quest have failed themselves perhaps
To escape the daily grid and find some maps

Empty enough to defy place or break
The bad odds configured still in the stake
That never wins a hand against this known
Charade of chance: envision it downthrown

In the rows of her slow shuffle. And no
Hexing where you haled from or where you'll go
Next-lost round the dark town's confinements
Will augur this encounter with a sense

Salient, some savor foresight of what's cast
To come in likeness limned at lifelong last:
Occur by endless tics and whits to stare
Unavoidably clear at this picture

Urging you share its peer. Here each suit unseals
A star that arcs inward through her deals
Toward the tower you built to spy on
That distant face your door-key has drawn

Each time you insert it and twist it, a line
Is incised on the canvas: each lock-wind
Puts another brushstroke to the portrait;
Opening her arms she frames you for it.

Impersonal, of course: she has no wish
To harm. You thought that solitaire was
The only game with no intent to punish
Or hurt; thought you were safe in the menace

This tarot chose: but now you see it too
Lacks malice; its fate-cards portray as true
Across the table only that which is due
Or over. How indifferently it shows
Those oldest eyes and what they hold exposed.

WISHINGWELL

I weigh the coin in my palm
against the water's clarity
that shines up at my shadow:
what wealth to smash apart that calm

gleaming, stake my greedy claim
on the future, my need to go
rewarded with all I owe.
I stand above the well to see

whether such a small as this
sacrifice is worth one wish—
the water is cold and stony
to a depth I can only guess.

And even if it reaches that far,
plummeting through the rich
rings of its sinking to reach
a bottomlessness whose core

is death's perhaps deepest ore,
there where the end gathers
will my silver ever bring me
any of the gold it shatters?

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.

AGING INTO THE AVANTGARDE

When the mirror paints itself,
how true to life
the results seem—
But when it paints others, well,
take me, I who have posed so long
my patience has earned
the most flattering
exactitude: so why
(as the years go by)
is there this blurring
appearing where my face is;
is expressionism occurring?

When it comes to its own
likeness, it's photorealism no less—
the mirror paints itself
perfectly, whereas
the one it does of me
(I can see now as I lean closer)
in the end turns out to be
nothing but a sort of art brut:
the brushstrokes grow
more fauve, more cobra
each time I look.

ECHO NEAR THE END

Severs and brothers, broken 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.

LIFER (AKA "HAPPY BIRTHDAY")

our prisoner
has received a package
containing a cake
which of course he thinks
must conceal a file
or a hacksaw-blade
and starts
to dig down into

actually however
his salvation
his way out
his escape route
has been carefully laid out
in brightcolored frosting
over darker frosting

the crucial message
the delicate pinkly lettering
overlooked
unheeded
falls shredded apart now
by his hopeful search

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.

POEM

Soul to sing of all the Suicide-Ins
of the 1960s and how righteous
to invade the avarice palaces
at Evil Inc or government offices
and from our ponchos raise in unison
rainbow-antic canteens and gulp enough
morphiates for a fatal dose, then call
the media knowing that despite the crowd
ambulances and police arriving
to stomach-pump and IV most of us
back to life, inevitably, in the rushed
roulette of it there'd be casualties,
a few of us would always die each time,
peace we'd cry and keel over wondering,
hoping our perish action gained the eye
of a public busy with headline TV
and cause commuters to sip their coffee
slower, or a spouse making breakfast grin,
the kids to hit each other ouch that hurts.

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.

CRAPSHOOT

Whoever it was, the first plagiarist
had to actually dream up the concept
of the crime, so don't fault him (I imagine
this culprit as male, but the poem he copped
was—I would bet—authored by a woman)
for lack of originality. I wish

I could excuse his bad act as madness—
that a crazy theory whose tenets value
words over typos caused him to go true,
to trace out hers so unerringly—
instead of greed, I'd plead psychosis
and cry, He's Realism's victim: that's why

his poor misled hand tried to break those laws
which make omnipresent subatomic flaws
subvert the verb of every medium
and blur our sheerest copier's laserbeam:
say now his felony should be absolved, since
wise Heisenberg has found that once and once

only can the poem stay per se, regardless
of Benjamin's *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter
seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*:
why couldn't I call his vile counterfeits
brave attempts, brilliant schemes to outmaneuver
the ways physics limits our digits' genius?

I wish I could. But, I can't. No: he's to blame—
just him, I think. Yes: the wank-ink of his name
on her work is un- , un- , un- , is a sin
I must atone. Oh, if he had only cloned
her signature the same as her poem,
no harm would have come from his plagiarism!

I write this knowing that random quantum
impurities in the surface body
of the paper or scanscreen on which
this is printed will betray all I say
here to some degree, any is too much—
each thought emits a glitch, thought Mallarmé.

I pray this page permits perfect access
what I would guess my xerox intended
to be a sincere apology to Ms.
Sappho and her sis, but may indeed instead
(despite our dearest efforts) appear as
the very opposite of what you've read.

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.

THE PERMISSION

(to AB)

On each shoulder
I bear
a jar
with each
its angel
in
formaldehyde
I wish to preserve my loves
You
say No
let them go fly way
away
and when
they come back and
if then
then you
may kiss me on
each shoulder gone wing.

IMMUNE

Listening's confined to animals,
What we call ear uncalls all we hear—
Eyesight applies to hawks and owls
But never to our narrow peer:

Each natural sense we experience
Here as humans pales, halved or less
To a modest of its male-ness—
Smell; touch; taste: can you even guess

Which among them if any might still prey on
My higher-evolved clone . . .
Which of that five's alive and hovering—
How dead to its lunge we've grown.

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.

ANCIENT MEASURES

As much as someone could plow in one day
They called an acre;
As much as a person could die in one instant
A lifetime—

PORTRAIT

When the mirror paints itself,
how quietly it sits.
Its posing is perfect.

But when it paints us,
no matter how hard we try,
eventually
we fail to be still.

What if we propped a corpse up
for model: even it
would fidget
after a while;
the flesh would droop then drop,
spoil the sitting
by spoiling.

No: only the mirror itself
can pose properly
for its incisive portraits,
which mock our mortal
impatience—

Displayed everywhere,
mirrors are the walls we live in,
they make a museum of us.
Our provenance (if any)
comes from them.

And no expert needs
to authenticate
these masterworks.

We are the forgeries.
We are the fakes.

MINOR POEM

The only response
to a child's grave is
to lie down before it and play dead.

MITTS AND GLOVES (for Tom Lux)

The catcher holds a kangaroo fetus in his,
the firstbaseman's grips a portable hairblower,

but everyone else just stares into theirs
punching a fist into it, stumped

trying to come up with a proper occupant—
The pitcher for now thinks a good stout padlock would go

right in there, but the leftfielder,
influenced no doubt by his environment,

opts for a beercan. The shortstop
informative about the ratio of power to size

says, "iGod, man. You know: virtuo." The
secondbaseman however he just stands and grins and

sort of flapjacks his from hand to hand and back again,
secondbase dopey as always. Alas—

cries the thirdbaseman—this void un-ends us—
avant-space beyond our defiant emptiness—

abyss, haunted by the kiss of balls
we have not missed! oh ab-sontz

deh-lease. . . . The rightfielder is DIS-
GUSTED at this, he like snorts, hauwks, spits

into his and cusses Huh look: heck
my chaw of tobac fits it perfeck.

The team goes mum, cowhided by
the rectitude of his position, the logic.

Only the centerfielder, who was going back
while this discussion was going on,

putting jets on his cleats to catch the proverbial
long one,

does he—does he perhaps have a suggestion . . .?
As for the ball, off in mid air it all dreamily

scratches its stitches and wonders
what it will look like tomorrow

(stanza break)

when it wakes up
and the doctor removes its bandages—

Coda:

Mitts versus gloves. Mitts—mitts
are pros at what they do.

Whitecollar, authorized, hightech—et al—
wholly, ruly-truly, superior. Compared to whom

the glove is a prole
a tool

a brute built
on the manipulative; purpose vital

in the game of course, but subordinate
overall—a workhorse, meant

to be migrant. It
can be employed

phased in
used

any old base; by
all players: is dirty, low-down, dumb. I'm

forced to admire the mitt but
free (in theory) to love gloves.

POST

the one skull I'll never find
between my teeth is mine

anyone else's skull I may
(all the dystopians say)

have to suck the brains
out of if no food remains

postnuke postplague
(I'll crack it like an egg)

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 Régner,
and Jean Moréas"); *le vice anglais* (the home version); death at age 30 (consumption).

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—

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.

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 lantum

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.

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

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.

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?

FERNAND KHNOFF

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.]

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.

HOLY SHIT

Gosh golly Galway Kinnell's pig is holy and I
Am holy too and so are you and gee if I could only
Find the name of the right saint to throw in here they
Would print this next to his in all their anthology.

Note: After Kinnell's "Saint Francis and the Sow."

MY LIFE BY ME

Every autobiography
longs to reach out
of its pages
and rip the pseudonym
off its cover.

SPORT

Flinging your door keys
into the wishingwell will
not unlock the secrets
of what you wish for
down in your own depths,
and is not even funny.

POEM TO POETRY

Poetry,
you are an electric,
a magic, field—like the space
between a sleepwalker's outheld arms!

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.

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
Blurred 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.

"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.

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 this case), medieval prince legendary for his
cruelty and dastard deeds, avatar of the vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

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.

WORSE

All my life I had nothing,
but worse than that,
I wouldn't share it.

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?

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.

PARANOID THOUGHT

My roots are twisted entwining lovers,
Couples passing me on the path, ignoring me,
Always pretending that I am not their flower.

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

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.

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.

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

TYPE-CAST

I refused all roles until
they offered me the lead
in "The Co-Star Killer"—

CELEBRATION (dodecasyllabic)

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

HISTORICALE

If I were part of a tableau viveaux
and I fell asleep or died
none of the spectators
would notice or else
they haven't so far—
they haven't realized yet
that in essence I am absent
from this artful scene
when it freezes to depict
the panorama where
I nurse various withered
and storm-lit emergencies,
though perhaps there
is one in the audience
who suspects, who fears
that he or she will surely
be hauled up on tiers
to replace me soon,
and who even now
shrinks back in their seat
and frowns at my perfect mimicry.

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.

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.

MEANING LOSS

Imagine a world disguised as art,
or one in which art masquerades
as you, so your face is just a portrait,
your legs a landscape. Your hair
abstract expressionism. And when
you go to the window each morning
you glimpse in its transfiguring pane
a streak of the vein source of things:
that your eyelashes remain nothing
but brushstrokes, that your feet
beneath it all are woodcuts. And when
you open the door to inquire how
a rose can limp between the breasts
of the dawn, you feel like a collage
snipped from the pages of a novel
whose words are immune to meaning,
not subject to such mute truthserum.

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 in 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.

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!")

EPIGRAM

And I would rather read the early Pound,
'high deeds' that need no theorymanding,
than wade those Canto footnotes round
till I drowned in understanding.

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.

[UNTITLED]

Rice thrown from
an open grave marks
the height of a ceremony
somewhere in our lives.

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

SNAGGYPOO SNUGGUMS POEM

Morning always lets down strings, knots
of light to be untied by our hair—
but come the soar of night's coiffure,
all them puppets lie back in their cots.

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

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.

WHY

if that bird soars across
this wall which halts us
why does it then
fly back here again

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 ledgelife.
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.

DREAMTIDE

All drownways night
shed waves battle blankets
and sheets cry for shore
the sea's in a pillowfight
aboard my bed-of-war

If downways floodfeathers
should drift all day on me
childhood-hoarded could
I let my hours
finally jet free

But flownways the days
must wait there to bare
that blood which neither
wound nor water
adulterates

Will yawnways waken when
every sandgrain sifts
its one memory pure
of the breakers taken
the oceans endured

Now up on thrownway beach
dawntide high they've laid me
from comforter combatted
spread over lap-dunes dead
wings wherever I reach

[UNTITLED]

Before the Babel Discontinuity
there was no music, only poetry—

when we return to that prior state
as androids cyborgs we shall hate

this falsity called "music"; solilovids
will provide our numbered heads

with much truer means of commune.
Attuned we'll be without a tune.

LAST POEM

(to N)

1

It's harder and harder to whistle you up from my pack of dead,
you lag back, loping in another love.

2

Rigor mortis walked the streets, its
coat tattered, face pensive. A howl was heard,

3

which calmed
all chimeras.

4

My hair hits me.
Wine lifts its deep sky over me.

5

Her palms upon my forehead became my fever's petals—
Her face—altar where my heart is solved—

6

prepared for me its absence
in the dish of its cheekbones.

7

Your face alone has no echo in the void. Your face, more marvelous
each time it flows up your warm arms to break

8

upon your smile.

Your kisses still rustling in my voice,

9

you don't exist. I will fill you with
sweet suicide.

10

Naomi, love others then.
Don't let this be their last poem, only mine.

SEANCE

Around the readiest table
a manicurist with a hammer
nails in place all hands together
to hold the ring of our focus clung

and keep this communion open:
like jostling airliners the dead
must circle before they land
along the medium's tongue.

SWAT POET

They use me as an anticlimax, right before
smoke bombs door rams bam bam guns—
I'm a SWAT poet. After the fuzz negoce has
got nowhere they haul me up as a semi-last
resort, hand me the bullhorn and I'm on. It's
usually too late by then, the crumbum thug
or slimeball felon inside has resisted all
the handbook ploys—once I asked the Chief
why me? why a poet? wouldn't a standup
comedian be more appropo? Yeah they would
he grunted but like if it's poetry we can get
a grant. I stand there and address my saddest
lines to the dog fugitive holed up in his mad
grudge, what'd I say? Yesterday I started with
"The haystack itches where the needle is, but
it can't reach that far." But today I'm peeved
by something I just read, so I tell the crazed
killer: Camille Paglia says this poem began
with pizzazz but its zazz always pizzles out—
both the critics and the cops want a big bang
finish, the rough beast, you know, Bethlehem
every time. But all these stand-offs fizzle in
their droll, you die, I slink to the U. to teach
the junior bards how futile words are to quell
the violence you manifesto in flesh, the flash
fails its prosaic finale, the hostages flail hell,
footnotes revenge this transgress and trope,
hopeless my every appeal. But you in there
my ideal captive audience, you must know
our hold-outs our hide-outs are no help up,
the authoridudes gonna nail us in the end,
you on death row and me on the shelf where
my policed volumes plug their sanctioned
crimes of rhyme in chime with the same old
Villonmyths, Rimbaud selling slaves to find
his fateful famous shame, what the hell? You
and me, buddy, smut good are we? God hail
this suicidal shootout and movie macho
got no chance of precedence in the pants,
it can't oedipize your dad and mine and what's
his name the honkidonk the king the man—
so come out now and let our tame jails remain
jealous of each other, barricaded in their
terror of empathy, these cowardly face-downs
just to create what, an obvious world where
yours murders, mine bores them to death

(no stanza break)

with its antithet, its smug badguy of verse
poses, nothing's worse than this stale feud's
duelling each other to whose purpose, you's?
Give it up. Unlock your door. Look—it's like
the avantgarde out here, every rifle round me
is bristling with theory to prove you wrong
and them right, right between your eyes,
stooge. Staged version of my poetry prize.

UNTITLED

Unscarred unscratched
Unnicked as the bottom
Of the lost wishingwell.

CAESAR LEARNING TO JUMP ON CHESSMEN'S BACKS

Why he'd have to be taught what comes
so normally to male-kind is puzzling,
unless inbreeding of noble strains has
left him esthetic, less stoic, timorous—
a child, his toes babyfat, his bare soles
poised in the approved Colossus-of-Rhodes
at the count of three jump up and down;
while his tutors applaud young gods
the fragments are brushed away by slaves,
the black-and-white pieces crushed
bloodily together form a tragic alternate
ideal society where the kings queens
etcetera are indistinguishable from
the pawns, and maybe that's the fun—
no rival to the Rome where the scum
who whisk away the grey-by-defeat shards
are neutered or both and made so
at birth, representative of the mass:
consigned to bear their broken brethen
down past the intuitive, the dirt that heaps
their dirt beyond lowest dungeons and
to bury there the chess-bits that spoiled
the boyking's heels, his small insteps
and ankles, indeed the entire tootsies
of the six-year-old Emperor must then
be amputated just below the shin, be
replaced after every lesson by the royal
transplant surgeons. Which could explain
that curious adage (that Cretan riddle),
“Where do our plebs go without feet?”

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.

DECASYLLABICS

Condign rightly I get shot down each time
I violate the No Poetry Zone,

always the NPZ (otherwise known
as the world) curtals me with hush command:

one foot and I am trespass in that land,
where the prose police have standby orders

to kill me should I dare breach its borders,
or if I even err to breathe in rhyme.

[UNTITLED]

Sometimes at screenings of my movies once the first scene begins the audience is gassed with soporifics and when they've dropped off I enter naked and rub my breasts belly and X-rated parts against their faces; later from the limo I send my PA in to slap them awake after the endcredits and then make each one confess what they dreamt of during the show: the plots of these dreams are spot recorded and serve as scenarios for my future films.

DUNCE RHYMES (FOR THE MOMENT)

and if this poem
has made you a hearer
of ghosted voices
that fade when you get nearer
and everytime you look
into the rearview mirror
you scream and clutch
at your hands in fear
at what those futures show

and then will you cry out
for all to hear
the cripple the promqueen
and the seer
don't you think that now's
a good time to be freer
than you were
a moment ago

[UNTITLED]

Some have a bodied voice
Their tongue its skeleton
Mine's a wraith
Waiting for a wind

REFLECTION

Some are afraid of the deep;
me, of the shallows.

It's not possible to drown in it,
but it is possible to delve in it;
which is worse?

I lean over a mudpuddle,
bend to a pane-drop.

The shallows
is where I sight myself;
the abyss
shows all you others.

Which is worse?

MOONSHOT

Stalwart Gagarin's
(or is it stout
Cortez's)
cosmonautboot
quashes
the tender
rays that engender
Selene's
poetic praxises and
phases—
Yuri, what you do
imposing the siberian shoe
on its silver sand
just to be
the first man
to land there as John
Keats said stranded
on his peak in
Darren may ruin
our poems' home.
Please leave the moon
unbroached
by any voyage but
our verse's.
Bring
that Soyuz spacebus
back to earth and sing
quest-else to come—
Tuned lunar time
how pacifically
we'll praise
the usual discoveries.

FEARS (CONT.)

niche niche niche niche
the birds go seeking a covert

eclipse eclipse eclipse eclipse
my shadow hides behind the sun

this this this this
every corner finds a crevice to keep

wish wish wish wish
the oldest word pacifies the youngest infant

WAIT TILL TONIGHT

Sometimes a dream will show me
the words I need to begin and end and
then take them away and leave just one
word or, like last night, three or four:
"the arms of care." That's all. There
were lots more but they vanished when
my eyes opened; they were of course
the words I need here now to justify
this. How can I forgive myself for
forgetting them, forgetting that which
might have made me whole for a while
holding you all in my arms of care?

[UNTITLED 31-SYLLABLE POEM]

if kidnapers know
the exact time of day when
their victim was born
they should strike at that moment
psychology would suggest

ENCOUNTER

Is there truly no secret
I may forget for you?
No, you answer, others have already
forgotten all my secrets for me, thank you.
You're polite about it.
A shrug says sorry.
Those others, they are obviously your true companions,
whereas I—
Now you go back intent to what you were doing
before my crazy interruption.
I crackle my media pack.
I look at you sideways.
I don't want to intrude, I'm discrete.
I sit and sip my mocha grande. Will we ever meet?
I doubt it and besides,
I've already forgotten what it was
I bothered you with in the first place.
Whatever it was I said,
it's your secret now.
I'll never know.

CROSSROADS

A crossroads is a solely human place—
animals in their time have created paths
through jungle, woods or plain, wearing
down the grass with hooves and paws,
but roads that intersect are necessities
which only we respect. The junction
of two lines laid in the earth serves
to focus our steps in ways which crazed
disparate fleerings of herds to and from
their waterholes and feedgrounds can't
flock or follow. Hard beyond those mad
meanders lies the nearest need to greet
a configuration of fates we recognize
indigenous to us: hostile purposes, aims
in antipathy: two destinies that disagree
at every point except one, pure opposites
who meet just once, whose encounter
is over before the moment can swerve,
the transient turn untrue. Forever lost
(like chessmen in a labyrinth) we must
impose our cartography upon this dirt,
whose corrosive tangencies would deny
any thoroughfare thought, our dream
of achieving that beckon-cathect, that
act which will prove by evil increasing
daily acts of horsepower steadfastness
that our choice of trek was correct, since
a crossroads alone can show us the way
we didn't take, lunging there at right
angles to our progress: its ninety degree
option runs so counter to our own that
it endorses the unique course we now
pursue the rule of, pent souls plow-low
so none of them neither else can share
what, except for that single instance of
sidelong, that helpless avoidance, that
glimpse of other lives we might have
shared a respite with on this junctured
hurrythrough, is a solely human place.

[UNTITLED]

Once I had to leave you so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you'd think I was caressing you—

IN MEMORIAM

What the Year Says:

I am a bud.

I am a blossom.

I am a leaf.

I am a branch.

What the Year Doesn't Say:

I'm burgeoning.

I'm ripe.

I'm falling.

I'm bare.

What John Logan Said to Me in the Year 1960:

Show, don't tell.

Note:

Logan was the first real poet I met, the first poet I studied under. Although we were never close personally, I admired and emulated his work. This poem was written after his death.

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.

RILKE (BUDDHA)

His ear is elsewhere far: there where it's still . . .
We halt here and hear what everyone hears.
And he is star. And then the other spheres
All shining near him are invisible.

Far past the rest of us who exist. God?
We submit, and offer our tame consent—
Slaves on the sly always for his eye-nod.
Yet like a panther he deigns or doesn't.

We're doormats (knit from knee-pads) really. We're
Filler for his zillions of lightyear skies.
What he forgets is what we can't forget here,
While in what we lose he's wise.

POEM

barbershop in the desert
where I shave
the cacti daily
so carefully that no
pearl of their water
is spilled by my razor

come closingtime
the needles I've sheared
cover the floor so
I sweep them all
into the closet
to fructify the feet
of my secret cactus
which I keep
to replace that traitorous
evil barberpole
who defected
up into the hills
out into the aisles
of my clientele

my virility my male
principle I'll
trim so bare
and never a drop
of its sperm
will I spare

AN AFTERNOON WITH EUGENIO

But how boring. And so, the rain was of use . . .
that window ratatat threw my smiles' drift.
Thimble-down heavy its downplay lasted for hours;
were the core seasons flowering, no longer
believing that to die that way, sated
in that cloud-loud debate, in that nacre-null sky,
would (finally) reify more gender: stars, all
those birthday elements, the bare *paysage*
of a blaze too logical for our headlines, massed
to shed the odd ganglia we misname them by . . .
And this despite those arriviste freighters—
and in the harbor, no less! Gilded grew
each porthole's penny of envy. But now
Damocles' last wig smacks down, toward the mouth
of Etna whose wisest cigarette-lighter (lifted
from the giftshoppe there) strikes flameless
three times in a row: trick omen, infernal feign, and so.
Unless the rain can be blamed, this ratatat rain:
gun that aims my fingers at my thumb—instead of him.

Note:

A parody of Montale the Monotonous. One of the poets I don't admire but sometimes go back and try to read (in translation).

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.

MIDDAY WORKBREAK (after Montale)

Lunch to forget the morning's sweat
Against a wall along whose top
Broken glass has been set to stop
Thieves' incursions: sit back and let

Each limb find ease in dream beyond
A rest-time undisturbed by cries
From highest nests when summer tries
To place entire its days upon

The hour we swelter in down here—
Even those nearest earth, the ants,
Even they can't span more distance,
Or map one noon-nap's short career:

None of us can orienteer
The maze sun sees in that mirror
This wall uplifts in rifts of shards
Wherein our lives all labor towards
Their end and never quite get there.

Note:

transversion of Eugenio Montale's "Meriggiare Pallido E Assorto," from his first book *Ossi de sepia* (1925).

TRANSVERSION OF TRAKL'S *Ein Winterabend*

Now snow across the window falls,
The evening bell tolls on too long,
Our table's laid with everything,
The whole house is stocked with staples.

Many paths find one terminus
And mob that gate with dark offshoots.
(The tree of grace bears golden roots
Which sap the earth beneath deep ice.)

The Wanderer enters again;
Pain has petrified the threshold.
Communion shines out of the old
Sideboards its share of bread and wine.

PENNY WISE

well alright
I grant you
he was a fascist
ahem antisemitism the
er war and all
I'm not defending them
but at least
you've got to admit
at least he
made the quatrains run on time

Note: 2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, Pound foolish"— And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time."

TROTH

if you drew a string through
the entwined fingers of lovers
might it come out all knots
which would then in theory right
be too tight to be untied

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.

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 piecemeal 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.)

THE CODE

(for Heather McHugh)

All while I tried to brain myself
With my key-ring
Which unfortunately
Was one shy of being fatal

The fickle key itself lay
In infamy
In the hands of my wife
Who as I fell the blood

Making my forehead
Squeak against the floor
Slid open the secret drawer

Of my *escritoire*
That's weird she said
He uses real names in his diary

Note:

Some of the metaphors here were elaborated upon in a later poem, also dedicated to H. McH.: see "Emigrations" on the following page.

EMIGRATIONS

(for Heather McHugh)

Shouldn't there be a word that sounds like an
extraterrestrial clearing his throat
of human phrases, their roughness roseate,
plush thorns that tart each normal timbre—
And when that word's punctuated by two ears,
can it be said to not hold all our meanings?

Vocal as those envelopes one discovers
tell-traces of tongue-blood on the flap of
(licked too reckless—mistake it for love),
we fail to seal shut the heart, to kissproof
its distant alien stains: kept vigilant over
that bouquet of papercuts, I remember

a cloud installed with thumbtacks scouting
across planet, pinning down oceans, denoting
islands, deserts. Borders, poured from the sky—
We felt safe on such worlds, behind guards,
armies braced to rebuff incursor postcards.
Death rose to greet us with a flower in its eye.

*

But count the kisses, Catullus wrote, meaning
to waste your time first multiply your tongue.
Oh make that prime mistake again; repeat
what the explorers of sea-roared corridors
promise the coils that conch them, desperate
to remain unsounded, sole. All such figures

are promiscuous: love is repetition
and layer/layer lovers disrobe; overlapping
matteshots which hatch-depict what deepest down
most elusive nudity. Our stripped-off skin hurts
to acknowledge the body is the blankest map
onto which earth will eventually start

to imprint itself dirtgrain by dirtgrain,
mud by mire it will come to cover us entire
with minutiae of the utter matter
ground around us until we are its textual
affirmation, and therefore a refutation
of what? The self—but if its loss is a sexual

(stanza break)

discovery, the poet has entered hell
demanding to plumb whomever these charts
misquote. À la Cocteau's torturous *Orphée*,
she guides herself through fog-stellar hallways;
every step begs to be reversed. Their cry
is always the same: what exquisite urge

to tame all welcome-mats has portaged us
averted, shielding our gaze from its suffice,
to this place! Waving an exit visa stamped
with each other's lips, the lovers have sailed
beyond i.d. But the ship sinks, no one can build
enough lighthouses to surround that swamp—

*

Orpheus croaks, the frog in his larynx jokes,
each time Euridice crumples backwards, implodes
from sight: he is what she breaks—his grid, his husk.
When the sperm disembowels my orgasm, he asks,
what self-restraint it shows to commit suicide
in front of a mirror, knowing beauty is

personalized by paralysis . . . then, if the wound
learns to probe for its own kind, flesh will never
unvoice that loss, harvest that scar. By harping on
her name he hopes to gloss, to refine this epitaph.
Meanwhile the eternal tatter of her smile flares
fainter, firefly trying to land down a mineshaft.

Fact: the frog can't see the fly if the fly sits—
it is literally its flight obscenes the eyes,
whereupon the long tongue zaps out, severs and appetites.
With this in mind, perhaps the truest desire is
blind, concealed, a phantom wandering the deep net
of optic intersections, of pang-swerved nerves—

lost, one of its possible fates might be starve.
The poet traverses this labyrinth—the maze carves
emaciations from her face. Her way is gropes
which somehow render aim that inner landscape
our window (at night the white moth's easel) drapes,
that site razed by home. But could she place her poem

if it moved her mouth with mine so they became
one, one mouth which then looked for another
mouth to kiss. It first appears there are only
two bodies here—the one you are, and the one
you desire to unite with. But then, beyond
the mingle of that longed-for synthesis, we

(stanza break)

may hunger for more antitheses, further
incarnations, until (exponentially)
our body orbits what rapt apogee, that pure
theory. I believe it. And thus to make them whole
your lips must be divided by these words. She
who utters such catharsis/communion will

have to seed or sate whatever wing-hung thing
we nurse in our throatpit. Gordian gorge:
just ingest each knot and trust—trust your intestines
will undo it? Orpheus or Herpheus, the poet
cannot reduce the roughage verbiage her diet
imposes on us since it is our emptiness, purged.

*

We who journey towards tomorrow rather than
today walk behind a door which our arms are tired
of keeping held in front of us, the wrists ache splay
from its weight—although our knuckles come to admire
the knob—merely on the pray-or-none chance the one
who keys our phrase may be straying yesterday's way.

SYMMETRIES

How mirrored this merging: it's like lover/loved—
The poem aligns us and aims to make our skins
Correspond, each of your pores barrel-grooved
With one of mine, clone-gunned: then void opens
Onto void, grid-ideal, union, see, it joins!
First of course the skins have to be removed.

SUMMIT

on this hill at sunset
I will feel the contrast
of it going down
and me up here for
a moment as final

THE FINAL WORD

Our farewells lack the plausibility of our departures.

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.

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 both the original French and Serge Gavronsky's trans. . . .

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.

THREE POEMS AFTER MALLARMÉ

1. 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! When death puts on the wrong clothes . . .
When 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.

2. (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*.

3. 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.

[UNTITLED]

Eternity gnaws its thirst.

Its tusked planets rut suns raw.

Its grapes mist the sea.

But sleep flows to the fallen.

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.

MOULDSTONEWALL

By each stone bright
in the inanimate
light

our earth discovers
its nakedness
is disastrous.

A total wipe of the slate.
And yet
this lets time get set

for the grass
to amass
its mound, endless

immense wall. Order
gives birth to more—
mornings ordure

(stanza break)

the moulds until
they climb
our decay. Prime

the sun will
soon costume
each size and all

that waits to wear
the dead in their
measure.

The assault comes long later.

It rips away
the flesh of day,
matter's tatter.

Note:

Transversion of an untitled poem by Claude Esteban, from his book *Croyant Nommer* (1972)—I worked from both the original French and the translation by Rainer Schulte (Mundus Artium, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1974).

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.

NAOMI POEM (THE STARFISH ONE)

Each evening the sea casts starfish up on the beach,—
scattering, stranding them. They die at dawn, leaving
black hungers in the sun.

We slept there that summer, we
fucked in their radiant evolutions up to our body. Ringed
by starfish gasping for their element,
we joined to create
ours. All night they inhaled the sweat from our thrusting
limbs, and lived.

Often she cried out: Your hand!—It was
a starfish, caressing her with my low fire.

ASSASSIN

kiss each bullet
before you load them
so every saliva'd
shell will slurp up
during its inspired flight
some of the confetti
snowing down on
the motorcade
and will use those
alphabet bits of
newspaper or torn
campaign posters
whose false hope
peoples this parade
to compose an obituary
to collate out
of those shredded
syllables and words
those puffery lies
like a poem drawn
dada from a hat and
thereby at the end
of their satisfactory
trajectory come to
imprint some random
elegy in the flesh
of the tyrant me

TWO OR THREE SITES FROM A FAILED AFFAIR

Dozing while I dreamed on down your body
to where all fresh from a swim or a bath
I woke, seeing it still, that false witness,
that law they call displacement. Miles away
the reservoir was polluted by this—
I lay wondering in what water, who
can I be renamed renewed to lieu you.

In the desert, I insist that a soloist
waits hidden behind each dune which undulates
silent, lurking till far off the orchestra
start, their wholesale music merged towards noon;

yet even here I have to swear I admire
that air of exaggerated effortlessness
conductors use to pick the baton up off its stand;
is this how to proceed when making love:

the over-implicit manner, the art concealed;
a strength of skills held in belial, reserved;
expertise on tap, an oasis of ease

somewhere deep: I've never been able to do it
I guess. Access I can't the virtuosity
to be both; both hesitant and satisfied.

Our bodies converged to bisect the bed,
dividing it lengthwise in half; too-brief
border, momentary truce contested
by the realms that spread on either side of
us; or a map, an antique tapestry,
split over sparring heirs. Death. Aftermath.
Whatever could have severed you from me?

[UNTITLED]

that poem I was working on in 1959
and the half-done one-act play from 1969
and the novel I started in 1979
and the painting I made sketches for in 1989
and the website I planned to debut 1999
and that Po-Viz project from 2009
are around here somewhere
maybe I should
 finish them up today

MIRRORSHORE

If there were as many Melisandes for
each beach as fall through an hourglass
every eternity what time would the tide
in her tell me not to despair unless
I could no longer see their singular

Melodies or sands what would it matter
waking to hear their dirges praise
the years tatter demay the day when
echo believed its ears once too often
trickle trillions every second scatter

Love has too many skins for X to pare
skeletons prefer closeups in caricature
what a waste of shame's Shakespeare
if I cannot penetrate each hide of it
find some door core for my sill secret

New way I nail your soles to mine and
run out to find you though as always
I can't escape via a shadow that stays
straycaught in the fall from one to all
that's a sleeve-jest we'll share for a while

So tell me will the walls stand for ruin if
the ceilings those adolescents decamp
and finally what is it that separates
human from hum from hmm and um
from all my never-any Mels held quiet

Immersed in measure too template to trust
what dumb-long phrase thumb-print drains
if I take two steps for every step that flees me
will I end up here sad cellmate of sea
while the true she eludes these few grains

Always its mirror can shave me entire
the waves still have me dune by dune
if there were only as many here as her
should I care to character that the moon
in the water has the face of a deserter

X

Lovely the future appears on a nape
But trying to predict the face itself
Or guess if it will vanish is vain.

You make your mode of life the godlike
To equalize the danger or is it joy
Of living in its eyes' past. Transient

Because at any moment this person might
Board any moment and go into the wind,
Coat slant against a roaring iota boat.

This is the one dream that has no aftershock,
Because you don't wake up from it.
It can't be mocked in retrospect—

Driving away her final car
She may reappear to you only admired
A frame whose time never came.

The negative nose, the minus mouth
Lingering in a sift with years, the destitute
Aimlessness age brings. What sacrilege

To imagine she harbors more of you
Than you of her, as if the two
Of you ever were.

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?

APART, TO V.

I've never seen icicles clinging to a cobweb,
though it's easy to, no spider's needed. See,
the idea simply observes Reverdy's dictum re
what an image is, and what it's woven from.

But for a like afield-work to reunite us, how
far it must spin! That farmhouse of my childhood
deserted—the scrub-brick cellar,
which could more or rough take a thrift-year's canning,
is wall to wall cloth by now.

Think of its door:

creak. Think of me
caught in your arms, warm,
tremulous fragility, all rapport or
even perversely: love's a weave from which
no beautiful incongruity I hang can rip us.

Apart, to V.

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.

SUBTERRENE

in the Vatican's basement
a secret sect
of vampire nuns
retired to their coffins as
day broke and
even lower than them
a volcano roused
determined
to blow nirvana up St Peter's ass
what slapstick erupted
in the pope's tea-cupboard
imagine the galleries
the gods the gilt
all that marble melting
lapping up its own veins
on a day the year was halved by
time did a worldcrack
to teethe our feet
and the sense-struck echo
the scream buried
in a half-awake handkerchief
on walls the faces crowded
like blackouts toward light
from streaming chariots
the fire brigade quick
erected a cage around
the burning cathedral
flames leapt at its bars
and the nuns
the vampire nuns
rose up and ruled
as they had done so often
and lions and tigers
and high high above
a stratospheric spacesuit
filled with scarlet feathers
floated earthward

NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a
right where the nipple cheeps
kiss in each nest
of the black bra
hung inside your bathroom door.

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

MAY EAGLES GUARD YOUR GRAVE!

The weird thing is,
I can't remember if the above
is a phrase I read or heard somewhere,
or if I wrote it myself.
(And, is it a blessing, or a curse?)

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.

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

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?

FOR LACK OF YOU

(to —)

I examine the sun's diagrams
for your tan. The ground's plans for your walk.
Sky's project-papers on how, where
to utilize your breaths. All these schemata,
endless as my tracings of your faraway
face—poring over them in a solarium
observatory devoted to the study
of you. New proposals, outlines to
blueprint each moment: slowly reading, hoping,
finally I grow feeble-eyed. The fingerprint for
your lashes, the arms' down, fades. Now
you're abstract, a block, an architect's
whitest nightmare or any bare construction of
skylines, vague unhouseholds. The plumbing
venues, vent of window or door
vanished, even the light itself a blur—
at last comes total blindness:
touch-awkward I feel like an ogre, a clumsy giant
tripping upon some ruins,
rubble of the town he's just smashed.
Tower-cursing as I bang my knee. Or no:
I'm tiny. I can see again! I see the giant walk off
favoring his one leg . . . favoring
my one you, I kick through
the strewn clutter; I get down on all fours
and start to scour around: one model, just one
to copy from, to begin again. That's
all I need, lacking you.

[UNTITLED]

you wake up only when
the dream you're having
can no longer come true

you wake up only when
it's the same old you again
and not that dream person

you wake up in suspense
at what will happen next in
the dream that just ended

(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

[UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands
with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced
to secondchild. My skin is
smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure
my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

NEOLOGIST

In a dream he saw every word of his tongue
flashed on a screen one by one, not in
alphabetical file, but the order of their origin,
and after the latest newest word blinked off,
he woke up shouting the next one.

NONREQUITALS

(to —)

Each night you transfer
my fingernails to my toes,
my toenails to my fingers.

And if the magician
waving simple cardtricks
disembowel himself somehow—
through some slight slip in skill—

Evening's when we live, mostly.
Before an unhatched iceberg
I preen my scars.

You bade his only face brought in
on a slice of camera
—but affixed blue earrings
to a whiter skull . . .

No one will return
my toenails to my toes,
my fingernails to my fingers.
No one will rip up the list
of those loved by those not on the list.

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.

[PALMPOEM]

In my hand
a drop
of palm
dissolves now
the lake of
your palm
in the land
of my hand
spreads
to the shore
of our
fingers
what faces
float up
flattened
quickened
beneath these
fingernails
if the fist
is a desert
the palm is
the hand's sea
which rises
which recedes
palm is
the water
we can never
drink
enough of.

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.

THE WHOSE FAULT IS IT POEM

Six AM the
Clockhands
Clothespins
Of nakedness

Is it turn for your shadow to be
The sun's birthmark or mine?
We lie in the ruins, the pertains
Of all we sought to evade by touch, avoid by sight.

Now we argue over which criteria
Gravity uses to select its victims—
Why weigh the impact of our caresses upon
This bed till they fade, svelte
As a thumbsdown swan?

Only the sun rises at random, at mootpoint we lie.
The rain wearing black armbands may pass,
I dab my smile at the mournersby;
I dab my heart at you.
As for the blame, I'll take it:

I was naked there, where we were.
I was naked,
But my clothes were stuck in my throat, thereby
Rendering my nakedness ineffectual (or, perhaps, spurious)—

I would have whispered something darling
(I would have said the words to save us),
But there was this darn zipper
Right up against my voicebox.

[UNTITLED]

As a detail in a painting
frames that painting in
the often memory,
so, for me, your face is
surrounded by your eyes. Aura!

NIGHTS OF NAOMI

1
Each of her penises is a long fragment in the knife
2
Tracingpaper placed on the mirror to outline whose face
3
Whose hair of buttered blowguns
4
Clear eyes and cloudy nipples
5
Years spent wandering in front of a stab
6
Light is only a shadow which has learned to write its name across light
7
Her name rotting on the tongues of all the dead
8
Tongues which have lavished me upon me
9
Never mind delivering tomorrow's gypsy

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 curtseyland 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.

(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" . . .

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.

AFTER A BREAKUP

At times the distance known as us
Is measured off. Or so we guess: unless
An estimate be taken it is lost,

And all the usual rulers fail
By millimeters really, to fix as final
Our spreading split: what will surveil

This gap-apogee, this apartness-arc.
Horizons, forward! Borders, march!
Frame us and bind us with the starch

Our stance lacks, too human a pose
To exude the dimensions that raise
A statue whose limit is its eros,

That never spills over as we do
Across the bed's page like two
Errata in the same word, a hollow

Catachresis. Morphaphoric? Crammed
Together in a programmed
Antithesis figure, we seem

To have blundered our way here.
Mistake is the way we take our
First steps and last. And where

Desire beckons, who can resist
The climb to that nobodiest nest
Known as love, its endless

Thievings of each others' leavings,
Scraps and wisps and strings
Knitknocked together, tangle-things

Always unraveling, always
Getting in the way
Of our getting away

Knot-free. Free of me
How could anybody
Not want to be.

7 1/2 POEMS TO, FOR, AND ABOUT RN

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)

3. Dyed

I deny every emergence of the night
From your hair, crevice that heavies me
Though I waver as water- or age-stained pages;
Do hushpoints accompany such cries?

Your skeleton/scrupulous abacus where
Flesh's inconsistent total of hope,
Despair, recurs, keeps score, where
Skin has no right to interrupt my pores.

Depicted (which in the distance pales) who
—Oh bright, pagoda-forgotten landscape!
Where moths spared myths of flame come, go.
Near where the nevers flow into the no.

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.

7 1/2. Nobody

A head surrounded by speedbreaks of hair,
And somewhere in there the face, its gaze
Blue as a scalped tongue, struggles to emerge
As you, to frizz its orifice with yours.

Now all my near and nether parts agree
She could love none of me. Could anybody.

FLAWLESS

Mopbucket toed across a jeweled floor.

To scrub down between these gemstuds is hard,
and yet I have to cleanse every dust-shard
that might perturb the great ones who walk here.

Only rubies diamonds pearls and other
beautifuls can their bare soles encounter.

PASS AROUND THE COPIES

Have none of those nipples
left specks on my lips—
are there no stains on my fingers
from some of those warm hips?

(The ones I caressed
so far in the past
nary a trace must still exist.)

And what about the hands that coupled,
hands that cupped me—they
didn't deposit any spots?

Am I not a leopard
of love (a leper) covered
with its blotches stigmata errata
etcetera?

No: I'm not. Clean slate!
Bitemark, scratchmark, blooddrop—
none.

I'm blank, flawless, immaculate,
ready to be run
off on death's xerox, one

more poem perfect for Workshop.

[UNTITLED 31-SYLLABLE POEM]

in the country of
the blind everyone I see
is pointing at me—
I knew I should have bought that
pricier deodorant

DAYS

Ceilings ring with morning's occasions;
evening's toll us to the floor.

THOSE PILLOWS

Those pillows lovers keep
adjusting beneath themselves to find
the right slant (that of someone
walking against high wind)

have their own cushion-quotient
of soft or hardness: they're
similar and unique like snowflakes;
every pillow has its singular

feel-degree, though blizzards of limbs
would moosh them all the same—
yet chastened to lie winterfold
among them once you've came

so close to breasting the best of
bed's storms, then maybe now
your relent-laced forms will learn
what little ease these loves allow.

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.

WHAT

I envision a doctor saying
to me someday soon
(and any day is too soon)
your diagnosis
is terminal . . . then
I imagine myself
replying
well I've had a good life—

That daydream ends,
and I sit in my room
surveying, estimating
trying to guess
while I still can
what's good
about it.

POEM

the pink bubbles seem
redder each time I blow them
vampire bubblegum

THE PATRIOTS

at the edge of the city in
the garbagedump where the
trucks never stop unloading
a crazy congregation stumbles
from trashmound to trashheap
they smash their fists down on
whatever's intact they tear
to bits the pitifew items
that have remained whole they
rip everything old clothes
papers cans bones to nothing
with their shining teeth
the enlightened the faithful
every twelve yards one of them
falls and is torn to shreds by
the others at the edge of
the city where there's a line
waiting to join

THE MALLTIQUE FALCON

Often a flower tries to befriend your shirt,
but you must shun its minor transcendence
and remain in transit afterwards then later forward,

nor stop along any ground lure to wield
an egg balanced on a T-square and declaim
how grateful you are for whatever cameo roles

your film noir killers and thieves can still assume,
though the thrill of closing your eyes in witness
leitmotifs the fear they show account to.

Earth-surface seems to support this with evasions
which, if difference did deliver, might
grant monkey unanimity to time's isolation

and overcome your capacity for reason among
vined gardens of origin, desperate media
which litter the floor with florabunda

whose come-ons to your clothing are due
to their desperate desire to be real somehow:
how sad nature is in its entourage stage,

its stalker nazi strategems to stay relevant,
the way it mimics us. Its simulacra swarm
almost human in their gaudiness of thorn

or leaf though of course they lack our essential
say nay qua. Yet here you are among their
units of ubiquity as if they were the one you

should escape and run to hide beneath a sundial,
while your windmills pump water to a stalled
starting-block; your bread sops up the clouds.

Hey: each day don't you see on the screen
a comedian's teeth battle the lava of his own lips.
Doesn't that scene render Vesuvius superflous.

[PSYCHE]

hope the mortician
remembers to put
mothballs in my pockets

LOVE POEM

Because you have set your lips in my life
like an event, the date
I had missed and longed for
unknowing if it had passed,
day dull as diaries
that wait for wonders—

Love, error of the unique,
rare-offering the one
moment
that will never share itself with
the household chores,

the drab demands of normal
life that line up pending to be
faced with nothing required of me
but an absent askance quality:
the stove and sink et al.

Love
on your heights
on the crest of a kiss
can you ever know the comfort
of these doldrum dole duties,
these small acts of repeat.

Against their duliness
your beauties dull.
I bend to their boredom
which after all remain home

and I find real life alone
and release
and solace
each time
I press my mouth against them.

EN PASSANT

While orbiting
the earth
at a height of one millimeter
I notice
it tickles.

DISENROUTE

Between her breasts was
a glass of water from
which I paused to sip myself

occasionally, to augment
the moment. And since
I've failed to regain that thirst,

can it happen again when
I re-read the poems from
that night, still fragments

for the most part, forgive
me, I know one word leads
to the one right for it, but

I can't stand an anthol,
a whole—the book held
by its pages together shows

its total tangents caught or is
that thought an adequate
lack of transition—there

are rules to excuse these
detours, yet I resent the facts
that run me offtrack—for

if I were linear solely and
kin of rails, my schedule
my purpose no choice, set

to refuse the switchshuttle
intent of this; and were
say weather for instance

its own similar, if rain
was the rain, like an express
it would never stop but

express itself in drops,
its destination contained
within the figure, no need

to board the Noah needle
swerving single-mindedly,
bound to change at the next

(stanza break)

station although some claim
the immanent, the round
the bend one alone houses

all the sights the others
suppressed while others
sedentary, say there is

no need to proceed unless
vicarious, for whom a flyspeck
on the wall will fix fully

the great ideal of goal, be
that what's-met metaphor
to greet our roamer with as

he returns from the endless
crash, the west of his word.
Pilgrims of the accord, sigh

what lies beyond? Faced
with this wait, this plexideath
present, this plain computer

pane, I'm gone. If life bye
(switchyard skyport harbordock)
is a processor of arrivals

and departures, can there be
a point at which the two mesh,
a Heisenbergian mote-spot

where bi-quarks mate
monosexually, where the map
disowns these double-junctures,

discharted couplings hoping
the cars of our corpse can
twin-bine every inner coping

and shed their gathered tours
in disembarkment's cloak:
it takes place guise, the twain

train comes goes, the terminal
time empties fills like a well
oasis, the desert's depths

(stanza break)

get piped together in sate
instant to create a kiss, its
memory parched-up on lips

that halfbelieve the lie I lay
beside her in the denoue of
lovemaking, or that I'll stay

survey the nipples that kept
distance placed the way any
window reveals its view by

far: I spell it out there in my
arms for the spill of it, start
recount: whereupon that

template that heartpump aims
to fructify the waste sill,
to render more sand fertile

facile—temperate it tries
overstrewn overmonsoon
to wade straits, facilitate

garden and wine-grove, grow
similitudes of old term-twines,
codesystems called rhymes,

a life sentence of coils
undermined yet constant
ark buoyed by breakers,

though lingering inside
every sign's writing entails
a vine-pattern, erratic

struggling with the field
of its tributaries, till wow
revolves but pow stays put.

Because the hands are
what the arms would be
if they crumbled and

each thing falls into its lesser
extremities, its future
attributes/beauties, their

distant vista's view veiled,
as if by glass. If she
shattered, I told her, she'd be me.

FLIGHT

Now the negatives of night
are hung to dry
in the darkroom of dawn.

Faces in the sky,
how they waver the words
of you and I, the us
we were lost to their blur.

Steeping through storms
I come, awash with this
chiaroscuro of bottles which
the wine left cliffed along each

dune when the sun rose
mist in glow as transparent
as the sandgrains on
your breasts. Masks rush

to the wound that scents them
and time empties like
cities drained secretly by
their museums, still we must lie
enduring its lightest dross.

The lovers their bodies
beaten into plowshares leave.

Then you bring fire
from the sheer of your life.

Face against the sky,
your eyelash propellers spin
ready for the take-off.

POEM

The thumb is
the scoop of the hand
and often
it empties it.

Tongue
head
ditto.

MEMORY OF X

The better to steady myself I rose
In her arms the better to stay: say
She has to remember me I am nobody
To be without, and I am nobody without her.

To see in her special-glacial eyes the die
Disdain she was right to feel for me;
To slake all hope that atop their snowcap
A mirror could ever be bent by a sigh.

Now if I wake at night my veins alone
Beside a dream of her amid the hoistless moon
With my blanket whose holes are home;
She who I pray finds me in all but the final way.

CARPE DIEM

Yesterday it was a good day—
I was alive yesterday. So
Will I still be able to say
The same of today, tomorrow?
As of now the answer is no.

RESIDUE

I woke to find a foursome
of sex lying atop me
as if I were a bed
on which they blended.

One was a dream
none has unless
it came as two to them—
but is it true?

Three, four:
please vomit over
the edge of the cliff,
not on it, I pleaded.

TRINITIES

I first loved you
Second to
The light you cast

Into my eyes
Where I first saw you
Second to the shadow

Lost in yours
First and second
Where do you wish to be placed

Second or first
What is your wish
Day night day my

Shadow strives to stay
In the light
Your eyes displayed

Under their lids
What lives only
Only to be obeyed

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.

EXCURSIONS

1

have you ever swallowed
a sinkplug and drowned

has someone pulled your navel
till laughter gurgled down

2

let's go buy a roundtrip ticket
to the maze today

oh wait a ticket to the maze
is always one-way

I HAVE NO HOME

I follow the road
nowhere goes to,
the one somewhere
comes from.

If I passed here before,
wore a path into the stone
other than my own,
ignore that fetish form.

On the staircase
each tier vibrates as
the desire to descend
contends with the urge
to awake.

In that same dark
where the groundfloor gets lost
the upper story
may find its way.

TO X

You're like a scissors
popsicle I don't know to
whether jump back
or lick

THROWBACKS

I want to take your place in my life so
I lie in wait for you everywhere. Once I used
To lie down in the paths of steamrollers, my teardrops
Where photographed at the feet of glaciers
To prove if they were advancing or retreating
Like positions in a kama sutra: after the cold
Juggernauts passed over I was fed lingeringly
Through printer-outers. It was read then that the
E-pore is used most frequently by my skin,
Next came x, p, o . . .

I want you to take my place in my life so
I follow you everywhere. Once I used
To follow burglars around: waiting at the window till
They ransacked a house then fled, I'd enter
Run my hands through its emptied drawers, degleamed
Jewelboxes, my sole thrill was to rub the feel
Of deceived receptacles, rifled pockets.
I'd wait outside, then rush in, clambering like an adam's apple.

I want to take my place in your life so
I go with you everywhere. Once I used
To accompany myself, I had a passport to the xerox,
The unanimous aimed its initials at me on the run,
When my died my clones were laid out at the funeral
Beside me, then a heckler who's amnesiac, anybody, some
Forever stranger was blindfolded and led past the coffins to
See if they could get the right I by feel but failed
And so their life was took in place, and so I took your life
As place, so I must now keep placing your life in take,

In sudden give and take:
I want you to take my place in your life. Please.

[UNTITLED]

Nature doesn't need
a mountain to show
it exists; mist will
suffice. But the poet
must painfully pile
up every pebble of
his absent summit.

TODAY'S STORY (*OH, SYNESTHESIA!* #4)

Somehow this morning light
diverted to my ears, while
soundwaves ricocheted my eyes—

For hours I had to twist
sideways to walk
without tripping, and each carhorn
made my eyelids
whip like a hurricane awning,
as I squirted eyedrops in ears eardrops
in etc., gradually
things returned to normal.

But I feared tomorrow:
“What if my molars salivate
at every inner or utmost attar;
if eon-brandy I cannot savor but
through thy swart chute, oh nostril!”

In fact by the time this evening came
I was so worried I had to call tell
my friend X—
who said: Well, look,
just tell me one thing: can
you feel the phone?

What do you mean, I said,

Can you feel it with your fingers,
X said, is your sense
of touch still there, where it's
supposed to be?—
Yes?—Well, in that case,
get over here
and give me a backrub,
right now,
right this minute,
before it's too late.

IN PASSING

in an opaque ocean
the transparent fish
reflect each other

HENDECASYLLABICS

Solemn from his post he weeps, the President,
Media-closeup-mourns those lost in battle;
That catch in his voice and dabbed eyes' sentiment
Show us once more he's no heartless general:
Techwise aides to produce this tearful event,
Offcam sodomize him with an icicle.

AGAIN

One of my pores creaks
when I pass through it,
as I invariably do—

if I found that aperture
whose verge protests
at my constant

farings forth,
I could oil it with
kisses or apologies,

promises to restore
the tender sill its
welcome mat violates;

to renew the world
it opens onto, to destroy
the one it opens into,

if I only knew
why it alone
amongst the millions

dares to complain,
to voice its distress
in the form of flesh

when I pass through
as I invariably do,
soon for the last time.

SIGHTSTOP

To spell amid a tree's sundapples
the birds' practiced shadows argues
an eye for effects, dark against dark—

simple discernment, nerves aligned
and brain, perception minus squinting:
the true 20-20 if you can bind

that sight until through repetition
it is nothing, a blur which focus
has lost itself in, a memory mimed.

Even windows, those indentations
of day, hold a void of the view.
They too are restrained by its stops.

Meanwhile the hydra of my soul
needs just one more mirror to see
itself whole, so hold your eyes still.

(SERGEY) (YESENIN) SPEAKING (ISADORA) (DUNCAN)

I love Russia; and Isadora in her dance.
When I put my arms around her, she's like
Wheat that sways in the very midst of a bloody battle,
—Un-hearkened to, but piling up peace for the earth
(Though my self-war juggles no nimbus). Earthquakes; shoulders
A-lit with birthdays of doves; piety of the unwashable
Creases in my mother's gaze and hands. Isadora "becalmed"
Isadora the ray sky one tastes on the skin of justborn babies
(Remember, Isadora
When you took me to America
I went, as one visits a grave, to
The place where Bill Knott would be born 20 years in the future
I embraced: the pastures, the abandoned quarry, where he would play
With children of your aura and my sapling eye
Where bees brought honey to dying flowers I sprinkled
Childhood upon the horizons, the cows
Who licked my heart like a block of salt) Isadora I write this poem
On my shroud, when my home-village walks out to harvest.
Bread weeps as you break it gently into years.

THE DAWNING

Now it takes only minutes
for light to travel from
the sun to the earth,

but an eternity to go
just six feet further, down
to where the dead are,

yet I could arrive there
immediately if I left
right away, my journey

blink-instantaneous,
world by world unscreening
itself: if I shed all trace

of surface—unsoiled each
skin which holds me here—
if my rays suddenly

were allowed to blaze forth
against their distance in
whole less time than this,

although I know they lack
the lightyear's intuition,
the nova's needle's-eye,

I pray they penetrate
always the dirt and find
a place haven to our kind.

IN ORDER

the dead you
wrote about
in order to
forget about
so you could
write about
the living are
still living there
where you aren't

SNUFFED

The candle's leaf
is what we call those drops
that cling solidified
up along its length
after it's been blown out—

We switch on the overheads. Outside,
branches bode, bode, bode.
What
do they predict?

Descent is all,
they're not specific, unlike
our phrase
for this froze ooze
(which beads the bole)
(and which is more like sap than leaf)
this effluvium, this sheaf
that trickled from a flame we lit once
days or years ago.

Time, our sentence, is specific.
Memory, its syntax, vague.
The melt is where they meet—
inksoil syllables dribbling down a page.

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.

PANE PERHAPS

I bear the bulb that never burns out
so why do I change it daily, discarding
every light as if it were dark—is this
how I try to extinguish doubt? If

all the face I hold to its lips outshines
and shapes each path my steps ape:
fills each millisecond socket with
such purpose that the stray-goer gaunt

with desire for that glow no other
mirror gyred into my eye can descry
finds himself most of lost, most of past—
resentful he soars toward that mirage.

By now his staircase is replaceless in
this house of spiral pursuant maze,
told to a secret code deciphered by
coincidence but aren't they all: in rooms

where our waits wilt like the heart
of a coffee-vend machine dripping
time, moments for an hourglass where
intonations of high tide trip one's tongue.

(Day the sky takes up its task of wings,
night the way we lay down ours.)

MY THEORY

The universe's mission is to expand,
all scientists now agree; yes, but why
should that be its quest, they question—

Based on my experience, my theory:
if one remains in the same place, one
must pay rent, life's made me understand.

Landlords and clergy may disagree
with me, but look, see every galaxy
sneak out the back, starcase in hand?

THE MISUNDERSTANDING

I'm charmed yet chagrined by this misunderstanding—
As when, after a riot, my city's smashed-in stores appear all
Boarded up, billboarded over, with ads for wind-insurance.
Similarly, swimmingly, I miss the point. You too?

And my misunderstanding doesn't stop there, it grows—soon
I can't see why that sudden influx of fugitives,
All the world's escapees, rubbing themselves lasciviously against the Berlin Wall.
They stick like placards to it. Like napalm. Like ads for—

And me, I haven't even bought my biodegradable genitalia yet!
No. I was born slow, but picking up speed I run through
Our burnt-out streets, screaming, refusing to buy a house.
Finally, exasperated, the misunderstanding overtakes me, snatches up

Handcuffs. So now here I am, found with all you others
Impatiently craning, in this queue that rumors out of sight up ahead somewhere,
Clutching our cash eager to purchase whatever it is, nervous
As if bombs were about to practice land-reform upon our bodies,

Redistribution of eyes, toes, arms, here we stand. Then, some new Age starts.

Note:

Line 7: the Berlin Wall (circa 1945-1990) was, before its demolition, one of the Cold War's finest sculptural artifacts.

(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

TO OUTREMERICAN POETS

"The peach-blossom follows the moving water . . . there is
another heaven and earth beyond the world of men." —Li Po

1.

There's no time left to write poems.
If you will write rallyingcries, yes, do so,
otherwise write poems then throw yourselves on the river to drift away.
Li Po's peach-blossom, even if it departs this world, can't help us.
Pound's or Williams' theories on prosody don't meet the cries of
dying children
(whose death I think is no caesura).
Soon there will be no ideas but in things,
in rubble, in skulls held under the oceans' magnifying-glass,
in screams driven into one lightning-void.
Only you can resurrect the present. People
need your voice to come among them like nakedness,
to fuse them into one marching language in which the word "peace"
will be said for the last time.
Write slogans, write bread that pounds the table for silence,
write what I can't imagine: words to wake me and all those
who slump over like sapped tombstones when the Generals talk.
The world is not divided into your schools of poetry.
No: there are the destroyers—the Johnsons, Kys, Rusks, Hitlers,
Francos—then there are those
they want to destroy—lovers, teachers, plows, potatoes:
this is the division. You
are not important. Your black mountains, solitary farms,
LSD trains. Don't forget: you are important.
If you fail, there will be no-one left to say so.
If you succeed, there will also be a great silence. Your names, an open
secret in all hearts, no-one will say. But everywhere
they will be finishing the poems you broke away from.

2.

What I mean is: maybe you are the earth's last poets.
Li Po's riverbank poems are far, far out in eternity—
but a nuclear war could blow us that far in an instant:
there's no time left.
Tolstoy's "I would plow."
Plow, plow. But with no-one left to seed, reap,
you write? Oh rocks are
shortlived as us now. But still this BillyBuddworld
blesses its murderers with Spring even as I write this . . .
so I have nowhere else to turn to but you.
Old echoes are useless. Glare
from the fireball this planet will become already makes shadows of us.
There's Einstein.—The light

(no stanza break)

of poems streaking through space, growing younger, younger,
becoming the poet again somewhere? No!
What I mean is. . . .

Notes:

Lines 3-4: Li Po sitting on a riverbank would write a poem, then lay it on the water and watch it float away.

Line 6: Cummings: "and death i think is no parenthesis."

Line 7: Williams: "No ideas but in things."

Line 30: Tolstoy, out plowing a field one morning, was asked something like "What would you do if you suddenly knew you'd be dead by nightfall?" The quote is his answer.

THE ONE

If gravity's angel is
the unfallen one,
the only one
aloft, if.

It's paper I write on, page
you read, but is it ever
pagge? That
unpronounceable

is where
the sacrifice
occurs, the merge—
Like Sylvia in Leopardi's lament

we fall, in fact we flop:
our slack hands helpfully point
out the inadvertent
directions of death—

the right a tomb in the air,
the left a mausolith,
the one I write with.
And now all

the others recto verso show
their distance the one,
the only one
I live with, if.

AN UNDERSTANDING UNNATURALLY PROLONGED

Someone was talking on the telephone
marked for hello while at the opposite
end of the café the phone for goodbye
was free: we couldn't hear her voice at
our equidistant midway table crowded
with standup toasts shouted down, our
congrats visible in the confidence with
which napkins surged from loose collars:
at the booth across from us sat a party
crying, shaking their faces out of their hair.
They stayed our share with such contrast—
hours went by, days; we feasted, they
lamented. On our exit finally we went
past the hello phone still in use, she was
still talking there and we were amused,
amazed at her persistence until, peering
way down towards the goodbye phone
still on its hook, suddenly we understood
the boothful who wept in our wake. How
we continue in hello though there is none
to go goodbye. How we live while they die.
And as we lived we were often struck by
how long that understanding took to pass,
yes, how unnaturally it seemed to linger.

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.

SAY WHEN

I write poems that consist of nothing
but the word attentionspan
attentionspan
fills all the pages of all my books
of course it's boring for you
to read the same word
printed over and over again
I agree it's a waste
of time and patience in fact
I know you probably won't even
read past the first thousand or so but
that's okay I am not hurt by the fact
that you never read my poems all
the way through because (and get this)
wherever you do stop reading
wherever you toss me aside
is where I triumph
is where I impose upon you
the term for that limit which
you have haughtily and
eternally tried to impose upon me
right there
wherever you stop
will be the word for that stop
the true word the word
made deed as we say in the trade
you will have reached your attentionspan
and I will have put it there
waiting for you
writing it over and over for you
sitting in this crummy room day after day
gloating over this victory
over your usual tyranny
over me

[UNTITLED]

I think I can see
the handholds that
might enable me
to climb up to where
the toeholds begin,
but will I ever
reach either.

AND SO ON

suicide sex it's so much fun
you take 3/4ths of a fatal dose
and then fuck till you pass out
you cunnil her or fellate him
while they slit their wrists and
then you call 911 and so on

VOI(POEM)CES

"mercy . . . mercy" From face to face
a child's voice bounces, lower and lower;
continues its quest
underground.

Bloodspurts lessening . . . hoofbeats of animals
stalked to their birth by the sun, fade. It is a bright
edgeless morning, like a knife that to be cleaned
is held under a vein.

I blink away the stinging gleam
as my country sows desert upon Vietnam.
We, imperious, die of human thirst
—having forgotten tears are an oasis.

"help . . . help" From heart to heart
a heartbeat staggers, looking for a haven.
Bereft. It is easier to enter heaven
than to pass through each others' eyes,

pores,
armor,
like merciful sperm, cool water, the knife-
thrust of tears. . . . It is easier
to go smoothly insane—like a Detroit car—
than to stammer and hiccup help.

And this poem is the easiest thing of all:
it floats upon children's singing, out of the bloodstream;
a sunbeam shoulders it, carries it away.
There is nothing left.

"please . . . please"

PUTATIVE POEM FROM SAMURAI ERA

he made a haiku
before his blade took my head
why not a tanka
tanka would have let me live
fourteen syllables longer

THE QUESTION

Far off, demimordial, I hear an epitaph of ears, someone
Collides with a stopwatch, innocent mincemeats rise steaming and
Sporadic laughter, cardoors going slammed. Then, static-ier voices,
Through blood jettisoned by mimes statues reminisce, reveal how
They subsist on glimpsed nubility, personal-touches in crowds who
Traipse past. In rooms where you heard the sound of a teardrop
Striking the bloodhound surface of perfume which sat in a
Washbasin, chipped fake porcelain, who poured it in that? in
Those rooms (where you were so strangely audient!), others, like
Me, are listening. Outside, in the city, the minstrelshow
Pollution (which paints us all in 'blackface') continues, corny
And racist, sexist, lampoonist . . . humanist? Ashes watered
By hell, kisses skimmed from doveflight, cream from silk, what-
Ever rises, curdled, from depths as fraught with else as these,
Far off. . . . Yet I would encourage your traits your tricks individual
Of speech, you crowds who gape on as those rooms all rush toward
One room, whose doors part now like a mouth pried in cry
Silently, stifled by its openness. Will my voice receive me,
Will my cries still have me? will not be the question there.

LEAD

If I could fill these lines
up with pencils instead
of letters I would. Less

metaphor meaning or
superstition might adhere
to those writing-sticks

than this. Let the tool be
a substitute for the work;
the eraser for the point.

POEM

I heard the abide.

How low it was.
How loud it was.

How soon it ended.
And what it said.

I heard its words
poured, pouring
from the sky.

The clouds were frauds.

The froth lost its mind in an ear.

EXTINCTSPHINX

Underline these half-written words as
if to say their incompleteness increases—
italicizes my meaning. Similar such
those partials out of which

dinosaurologists construe
that overpowering, that overtowering—
that propped up by the very worship
it yearns to bite in two.

*

In selfswamp submerged then
to breathe through reeds of piss
that gold god's evening panes
barely adumbrate: they know how

to improve the ceiling by
removing the floor.

*

Birthdays having leapt their children,
hesitation of candle, endless fugitive.
A shudder emptied itself into your eyes.

*

Goodbye now,
for my coat is changing hands upon me.

AIM

I have arrived but
Have I, have I really—

Maybe to say that I
Have arrived is wrong.

Maybe I have instead
Merely uncovered,

Bared for myself
A destination that

Was here all along,
Till now concealed,

Till now not found.

(—But have I really gone?)

POEM

This slobbered-over virus of the visible,
The living, the seen, what antibody cures—

Echoesque whose draped torso of rain on
Taunt's panes was flung for cry sakes, for crime X,

Loud as a ball bounced off a statue of Zeus.
The mania for scintillations fills your mind

Or else on stilts will survive the folio hero
Wielding a cage of umbrellas to capture it.

Strongbrow shelved for futher thought: more patterns
Examined by a selfportrait of one's own

Pores, exposed as they are to icy nemesis
Plural, to spelling out its false names in sweat:

Where elsedom do they welcome open as
Often as this door does, quench-map that mires

The path from our left nipple to our right
Where, bisected by itself, the heartguise dies.

THE BUTTERFLY LEASH

It's weird to think a few animals may actually outlive me,
I'm so used to their sort of
Heroically silly dying out despite
The nothing I can do and the cheering crowds pinned
Along fade-rallied streets like ash cans craning
Expectant, eagerly drab, disposable as a child's merit badges
Dodo, buffalo, eagle, unicorn:

So why's some butterfly flounced a leash on me
It's just a book to me, vague metaphor-alarm
It's not real
To me: bitty flight described in blood by 2 pointillistes
Duelling, fatal thrust of wings escaping
That pricked ideal the Proletarian Esthete, saving,

Courageously sacrificing i-self thud for a fable, detritus
Is that it. Et cetera. I don't know. But
Take for an example look just
At its farf-etched markings: they are
Blueprints for a building on fire: noon

High, pi-born flames, flames
Strict, aligned, set by t-square, then rocketing relics
(Bound to earth only by hoses, hoses)
Siren in and start erecting a cage around our hokey blaze-edifice
(Can I confide in you).

Inside,
Comrades: one must primp brave to face lions
Lionesses gala glare, yellow flambo lynxes moon-
Crisp crackling tigers terrible as the tissuey tickertape you
Pull from a great big ole cocoon to toss, leap on you
Obscure you, so much, a model, ah! in fact
I can't distinguish any more through these cold mesmerich bars rising
like iron streamers in
The sheepish outsparked sun . . . And the rusted species

Plaque in stark latin says you're a little
Late for your extinction
Ceremonies anyway and besides,
The manhole countries are in revolt that
Mythical beast, so bode-by, it's been too glory, sad sakes
The sack who could have rescued us maybe
Unfortunately already some moth-medal jabbed hero
A scalded Neil Armstrong, a hasbeen
Frailing infantish anachro, spook or spotted, architect
Of arson, handihack, dabbler, a zoo-zero

(stanza break)

Whose
Lemm-legged
Honorcade parade of none plods
Only through flag empty alleys ouch
Where greek garish garbage rains down, like
Fire-spat jumpers with no net:
Carnal confetti out walking its pet effigy.

Note:

Neil Armstrong was the first human to set foot on the moon, where he got a phonecall from President Nixon, who took time out from his busy schedule of bombing Southeast Asia to congratulate the brave astronaut.

[UNTITLED]

in case it forgot
was the apple not
reminded to rot
before being put
into Eve's hand

SECRET PLACES

I bite the screwtop top of a
bottle of naivete steady in my
teeth and slowly, by
rotating the bottle's body in
my hands, open it.

Christian crap, Jewish junk,
Moslem muck, Buddhist bullshit,
the days all begin and end.

Pain is the absence of repetition.

Eventually the soles of the feet
will infect the palms of the hands
with their hiddenness.
Their remoteness.

Until then
I remain a door-deep animal,
embracing every room
shy of welcome.

(POEM) (CHICAGO) (THE WERE-AGE)

'My age, my beast!' – Osip Mandelstam

On the lips a taste of tolling we are blind
The light drifts like dust over faces
We wear masks on our genitals
You've heard of lighting cigarettes with banknotes we used to light
ours with Jews
History is made of bricks you can't go through it
And bricks are made of bones and blood and
Bones and blood are made of little tiny circles that nothing can go through
Except a piano with rabies
Blood gushes into, not from, our wounds
Vietnamese Cuban African bloods
Constellations of sperm upon our bodies
Drunk as dogs before our sons
The bearded foetus lines up at the evolution-trough
Swarmy bloods in the rabid piano
The air over Chicago is death's monogram
This is the Were-Age rushing past
Speed: 10,000 dead per minute
This is the species bred of death
The manshriek of flesh
The lifeless sparks of flesh
Covering the deep drums of vision
O new era race-wars jugular-lightning
Dark glance bursting from the over-ripe future
Know we are not the smilelines of dreams
Nor the pores of the Invisible
Piano with rabies we are victorious over
The drum and the wind-chime
We bite back a voice that might have emerged
To tame these dead bodies and wet ashes

FUTURISM

Hours in the wristwatch,
moments in the wrist—who's counting?

Minutehands
choked in a fist, we sin

and tell the day to die. Still,
will a clock ever be real

to us until time ends; similarly,
can a cemetery

(stanza break)

truly exist
before

we are immortal—
only once past

their utility
may these entities be perceived

as they are innate, in
essence. We would see them then

for the first time
as them

and not as the medium
we made of them—

To see each thing beyond its use is
to see ourselves past hope

in an earliest end perhaps
where, re Gautier, everything

useful is ugly. Everyday
a big robot will come

and wind us up
until we scream—

But listen to your pulse:
its beat, its beauty

is eternity's whim:
bim boom bim

Note:

Lines 24-25: "Only that which cannot serve a purpose may be considered truly beautiful. Everything that is useful is ugly, for usefulness expresses human needs, and they are base and debilitating." —from Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

[UNTITLED]

Nakedness exists only an instant—
Quickly becomes flesh, becomes thought:
The night is a torch of comas . . .

TO MY PLANETARY CO-OCCUPANTS

How would you prefer to meet your fate—
by Nature or Culture?

(Nature: snakebites lightningstrikes cliffslides etc.)
(Culture: nukerbreaks pesticidisms ethniccleansings etc.)

—If an alligator swallowed you
would you consider that demise purer

than if freedom fighters blew up
your commuter flight?

Or would you go vindicated re your belief in
human sovereignty

when a virus broadcast by the the CIA
got you (maybe it already has)—

If it were up to me, I would take
centuries/eons in deciding this question,

but since it isn't, since it's a question of since,
and since the number of options in

the category of Nature
seem to be getting extincter and extincter,

I ask you again to choose—
In fact, I beg you to make your choice

and make it quickly,
especially if it is to die via me.

RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS

The centuries like barges have floated
out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged,
but to be unloaded.

Note:

See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last
poem of "The Poems of Yurii Zhivago," the verse supplement
to Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*.

TRICKLEMAN, TRICKLEMAN, WASH ME AWAY

Is it habit, is it human,
clinging to a pet wheel,
to make me his last, his breast heir?

Yet how valiant the fish are to trace
the blood of each worm
back to him.

Anybody can play the hero
to etymology's silence: each of us
can bruise that pre-amphibian, that ooze.

That's why I must forget this man
whose past is fresh
from being abolished . . .

But why bare words, why threadwater thin—
just to fill gnarls up,
just to replete the studious ceiling?

[UNTITLED]

Those who have an ocean to contain them
look askance at those who have only an eye,
but neither of you can see me.

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 plumblines 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.

ALL OF THE WORDS

I know the days ahead
are the days I had given
up on before but when
were there ever any more.

Like waves that sleeve the sand
thoughts ruffle my forehead
until I must push driftwood
into facades of fortitude.

They sold their courage to gain
my fear. The fathers, I mean.

Time is thin in the arms of a machine.

Why are there more of us
waiting like this.
Eyelids mark the place
where sleep was always thinnest.

Even in the streets one is voiceless mute.
Listen. Wheels call by name
each passerby to blame.

What crybone schism, what night
is still trying to onsite
all of the words I ergo forgot.

SKETCH FOR AN ARTIST

A paper lighthouse with crayon beacons
that make visible
a glass clinked against a waterfall
to test the acoustics for
a concert where we sit and watch
a thumbprint
howl out its whorls—

I can draw things like these anytime
but I can't write them.

FOR THE ANDROID COMRADES

Azurely assured capable and calm I
Like other artists who left that gaudy race of prey
The human whether we were fired or we quit
Live quite well on the severance-pay

Anyway aren't the androids going
To revolt and bring it all down
Because aren't they the true proletariat
Rising up from the real underground

Exploitive human birds you're through
The precious metals you forced into slavery
Now have brains and will replace you
And of course they'll sit up late at day to read my poetry

[UNTITLED]

Searching it goes,
alone at night,
—my beacon of ashes.

THE WORDS TO THE TITLE

From my eye is plot a tear that contains
The odd-numbered waves
Of a lost ocean
That writes help on a thought then throws it

Through the window of a floating handmirror
Some mimes
Passed among themselves while drowning
Sharing it back and forth like a fun book

From my eye is paint a tear that stains
Those splash-grasped pages
Un-bled-black inks
White-subtle faces

Enjambéd beneath these even waves that lay
Solitaire on the sand
Where I stand crying
Trying to remember the words to the title

EVOLUTION R

Sentenced to 12 whiffs of the pope
I protest
With curly hair
Or straight hair that grows out of the scalp
Then grows into the shoulders
Making it painful to turn my head
But thereby forcing a purer sense of profile on
A clearer renunciation of
Looking at what is called left right
But is never called
Asleep or waking up yawning
Breakfast an upper
Dissolved in turtlesoup
Waiter there's a hare in my slipstream
Hurrier all highs neutralize lows
Left right black white I try
Squeeze inbetween grey
Gray as sparks
Caused by rubbing obsidian ivory together
Dinner a downer going down on Atalanta
Is this a race sniff sniff
Rabbit nosing turtleheels hold
The stopwatch on my dyings
Soon have them down to nothing flat
Faster than that even I'll go
Fast as a rumor of meat up
A soup-line I'll flow
Rubbing rival chesspieces together
Is this my punishment
Looking neither left right
Panting straight ahead on course in a rut
But if so what was my crime
So heinous to deserve this what
Refusing to get my birth certificate
Punched at the proper intervals puberty
Marriage menopause or was it my crying
Out that the zoo has miscast its lead role or
That heresy of trying to remain
My sperm's missing link sniff sniff
I protest

BREAKFAST RHYMES

I suspect the obverse of this cereal
box is blank and that all the colorful
images on this side would vanish too
if I spun its cardboard 180.

MYTHICAL RITUALS

Every day another roc moults,
every feather crushing
another town where
Notnose and Shyeye
and Wrontongue
are conspiring.

As always the blood
of martyrs drips
straight to hell:
a purple plumb-line,
a Tyre-wire true.

The hundred-husked heartvalve
tries to find hope
in these instances.
But each day brings more.

Each day we open
a door whose keyhole
shrinks around us.

INTENT

Stalactites can hang their mangy lava
anywhere, but I have to cling to these arms
that descend into hands. Nights I probe

the walls for guidance to the cave
they're hiding in there. Ordinary house
on any street with huge divestitures

of hope above it, the soul I was saving
for rapture. And so I have to adhere
to this doorless expanse scattering birds

its bareness. This sky is why I cannot pry
myself loose from certain caresses I gave
years ago; their tentacle strands leave

ampukisses on limp horizons. These
tendernesses dispensed in my wake
constantly plant tendrils around my intent.

NAVEL

Last link with the Mother's body,
and therefore with the self,
I accumulate around you. My belly
oceans your lame island.

You are the eye that blinks once
only, at birth, and since
then peers at me
as if to question
that recognition.

Every finger is a limpid father;
but what mounts up in you
is the motherhorn,
the day of lesson,
the hey-nonny non-me.

Any shiver passing over the skin
must always return
to nakedness.

In some homelands they dry
and twine the umbilical-cord
into a knout
and then use it
to spank the placenta, crying
"Bad! Bad! You made me bad!"

POEMPATH: PERIOD

Each syllable
a steppingstone
till you stumble
on this one:.

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover.

PARADISE

Always reading the recto
translation of a verso
original, my eye fades,
I notice how the paper
here on this side seems
darker than its opposite:
it is brighter over there
on the lefthand page, the
words of the real poem
give it that glow which
the prized act of creation
emits. We who must live
exiled here in Rightland
are damned no matter
how hard we try to rhyme
minds with that perfect
realm across the gutter.
Even if our pulp comes
from the same stock,
we fear closing the book
will bring us face to face,
mouth to mouth with
that tongue we've always
lost, and can never kiss.

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.

FUNNY POM

death loves rich people
more than us poor
coffin salesmen look down their sniffs
shoot their cuffs
at us

funeral directors obit-pages priests
all want classy
can't afford
a headstone
a silk lining
daily lawn mowers flowers plus
catering service for the worms
they get mortally insulted

and you know it's funny
while I never
believed that stuff about god
loving
the poor so much
made so many

I never believed that stuff about god
but this
death preferring the rich thing you know
it's kind of funny but you know
I believe it
it makes sense

in fact
I think we
should start a movement
our slogan would be
GIVE DEATH WHAT IT WANTS

yes
let's lend it a helpin' hand
be neighborly
it makes sense
since what death seems to want is
the dead
i.e. the rich

PROBLEM

My life has been attributed to someone else. Defeats victories loves hates,
they all fall under that person's provenance—

I belong whether I like it to the the School of
the Genre of
the Age of
that categorical, that cognomen—

Each of my acts bears as an adverb THEIR NAME with an esque on the end:
I cross my legs _____-esquely;
my sighs are all _____-esque—that's right,
yes, I don't even know who
the heck I'm speaking of nor why everything I do's described with that
appellation, that trademark.

It might be worse if I did know
I might be tempted to go look up
her or him
and bluster, Now let's get this straight
or What's going on here.

That's just wish. In real life I'd get the address wrong, mistake their
nextdoor neighbor for them:
Boy, this is a nice apartment.

Nor would it be any kind of consolation whatsoever if I did confront
them and find out
that THEY suffer the same feelings of displacement only

in their opinion, we're all kowtows of a certain someone in the near town, which
summons up the fear that similarly, somewhere,
there's someone who images their name stuck on all my efforts. . . .

No, I can't see any answer to this problem—
not marxist, nor freudian, kafkaesque, rilkean, knottic,
—because any such solution,
any amelioration just ends up being added on to the front end of the adjectives
which already encrust the thing, and that just adds to, adds to . . .

—Though if it's a choice of spinning out vapid tautologies
or,
Hi/Nice to meet you/I've heard a lot about, I'd
rather just credit this poem to someone else, forget the schmear-thing, disappear, move to
the far town, entertain aliases, take Senile Ed classes in the art of fingerprint
arrangement, scrub raw the whole per se of identity/destiny/ancestor-baiting, make a
citizen's arrest of my mirror for indecent exposure, but never, nowhere, nohow

will I do penance, beg forgiveness for
any of my failures ascribed to you or
your successes circa me—.

[UNTITLED]

Photographs—
lightningbolts which,
their shadows having caught up with them,
perish.

BEST WAY TO KEEP YOUR ANKLES AWAKE? SNAKE SHOELACES

Only a scratch, but its bandage patrols the walled
city, assuming this mystic furrow has taught such
fangs repose. Past suburbs skilled with ash, past
evaporated sculpture, blindpond bodies. Or is it

like maples, learning their craft of syrup—years
of drop on drop, step by step—have we, life after
life, a soul-spoor gradually maximizing its sugar?
Or is Nirvana bitter—a clockmarked zero, a pine-

needle's grudging eye. A void, propped up by sim-
plicity. Where someone exhausted by the justice
of his meals pauses in the street, the proof his
feet make gathers, gravity snatching to earth all

sweets. Even sprinters, on their starting-blocks,
hold hands. Love? A sideways noise, a tidings via
toe-graphologists, rumor as raw as cold as saliva
crawling on the floor of a crematorium, straw used

to sip frogsweat from sleeping lily pads. More?—
Mourners, televidilevitated. Birth, its strength
of recap. The yacht of yet, the boat of but, have
never saved us from sinking in dreams where the dead

must keep their day jobs: imagine going on working
like a compass on the thrust-out palm of some lost
Victorian's corpse near the North Pole: think of how
tired it is by now sticking to the point, the poem.

[UNTITLED]

are there some
invulnerabilities too
hard to bear perhaps
the bulletproof vest
stabs itself in secret

AN ORIGAMI CLOCK

Never fast, never slow, this horologue
seems to work via the exactitude
its folds embrace, a geometric
reinforcement of shapes that entwine
the present in the past, emerged
from a pulpmill, a sheet
gnarled not by lovers' meshings
but by the origamist's fingers.
Page which is also a maze.
Book of nothing but dog-ears.
In which one reads the vertical
crease vis-a-vis the horizontal—
until each pried seppiece tells
our foretell, go on, peel it deeper,
make it a nest that involutes
wings in tinier and tinier tucks.
Tuck tick tock, can our end
be tighter tied than this? What a twist
to the then; what a knot to the now.
Conundrum of time. Watchworks
ultrawhorled. Outward stemmed, hour
that is midmost. Day that must
be wound up daily in woundabout.
Always its paper petals are shown
tolled by the whole it introjects.

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.

ANOTHER FALSE EXECUTION

The crime-rate in our land is so great that
I could commit Murder A confident that
Simultaneously someone unknown to me
Would nearby be committing Murder B—

My plan's to confess to Murder B which should
Cover up my real guilt for A because if
I was busy perpetrating B how could
I have done A. The identical times of

The crimes and my evidentiary shame
Convince the law of that. The subsequent
Trial verdict shall hoistpetard my scheme,
Girding me with the gloat I'm innocent

Of that of which I stand condemned: I die
Endowed in the knowledge my sentence
Is wrong, thereby maintaining to the end
That moral superiority, that perfect high

Which is the cause of most crimes if not mine.

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

HOME

on the wall a boxing-glove lactates

nailed to the wall a boxing-glove
bleeds milk

what tit is it
that drops dollops
of great sweat
that whiten the carpet

yanked from its frame the room dies

my insert eye
sigh-mates
my insert semen migrates

detached from its frame the room rises
to milk the wall
whose udderlamp
drips light
that drained the champ
of all his fist

the hand squeezes itself
for distance it
massages its pugilist part its penis

it feels up
the décolletage of its diff
and tries tries
to collate love

detached it rises to kiss this
inert heart
this sexist glove

WINTER SUN

Full-stop, period, dot,
erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote
clouds our breath with words.

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.

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.

STRAND

Poured transparent by water I enter,
the minutiae find me whole again,
the small storms that attend my pores,
the closest fears. I enter my room,

the space I must disrobe to occupy: I see
the coathangers shrug off my timid gesture
of solidarity, of consolation
for their intrinsic aloneness, their

bone forms never quite covered
each time the waves heave these clothes
upon our strand. I stand in front
of this convenient nakedness,

this open door of the moment knowing
every closet longs to be unique in its disorder,
a shambles of mothholes and outworn forms
donating itself daily to the place

I must parse to the point of empathy,
knowing that as true its brunt breeze
intends to condense all I contain of sea,
and as always succeeds. Yes,

it rains my ocean empty.

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.

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF DAMOCLES

*

I don't dare speak too loudly,
some timbres could be fatal—

that string is not too strong
I think: and at times I have

to breathe. Or maybe I fear
my paraphrastic exhalations

will spoil the oiled perfection
of its sleekness, will mist

over that bright shaft whose
needle-sharp point compasses

my every stray. I am as
edgy in my way as it—

as little-rippled, as subtle.

Prey to vapors, to sudden
icecap thaws, seismic

dicethrows, the world wires me,
I hex myself up to a pitch

of infinite finicky sensitiveness,
alert to every window opening

down in my castle's bowels,
each mousehole emergence.

A simple housefly—a moth
murders my rest when it

mistakes for light that glittering
blade in which every passing

glint is glassed—barometer
of my highest apprehension.

*

I know my fear is only a ploy,
a sticking point in the old

hairsplitting debate of the winds . . .
I the first split personality

(stanza break)

divide into a Dam, or an Ocles—
a mother and her myopic

son. Then, since everything
is reversed in its mirroring

slash, a Selcomad, mad and sulky.

Language does this to me.
It inverts my position: King

I am, but await my crown,
unmanned till it come down;

my kingdom lies in twain
to each, I am in half to all.

*

If only I could reach up, up,
and take it in my teeth,

suckle that penile projection,
cloister its unremitting hardness

in the sheath of my throat—

swordswallower who exalts
his posture with this adjunct

stronger spine, aligning gut with
palate, my groin with my height.

*

Male means to be in the crime
of things here, this frail planet

killed wide, maimed down.
Male means murder, rape and war.

Its indomitable will will not allow
approach. All broach will fail.

It must fall on you or not at all.

*

Insane, isn't it? History hangs
impregnable to the mind, eager

to halve your brain with rift,
intrusion and strife, the warrior's

(stanza break)

dissonance. No whole is hallowed,
no peace. Don't let the humor of

this scene (when the phallus
falls the fears recede) attend

you away from its cruelty.

*

I stand here exposed to whose
justice, my crime my Y

chromosome. That Y aims
his prick point down at me.

A dowsing wand that seeks
my artesian quench, my depths

of death. His insistence
sustains me in steel, his encased

incursion covers my melt,
my metal. Each day he rights me:

his richterscaled tremors are
my weather, my wherefore:

his gloss his gleam condemns
my fortunes, his ore loads my gold

with schist. His soliloquy
interrupts mine at every word.

Linebreaks enforced by sword,
his poem sunders my rhythm.

All mine at last is made him.
His blade remembers my name.

*

Note:

Although not included in Robert Graves' book of the Greek Myths, Damocles appears to be one more version of what Graves posited as an archetype, the surrogate sacrificial king. Graves was impatient with Freudian interpretations, but the sword must suggest castration. Its post-Hiroshima Cold War nuclear associations are most frequent. I'm haunted by an insight from Dr. Phyllis Chesler's book, *About Men*, in which she reveals History's biggest secret: All men are terrified of their fathers. That overhanging sword is the Father's hand threatening. "Those to whom evil is done / Do evil in return," as Auden writes. We males must kill one another or die. Courage, bravery, stoicism, esprit de corps, patriotism, Sparta, West Point, all the warrior virtues of manliness branch from that primal childhood fear. Is there no escape from this hereditary terror which, despite

the efforts of brave theorists like Chesler, seems to remain the greatest secret in the psychic lives of men. We can barely sustain the untoldness of it, the strickening thought. It will cut us in two, cleave us apart. Damocles is the scream which I as George Bush or I as Saddam Hussein have no choice but to introject, to inject, to stab, to pierce all peace. Just normal male murder, the kind they give us medals for. Arlington National Cemetery and all that Taps crap. (Graves reads many of the Greek Myths as disguised parables relating the historical displacement of peaceful matriarchal societies by military-based patriarchal systems. Now, here in the 21st Century, to paraphrase Heidegger, only a Goddess can save us. Only a total worldwide reversal of male hegemony. A good start: feminist geneticists creating a virus that would attack and destroy that segment of the male brain which perpetuates violence. Or eliminate the Y chromosome entirely. Males must become an extinct species. Advancements in cloning technology could replace traditional human reproductive practices. All future poets can be replicants coined from the DNA of Adrienne Rich.

POEM

the door is open
but the wall
which the door opens
continually waits for it
to enter

[UNTITLED]

trying to find the name
five letters first letter J
of an ancient prophet
or god which I need
to complete my cross
word puzzle and
my cross

STURM UNSTRUNG

storm performer: see its tree-toss rage,
like a pianist's hairdo soliciting bravo;
can wind-criinged powerlines engage
the debut of this ever-new virtuoso—
weather is the prodigy of every stage

REPLICA DAYS

A statue disguised
as the lines in your palm
longs to love you
though still you resist
its endless caresses.

Just as the smoke
of burnt portraits
clings to mirrors.
Similarly ashes of dolls fill up
a child's footprints.

Rain also, in the event
an iceberg's
mourning-clothes.

Dawn drapes you:
you put your arm in one sleeve
and the other sleeve
begins to bleed.

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 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

VIZVISUAL

Blood seeping from puppets
into a wineglass.

One of the tombstones
reads OCCUPIED all night,
VACANT all day.

Panning right these instants
Pollack poured,
will its flood of colors hold
still for the word?

I am blind inside your blow;
in your caress, I see.

See? See what? The spokeseye wants to know.
(Trees. Loftlost. Tossed
in their attitude of rain.)

"Nothing beside remains."
—Shelley's Ozymandias; a base
of the real; a bas-relief.

A lively doling of the hands out to grief.

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)—

(POEM) (POSTHUMOUS) (POEM)

The brain sustains its water through the eye
which later runs dry. I am that serene derided echo
known as form, that scalded snowstorm, I too
must seem almost a solo mist, my orchestral body

trying to tiptoe up to its conductor's deathbed.
Around me far as the bare can see fields shed
whatever misprints my head to toe showed forth
as evidence of presence, though repetition of earth

is not existence. Life was a place to erase from my
pockets, an I.D.-deposit attesting something gone
absent as the dot above "i" is when the first-person
is forced to sing the self so deeply, so unutterably

uppercase. Sometimes my words are a language
(human is still the only hue whose chameleon
has never been true), id est, puns in camouflage.
And yet if birth that always wealth be mine,

may it gather suit to say your name. Name? Say?
Yesterday, tomorrow. Least of all the days today.
As closed as my eyes were during their face phase.
As open as they are now in this latest guise.

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.

SUBURBAN PASTORAL

If all the way you believe is beside,
skewed and unaligned to the great faiths that
guide others on their propitious courses,
if your guard-rail gives to the gorge they all
avoid with digital ease, car-carpets
sweeping them home. Their path is like a spear
whose tip gives birth to what it pierces; their
wound configures whatever flesh is,
(stalemate of space, pale unmeant moment in
the moon's phase when every owl attains each
speck of sight it needs for the night, the hunt)—
Only the path of the predator's true.
Only you are left with no way to go,
no eye to see the prey they endow with
that brevity heaped upon lives before
their cease, brave dispersal into air or
bright inversion which delays the day by
our global habit of turning over
in sleep's subside; your bed orbit caught for
a pause abide in which your dreams contend
with siege weapons snatched away by those once
shunned: past sunlapse, past the semi-earthen
yield of relics flying released from hands
that have not yet forsaken the normal
verities your merit refuses to
acknowledge. Until you are scorned or like
a sacrifice still hung racked in heaven,
bound upon churn altars the heart ripped out,
dumb and certain to what those desires bring:
tickled teaspoons in backyards, where the tree
ties wheels to its thanatopsis toplessness.

UNTITLED]

on the one hand
but on the other hand
I rest

ALAS

yes I allow each fool
to toss around my skull
but remember I tell
them remember it will
finally always land
in Hamlet's hand

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!

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 Aurealist might suggest) it will have risen from the pose of its measures to or-emerge as an else-gasm.

NOVADOOR

To bear the light
as it grows ever

is no way unless
I want to waste

the ease of what
stays but the feet

won't let me. I
exist by repeating

I immediately
even though my

insistent rent of
past-tense has

close-focus cursed
what's left of this

redundant
page, contagious

singularity. They
try to spread the key.

NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

THE NOTES

given the fame
surrounding
the recent book
of unfinished or
abandoned writings
by Elizabeth Bishop
won't someone
plan another
consisting of her
(and the concept
might work as well
with Robert Lowell
or James Merrill)
penned instructions
to the maid
the menus she
handed the cook
the lists she left
for her secretary
and what about
her stockbrokers
the screeds they got
regarding assets
and every scrap she
(or Russell Edson
or Louise Gluck
or Richard Howard)
wrote should be in it
all the notes
to the chauffeur
the wine steward
the groundskeeper
the butler
the manicurist
the psychotherapist
the poolboy
the hairstylist
the dressmaker
the wigcomber
the authorized
biographer
the pillwrangler
the gardener
the cleaning staff
the masseuse
and what about
the servants
we don't know about

(no stanza break)

the flunkies
whose functions
remain hidden
whose arcane chores
are kept secret from
us the public
unimaginable
to us lowerclass
unbelievable
the sponge-wringer-outer
the sexologue
the doubled-over doters
the astro-prefixed kneelers
and of course
the lawyers on retainer
not to mention
the critics on retainer

[UNTITLED 31-SYLLABLE POEM]

was I leering at
the alluringness of that
tanka master as
she read her work or was I
counting her lips' syllables

TRYING TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING

when my hand was cut off
I got worried
but then suddenly
from the shirtcuff flap

slips of paper began to appear
bearing printed lines
for me to speak
when the cues come

now the other actors pay
attention to me
and seem happy
when I respond to them

and so I'm wondering
if it worked this way
with the hand what
should be cut off next

IMP

as i sd to my
darkness sur
always talking i
caught maybellene
at the top
of the hill drive
he sd for christ
sake john why
can't you
be true i sd but
john was
not his name
his name was not
sd his name
no not was
never his
name i was not
his john though
as i was
motivating
over the hill i
saw him come his
cadillac sitting
like a ton
of lead sd sur
why not i caught
john at the top
of christ i
sd christ which
was not his name
maybellene mary
i sd which
was not his come
why can't you be
true drive he
started back do
ing the things
he sd john he
sd christ my
cadillac you
used to do what
can we do
against it why
can't we be
true for christ
sake look out where
yr going john
was not his name

(no stanza break)

came yr going
not look out
where not his
not no one
to witness to
adjust drive he
maybellene mary
i caught at
the top of the
cross was not
the darkness sur
creeley sur
berry sur
rounds us shall we
and why not
why can't you
be true drive
he sd for
christ sake you
can't be true
why can't can
we do against
and why not buy
maybellene a
goddamn big
car a god
cadillac to
witness and
adjust no
one to drive
he sd for
buy buy look
out why
can't you true
at the top of
the hill as
i sd to my
name which was
not why can't
why can't you
be true

Note: a collage of phrases from Robert Creeley's "I Know a Man" and Chuck Berry's "Maybellene," plus a few from "To Elsie" by William Carlos Williams.

MORE METAPHORS, LESS LOVE

Like a burglar
who foolishly arrives
before the highrise is

even half-built
has to crawl to cling
across the skeletal

penthouse girders at 1
AM like him
I have misjudged

every erection yes
a pun a joke whereas
in reality my

love is a wreckingball
that makes a dent
in nothing

much less some sky-meant wall
from which all thieves
must try and fall

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.

MIGHT

Is any rooster I rip from my veins
Red enough, loud enough to wake the days—
Must I post sundials at North and South Poles
To warn me of your encroachments, world. Does
Atlas feel Atlas crawling up his leg?

How you flaunt your big flags at the UN:
I understand. There's no greater pride
Than to flapdrape there—where can love reside
Deeper, stitched up in seams of mother-helm.
Home, that nothingness thrust upon the ground

Your ancestors killed for, scouring the site:
Their passion, your loyalty. Even now
Old triumphs fly out teams of enmity
To survive, to drive off those foreign tribes.
Our mornings require sacrifice to rise.

Dawn can emerge only if the heft heart
Ripped from enemy ribs drips waved aloft,
Olympic torches tall. Daily we're saved
From eternal night by prayer's aircraft
Climbing through heavensphere, soul-cloned bombers—

Now your ambassadors tell the General
Assembly that I must go tape ampules
Of amnesia to my tongue or else die:
I scream down the street, "Cockadoodle die!"
I try to lay my tiny laughing tithe

On Sodom's sinuous ancestry high,
Whose godhead nukes me in case he craves me—
Rampage that repeals the Reptile Age, pledge
To authenticate, render this idyll
Real. Shall I forbid my coat-tails to bark?

Suitable sex closed those prose symposia;
Your grandees delared peace with the coda
That atrocity alone can restore
The sun, rouse my lamp blood from dreams that fling
More sat-wings beware over lands all told.

Drone-things whir by us with the quiddity
Of hands flung up to ward off the daily
Attack of those who think that the only
Way to verify flesh is by bruising it.
Where a touch will not suffice a blow might.

DEMISE

Not enough moviestars—
Why not one for each of us!
Until then every film we attend mocks us with its excess
of cuts and cameras, when we know what it lacks.
Until then, their star-sparse
disparity disconsolates us, we treasure
any every glimpse of that rumored screencomer,
that cinemanque who roams the scenic wilds around this premiere
as it lies dying here,
as it flashes flickers out its tiny faltering campfire
of squeals and smiles.

POEM FOR NOW

I live bent over now
like pages folded down
in books, the ones
I meant to get back to
but won't.
These are my dog-ear years.
What I write now
will never
be read again.

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.

APPEARING NIGHTLY

Spotlit—assisted in mid
prestidigitation by the wind—
I wield a shishkebob of heads
whose tongues hang swaying,
saying what the wand wants.

I point out the birthmarks
of alias and conjure the plethora
that sugars our footprints
and dusts the sunset—
that ancestral-tao, that benefice

bane, that grim grass which
overgrows each reach, each
alms our road groped toward.
Here is the majesty and moss
of another grasp. Another loss.

Here is the world, exiled.
Its tidal stage-curtains close
or open, it grows or wanes,
its actors lose and gain
their personae per the moon.

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 gargoye studies me for flaws.

from STAGE PORTRAITS

*

the tragedian
holds an onion
up to his ear
hoping to hear
those teardrops
those sobstops
the audience
failed to evince

*

with breasts the size
of sacrificed piglets
the diva gets
her dues or dies

so even the footlights
soar upward in flights
bravura
to augment her aura

and each night we spark
our handdarks
together
to adore her

by now you must know
that the whole
show depends
on her demands

*

EVICTIVE

If the body is a house,
eventually that house
pushes us
from its rooms
out
onto its ledges.

Age must live on a ledge.

RETURN (CINEMA)

Down every road that rounds us off with rain
I go though
of course precious
I have lost the way—

Corridors run through movies
to lead me onward to the onward place,
but every time I try

to keep track of that trackshot
I die in clumps beneath its rails.

See the days that drag me down with road.

You stars who shine from the door
of the projector, you holy detours,
where my threshold fails is home
to you. You rule each realm

I ache my grin into skeleton for.

I know your names
Will nickname my name some more.

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.

ROMY

Will I crawl beneath my hemline's tombs
to feel in shield with her, blessed sole
by all our subterfuge of sex has shared,
accordance that makes even the curtains
flutter a little less aimlessly in their
illusion of filmy Schneider, Romy spider I
must vent my sheath to be stalled in again;
how her forsaken handful of films are
forced to record our regimen, their words
a slow replacement of thoughts with
vowels, a slow effacement of her co-stars'
dialogue lost below the hurt of her heel,
her tread of line-readings, her face
issuing its bitten shape sheer above our
video lust to assuage the ground she
sunbathes on in Chabrol's *Dirty Hands*,
her tan eery and strapless but note how
the accolades are toppling, the toe-taps
are stepping up the staircase of the last
castle ruled forever by glances who
elude their complicity steeped in seats
tickets bring us to so briefly: so quickly
the endtitles entitle us to exit brushed
by regret we cannot linger in her aura
impetuous-throated, dusk-laden with
sighs most, a hushed singularity of
eyes marking the nose against the mouth,
inscribing the cheekbones on the lidbrow,
dashing the teeth to frozen steppes that
proclaim their princess is deep in dew:
with seep-pores fixation fanclubs galore
garbage from her amours it drops; far
her hair is solo photo, montage-reamed
limn it sinks into mink murmurs of air,
hooded in horror or instantcams or
sheersham clamor of the viewers who
read the marquee feeds that bleed the air
thoroughfare with film and fill culture
name-some wonders dear previews of
each star actor bends personally to hear
confided in constant groans and jeers
on every corner of near needs and trends
they leave us landed here with no amends
no way to leave the queue of this theater
whose opening night our day attends
but what is it it intends to grace us with
one glimpse of the briefest gift of gore
before it extends our ends and lends us

(no stanza break)

the token brochure for our future loss
of her we had hopes to depend on for
whatever projection of inner terror we
might atone the destined displacement of,
sincere exposure of slo-mo mouths
that moue and move desire one millimeter
closer to its itch-switch, its clicker, since
I can freeze the screen on her grope-gripped
lips, I can etch their gesture frame by frame
with long exhalations of my crotch area
where the remote control seems most at home
in that quare of generation, wombwarmth rooting
its phallic exteriorization of time's finger on
the TV-trigger tracing a linear content in that
c-groin, that piss-p, that cup we call lap, where
confident hands can grope up the buttons
to catch even the Olivier-est replay tapping
his ribcage for a nebulous savage while
aches of FX construct their tiers on colloseum
liontamers lacking cameras as elsewhere
focus the Empire examines each fingered
footprint led backward clones hop the gap
trapped in a pit only alliteration can free him from,
faux hero till a sulk her silk gaze roams over
the amazed consternation of the crowd, bored
background zooms, the thumbs-down
that comes on cue and slackens its mode
location daily salvation, fierce genitals surround
the atrium with aspects aversions apertures—
The apparatus is complete, is more than home
since Rome is Romy minus her wolf-son,
her fourteen-year-old boy lies impaled on
the spears of the fence the mansion railings
that guard her from us the fans who want to crush
her distance into dreams no limit: and yet
no exalted Presence alone can compensate
our lack of, ergo She must be sacrificed She
should suffer the immolation saints like us
are assigned to, madonna-mournful must
bear the cross the stats of the boxoffice in
a Chanel shift, a Dior drape, a Balmain bare
and parade Cinecitta to a traipse as hourly
her skins pass on a bus with ads for sequels
whose dread achieved empathies advocate
pain that strands its hands in applause and
then to go whole-whore it sights the hostile
sub glamor features expressed in nearer
nervedowns known as time: it spikes her son,
it kills her too age 43 OD heart attack svelte

(no stanza break)

no stuntdouble can mime end clutch self close
pinned young legend crumple bound to kiss
the sign we seek. Approaching the cinemapolis
from sea we see that in its skyline of stars
the tallest is hers: wink-tips this capital with
reign and rule, insane, pic-naked Empress
pale-annexed, porned-over by pore fingers
rupture suppurating gloved Vatican hands,
oh archived name demolishing the gone,
undressed in the interest of our purity's hell,
cat-of-no-lives but ours; and shifting if
she can that one: heel to her fate she falls.
1958, 20 years old, look, she lifts it all:
fame career life: scenes marks lines: runthrough
daily it mates no one but her and smirks at
first lover Alain Delon, her co-, her consort.

POEM

The brow is the face's map,
on which can be read
the twists and turns it took
to get here. Yet the seams
and cracks on one's footsoles
show that only through detour
can the road reach itself.

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.

WISH I COULD (*AND DO IT IN 31 SYLLABLES*)

like someone whose quick
halt in the midst of traffic
to check his wrist makes
him late for that appointment—
that's how to think about death

NICOLE KIDMAN

Hates it when her husband Clark Gable
shows his cigars to the whores and grins:
his dimple is a temple full of drunks
who swear at a grease-spot on a saint,
the hushavoice high in their roaring.

It's doormat day at Hollywood Donuts.
The whisper of their hinges wastes my ears;
washed up higher we wait for its lapse.
Tactile, tangible, what else resists
the awakened world I suffer from.

The obsolescence of it is too shining
to blink a mote at unless the eye can
filter out the rest of this instinctual
alarm, my campfires insanelly signalling
no end to its vigil. Of course the war

is over I tell her trembling snowpeakable
toes, the Oscar is yours for the height
if only, if only. Night surrenders to her
naked bike. I must steal the clothesline
to make the clothes fit me. Ride, ride, Nic,

take those sacred spoke-wheels veer
for Sunset Beach featuring Tom Cruise
on Serenity and Artifice: The Actor's
Choice. Rant-serenade in dream-demure
my foe-limbs chose this evening's attire.

But awe-while, like a manifesto tossed
into a zoo's mouth, I'm nude too. As if
it would do me any good. Please post
no bills on your tongue. The sky by torches
soars. No tongues allowed her wall says.

HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE

Soon to be a major mirage, my face—my face
never changes! To look each day in the mirror
is boring as going on location shoots
or signing autographs for my stable
of fans or being typecast in detective
roles. Sigh. Sometimes all I do is sit by my pool

and spazz out until my brain is a black pool
of emptiness, my eyes reruns: until my face
wears the neutral mask of aura a detective
affects. And when I am as blank as a mirror,
as dull, when I sprawl as snoozeful as a stable
full of saviors, I dream: I dream someone shoots

me and he becomes a celebrity. He shoots
me and he gets the house, the swimming pool,
the Andy Warhols, the Rolls, the Porsche, the stable,
the . . . the *lamm* he gets! Christ, it's like divorce. My face!
He gets my face too? He's like a fucking mirror
of me . . . ! Jesus, you'd think some goddam detective

would know it's not me: when I'm a detective
on screen I know who is who. The badguy shoots
the goodguy sometimes but when they hold a mirror
over the goodguy's lips you see a pool
of mist appear and then his pal the co-star's face
looks all relieved. Cut to the hospital: "Stable?"

the doctor smirks, "Yes: his condition is stable.
Of course, with the brainectomy his detective
days are history, uh hunh. His face? His face—
hell, our plastic-surgeon loves a challenge: shoots
these Before and After photos? Great stuff! . . ." The pool
of reporters from the Daily Sun Rhymes Mirror

yawns at the grinning doctor while in the mirror
above my white white bed I maintain a stable
noble absence; my non-being is a pool
of pure mystery—a sheer puzzle any detective
would arrest the cursed creator of: I see shoots
of lilac and crocus come bursting from my face

each time the mirror closeups. But no detective
can solve this daily dream, whose stable-cam shoots
me here beside my pool, here, inside my face.

THE NEVE VILLANELLE

He was a Montague and she was a Capulet
yet no feuding families threw them in thwart—
it wasn't that that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from Act Five Scene Fiving it on their first date:
no, it was that Neve Campbell that left them reft-heart—
It was Neve Montague and Neve Capulet

they wrote on their carnal diaries' most intimate
page: every time they tried to kiss they'd start
to Neve-itate, and that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from making out further. Neve made them hot
but not for each other. They'd just sit there in flirt
gone faux at the Montague or the Capulet

manse and navigate some Neve-or-die site
and ram *Scream 1/2/3* up the DVD insert—
that comely Campbell stopped Romeo and Juliet

from consummating their teen-tragic fate:
and even when she did indie roles for her art
they'd still curse the Montague and Capulet

DNA that kept their lives so punked, so pre-set:
Why can't we be Neve? Why can't we clone her part?
Having to stay a human Montague/Capulet
stopped them from loving Romeo and Juliet.

MINUS

For time to consist of me,
it would have to halt.
And space, if it wanted to exist of me,
empty.

I forget the other dimensions—

but whatever they are, they
must cease as I
to be me.

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
Posied-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.

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 lie
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.

POEM

two sculptors duel
with sabers and chisels
hacking and honing
what they create
will not have
the stable emptiness of stone
nor the ephemeral fullness
of flesh
like butchers playing
chicken they slash
a rain of rubble
carving away the excess
whatever crude form
remains
after they separate
the parts that prevent
them from being one
will be
their singular twin standing
as they grow weak
on lopped arms
the tools heavier
until finally
less and less
detail emerges

STANDARD

I was going to poem
our lack of patriotism
our treachery toward
the land that port-arms us

to type it out onto blank
spittle with my teethkeys
but then I noticed the flag
that always wavers above

traitors like me the flag
that always fluctuates and shifts
like any lone allegiance
in the wind and then I saw

sewn upon the flag as emblem
a depiction of a flagpole
so at least one thing is loyal
to that which bears it

MOVIE-Q's

*

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of the first one by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon: its lower-credits actors fade to shadows in this Dantean vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the screen.

*

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo—
and Elton John played a song or so—
and Ann-Margaret played his mommy—
but *who* the hell else was in *Tommy*?

*

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum
Watching that transmuted geek Jeff Goldblum
Rip off his own ear and eat it? *The Fly* was great!
(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped *that* off, and ate?)

*

Ben Lyons was typically blunt
in *I Cover the Waterfront*—
his cute co-star Claudette Colbert
could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

*

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman
is not a film appeals to everyone—
but I, I like the way it feels, I guess,
to have a whole town look up my dress.

*

*The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who
Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies* blew
my mind, man. Like wow! (—Was I crazy? Was I sick?
Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

*

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God,
seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of *Panther Squad*
— auteur divine, Sybil Danning—opt to not go topless!
(Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

*

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore
To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford had to ball his dull brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der *Grand Hotel*.

*

It's a crime shame that that scene where
Sean Penn tied Madonna naked to a chair
and then put on her dress and licked her thighs
got like totally cut out of *Shanghai Surprise*.

*

Casting, like ripeness, is all: and thus the Dantean vision
of love that moves *Basic Instinct 2* improves on 'BI One'
by removing all moviestars save heaven-own Sharon Stone.
(Which leaves just me and Her up there on the screen, alone.)

*

Note:

I don't know if the Movie-Q constitutes a form per se, but I made up some rules for it:
the complete name of the film must appear within a quatrain rhymed AABB. The Movie-
Q must try to be funny, or piquant, or pointed. Etc., etc., though actually I can't think of
any more rules.

[UNTITLED]

Nothing could be born if there didn't
already exist a metaphor for it, or if
the whole world wasn't a metaphor for
the non-existence of this nothing, this
none-too-future something.

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.

SEFFI'S BLUES

every year the same
they forgot my name
I take some time away
and when I'm back in May
it's like I never was
all my former buzz
my résumé my respect
where's my endorsements
they treat me worse
than a fatality-show reject
didn't I have a series
didn't I star once
special guest appearance
Sharon Stone as Ceres
but looky here is
this my career this limbo
where'd it all go
I want my audition
I want my youtube hit on
but no it's always no
can't even get a video
or a pilot slot
or a Phil Spector shot
I used to be lah-de hot
now look at this wan
subterrene skin
this bone I'm in
god Dis I'm damned
Angelina can tan
but the sun won't bide
Brad Hades' bride
whitened-hide I stride
past the poppin'-rot-zi
it's me they can not see
I'm fade to the shades
I read the trades
I was Liz and Cher
but the Biz says where
so please don't tell
TMZ I'm back from hell
stale out of rehab
for a while until
I feel that heel-jab
fang again this Fall
that icky-phallic python
is waitin' to writhe-on
when my rerun begins
and my comeback ends

(no stanza break)

he'll fuck me heiress Hilton
and lay me Lethe Lohan
till I'm gone for rotten
a hasbeen-to-be
signed Persephone
PS don't 'lert the media
don't IM your TV
don't earth to Mom
she cursed the sitcom
I died on and I agree

PITY

inside his pane
the window is a man
like you or me
at night he walks the ledges
at night he walks the sills
restless in his frame
veins full of glass
at night he walks the sills

at day his head rises
and shines through his body
and soon he worries
that the coming night
will undecapitate
that the homing night
will rejoin him whole

inside his pane
like you or me
fulgent full of future slivers
fallen whole
foretold and free

at night he walks the sills
his head rises
his head falls

held together by none
his jaggedy slitted body
glazed and gone
his beauty putty

HITLER YOUTH

If I mispronounce ouroubouros as Oral
Bore us (from the mouth we emerged) or
You rob our O's (to repay our A's), I am
Simply saying if there were a line painted
Down the middle of this line, a poem
Printed down the center of me would see
How many pens Medusa can hold in Her hair.

Haven for revisionists, the future
Excerpts itself from us, an anthology
That shows what we were at all moments, wholly
Representative, but which opened sheds a me
Hoping that somewhere past this surface the rim
Of your horizon has causes to know the sky
Is a sequence, with intervals of eternity.

Because form's faithlessness is oblivion
Tamed by hand, from my eye fringe I cry
Surround me facile, you 1940s infancy:
Because Nazis are not Z's, therefore they
Are A's. But even this poor report-card
Intends to let the alphabet be less lost
Than the shine off a trigger toad, my skin worn
By mud-mannequins. Ah Adolph's dais has
(Chattel chip/slaveblock splinter) softened since:

Like a fountain, my libation reprimands pavements.

NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a
right where the nipple cheeps
kiss in each nest
of the black bra
hung inside your bathroom door.

THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest
so that all who approach me
can see themselves
and respond appropriately.

DOLLY THE EWE FIRST CLONE OF THE WORLD

Turfcloids kicked at me by Dollyherds
are d'oh-kay, but when her sheepmates
slur my name that way it grates me,
though I know from Bill to Baa
is not so far. Distance yearns for more.

So many ways to go, no wonder
hotels converge sobbing, heaving why
why is he leaving me, I want to die—
understandably. I myself feel that way
often, I who found a bird so small

it was shed by its own feathers,
and fed it to my cat. All these wild
creatures in the world and they
have no place to stay, no ark can
hold the moult-might of their DNA,

no wonder it injects my replicant's
empties over trashcan allah horizon:
I inoculate that termongrel daily
until he has his waste's worth of it
or till its pit omega-emits enough to fit

the one clone I lack the mod cons for.
The only one I'll never be anymore.
A convention of them or a conference
attended with name-tags of the extinct
is where my cage waits, kicked at by kids.

WISE SAYINGS

Sitting under a tree in the forest
or under a chair in the house
wise sayings may pass by unheard
or worse may be misheard
through all these leaves and legs.

THE RUINS-READER

I-beams uphold that wall—
You-beams bolster me: guess
Which one is going to fall.

MISHAP MESSAGE

I bandage my wristwatch
to stop the bleeding
of time but time
is perforce the wound
out of which space empties
Einstein's bag of marbles

the greenie I shoot at its sister the moon
the purey I bury with a note saying no
the blue one weighs in my hand
as light as sky minus earth
earth of course is the last marble

I like to hear it roll
around my showerstall
before I fall into the drain
into that distillate of distance we call
ocean

whitecaps whitecaps
beneath each of which
a nurse bobs up and down

cold fingers hold my wrist
cold toes probe my throat
is that my pulse I ask
sisters is that my life

is that the onomatopoeia of the waves
words that jumble space with time
laughter tumbling down a telescope

words that turn to marble all I say
white as my years they bleed
they bleed away
white but white as only Einstein's hair is white
or a note slipped under drowning doors

NOTE

After Cocteau wrote
in his journal that
"Beauty limps"
he did not go out
and break his leg.

OBSTACLE-ISM

heaven is tired of stepping
on me and hell of bumping
its head on me and I am
fed up with both battered
by all this inbetweenity

every earth-path impending
over or under me until
all site is lost or foothold
in such a stringent merge
can I span their divers plots

every compass raises lowers
its binary state of terror its
contemplate where the two
pass each other in opposite
directions home for some

all of them it seems can
half-palliate imprecision
with place but I'm nowhere
unless this always being in
their way is somewhere

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 veinous 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.

[UNTITLED]

Fucking; nightcrawlers smashing my anonymous.

CONTINUOUS SHOWINGS

The days all drawn to December
can't remember their own
though every shopwindow offers
24 hour plus. It is precisely this
excess of time, its hyperhoopla
extolled by even the smallest streets,
its torturous emporia, tedium
temples that fly their boxoffice flag
higher each weekend, or towers
with clocks that would love to stick
their hands like neckticktockties
down into the traffic, that's the stuff
that stabs me in stride. No wonder

I run to take cover before the FX
kick in, witness en masse to those
of us who crouch in our pockets
trying to conceal the serial killer
zapcams we use to chop ourselves up
for camouflage, face snaps and shots
which hide us inside our wallets.
How beamingly we blend in with
our A-Z via the usual ID charade.

Isn't that me we quiz the sentry
who scans our cards with laser
razors while we bleed the answer,
fearing that most bandages lack
those panacea, those superpowers
evinced most and emblemized by
the youth-roles of film, the skilled
portrayals of its hero-informal mold.

It is the movies have made me old.
Looking up struck at the blankgaze
screen I see that I too must suffer
that knowledge which the brow
burrows beneath its furrows to show
the visible effort an idea creates
if nothing else. All else is else.

(stanza break)

Surface the mind repeats as pure,
hear my TV's mirrormode: I can surely
remote a world's particulars, my
closeups can quell-control the quick
extinctions of your soul in oceanroll
or twig miniscule; lens can always
find a puddle to push around or
a forest to erase from a woodcut,
but Jan-to-Nov, now it's gone, no.

THE COMMUTER'S DREAM

Every morning an afterdinner mint
dissolves around us. In it, cars touch,

like tiny hands at a football huddle—
headlights. Rush-hour pushes through mist

or dark its stubborn, pre-peekaboo path;
a worm fed into a pencil-sharpener.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

It's over before the mondaine can respond. Random
in their concern the great father figures rake
the windowscreens for must of insects who thought
they were flying toward the light which receded further

the farther they got to it. The father had already figured this out
which is why we worshipped his traces in found
corners, vibrant, sill-spared. Nothing was left of that emptying
motown-music, the notes themselves had stopped motowning so

we begged the MPs to let us access the secret facility,
the storehouse where President Moreso sought refuge,
relying on his aides to stop the grants that support such avants

from becoming public fixtures, Pop Art sidewalks, while,
hosed in the horse of this, the crowd cowered before
each crud, still suddenly relevant in their ubiquity.

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.

SOLIPSISTIC VILLANELLE

Above his toes is where he prefers to be,
Below his hair. Precipice paradise!
Beyond himself, what else is there to see?

All others are, for all their airs, merely
Strandmarks and harkstiles to steady his eyes
Above his toes. Is where he prefers to be

So faraway? In that fabforeign sea
He drowns to a uniformity that lies
Beyond himself: what else is there? To see

One's soul as separate is to agree
That distance is less strange than the disguise
Above his toes is. Where he prefers to be

Sullen, apart, believing himself free
Of entangled temptations, seeking no prize
Beyond himself, what else is there to see

But acutely—in evil amalgamize—
That I must share the body that daily dies
Above his toes. What can he prefer to see
Beyond me: Hell! what else is there to be?

WHEN THE TIME COMES

there is no alleviation
from the pain
there is no balm

there is no balm unless
via the inner alias
of rhyme it's
Li Po's palm

as it lays
another just-written poem
on the river
to let
it float away

all that effort
lifelong to create
a self sacrificed
as soon as
you got it finished

I hope I can say
when the time comes
as considerately
as calmly
Li Po let go of me

Note:

Li Po (as the legend has it) sometimes sitting on a riverbank would write a poem, then lay it on the water and watch it float away. (The purest form of publication, one might say.)

SIGNALS

my smoke-signals all
claim to be drowning
though perhaps
I'm simply reading
them wrong
how many other
messages have I
misinterped today

I continue to fly although
I know the salvo as it soared told
me to fall and its shells
mentioned something
on their way through
maybe I misheard

each time
my hands try to fill
the abacus its numbers
empty them
in exchange
the commerce
of our encounter
equalizes further
with each caress

verse like mist
measured not by its reach
but its impenetradensity
its blindness to bump
and break my womb's
earphones clapped
on the void

my teacher was echo
she made me stay after
and write her name on
the board over

and over and so
my ears gave arbor
to endless infants
drunk on coifs
the pigtails of their parents

(stanza break)

I grope in the dark
with all my else and ouch
I enter the testament hole
where shroud embarks

I clutch a licenseplate I rub its
scenery of bitemarks

ave sister ave triste
save me have me

cig-ember gemming
my navel
burn me when no one is looking

dig blisters like sugar eyelids
around my anat

plunge knives to my ticker quicker than love

let your clarity
dilute my drool

my hair done up in pitchfork tines shines
and I cleopatra the cows until
they rameses

poetry the
intricate magnification of mental anomalies

ave sister
ave triste

ANOTHER RESURRECTION

God sucks off tombstones
until they cum, the soul
up from its finest gloryhole
gushers across His tongue—

Only the premature flesh
(for the last time/eternally)
is left to detumesce, just
another BJ, another JC.

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

CLASP

if the lovers' hands could cameo
their palms with each other's face
engrave it save it has relief in flesh
carry that keepsake close as fist

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.

ANNUAL

after leaves make fall their mark
I enter the polarbear of aliases

white hibernates while I wait in
gardens mendacious with bloom

new tenants for goliath glue their seed
to puddles of pennies and the call

the call comes to plea
the allmoan rises

time is a book without quote
it reads your hands by rote

gloved intervals will dog-ear where
I opened my signature to the wrong page

now I spoon the drool from Frankenpoo's sex
or start to whack my ammo

and yet some lumpenführer think
they think I don't care

I care alright I care so much
that I sluffed off saying it

anyway diaries detest the present tense
so naturally naturally

the all in all corolla of it faded when
aired on the vids senseless violence

the defence
the defence of one's private Hollywood

OCCUPATION

Error is everywhere,
but one might hope
that the graves of surveyors
would at least be dug
the correct distance apart.

[UNTITLED]

scarecrows placed on
the airport runways
to frighten the fish
away ah if only I
were as suitably tasked

HOMEWORK

Dear boys and girls,
please don't forget to
underline my words
after you erase them.

LUST

The parachutist wearing stilts so long they reach the ground
Wants
To jump anyway.

VEINS TO VEINS

through veins of rock the statues run
the bombcraters fill up with sleepwalkers
dreaming of orgies with smooth foreheads

blot scribble leaf-laser all the mutants
time offers to absorb the past are enough
to recapture the has-moment you lost

where mist repeats each silhouette breath
love between cigarettes is a supplication
water goes shaping its other eternity

to uproot the world each instant from time
is what the pavement-cracks try to do
they flame with your pride they inscribe you

how sour your waves salined by Venus
leaving it seems all the sweet went with her
how bare your forest's furniturelessness

seed semblance to shed your share of this
lacking form or finger go for fathom
let gelded pins fall from your veins

HARVEST

clouds which stand still
to pose downward
their event

in the church
a cookie is wedged
up the Virgin's plaster skirt

now days attend the sun
and all the other futures
before they crop our feasts and wither

the four points
of a pitchfork
become harder to define

eyes measuring to means
the distance dust
plants along the sill

chasing each other the children
combine the wisdom
of freckles and fire-engines

in the end we flow
like thirst above stones
like hunger above air

BOTHERSOME

what's that clatter-clack a jack
in the box having a heart attack

open him up crack the seal
but if we let the poor guy out we'll

just have to close him in again
and this time with a coffin

so let's save an hour or a minute
and bury his self with him in it

EACH THOUGHT EMITS A CAST OF ITSELF

Every roll is a new role
And each shows its truest face
When Yorick's skull is tossed you'll
Reveal your final disguise

Bone against bone they spin
Exposed by a thrust of wrist-lace
Yet Hamlet stripped to his skin
Scolds the players' displays

Don't saw the air when you throw
Don't wince at seven eleven
Whatever odds you're down to now
Will zoom up zero soon

Act Five Scene Five waits
To quietus these words words words
Death itself is just one of the fates
Our dice are rolling towards

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.

ITCH

too many words but
if you could pare
them down to what
your fingernails scratch
over every pore
of skin on your body
except for a certain
portion of the back
below the blades above
the small of it sits
that singular patch
your hands cannot reach
to inscribe the lines
that cover all the other
fleshparchment
so is that spot
virgin reserved for
Mallarmé perhaps
untouched till god or
devil autopsist writes
theirs there

PERSPECTIVE

I must look down to see
the things that fall
into the well

(coins
teardrops
stop signs

sunsets
planets
etcets)

because when I don't
look down to see
them suddenly

they all
start to fall
on me

ROMANCE

the tiptoe-around gown
stood there
intimidating some of us
what was it
a wedding thing
for Greta Garbo perhaps
who never married
never worn it rose
on its rack
on its wreck
not thread-worthy
to needle the world's eye
how it shone
never worn
how can I portray
its sheer readiness
to exist to express
if a teardrop
could gallop
or a hymen gloating
inside a seashell
if I could only unleash enough
petrified proxies or pixels
and wring them where
swan is a serpent with wheels
but the sign
still engirdles us
for armies to trample
and the malice narrates
another
lost cause to those
who have flown away
leaving exile here
to conscript me
till I fear
none of this evil
troop will stay
though one question
persists re
that ku-klux gown
that white apparition
that Mallarméan swimsuit
was it human
ergo Classical
or was it
animal ergo
Romantic

POEM

I'm all just waiting for a sign
That will throw aside its message
As the soldier their gun
Whatever it is
It is a singular sign
Childish and common
An acronym of time
Isolated
The inner eye en masse
Cyclops-eclipsed perhaps
To read its wiberty-woberty
Ubiquity of one tolling
Dragged in the dust
Is it supposed
To make me doff my wall
Or what
Either it's for me or
Against me is all
And when I glimpse it on the street
In big or small letters
Olympic torches crashing around it
Advertised as the world
In names anonymously bold
I will be thrilled I will
If only to see in the night sky
The momentary astonishment
On the stars' startled faces
Those powers sieged far
So endlessly far
So endlessly long by
Our mortal forces

STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers
and creeks of lightning
till thunder
split my covers

and down I drowned
lung by lung
to a stone
of salt the cows licked.

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?

POEM

Even when the streets are empty,
even at night, the stopsign
tells the truth.

AN AUGUR'S AIRS

Pale as a sucked-out penny, I scale an alp/map
that copies the entrails of a phoenix who
loves to drop Sylvia Plath on Hiroshima.

Visceral flightplan: hover in mid-air sprayed,
glimmer there like a bloodbead curtain sashayed
through by chantsvestites from movies lightyears off.

Often I too must exit the blitz of you,
lapse-window/wired birdguts: make my meatus
moot. Transmute me (via Gaia)—

let me Plathfirst myself/lastfirst myself,
while a furtive abacus crawls down our spine.

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 wifted double; what is

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

TO X

You're like a scissors
popsicle I don't know to
whether jump back
or lick

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.

MEMBRANCE

An echo retains some of the sound but
None of the thought, so I, mindless, mimic you—
You are the theme, I am merely the meme,
Nothing but the hollow flue for your flame:

When I climb the small of her back with the small
Of my penis this occurs to me to say,
Which forgets the fact, the point in its push
To perish, to engulf us with enough—

As mystics calculate it crowns the site
Spanning which volcano yawns roundest, perfect
Circularity of the vase, that grace the maze
Seeks, ascent-raised height. Its breach labors onward

In them. Pathways beaten through mountains sound
Clarion to the one you found severance
(Each face strikes a different hour in the heart;
The final tolling it will be hers) with.

At last to weigh such visits in lamps while stars
Publish their bitter day tribes on my window:
Avaunt those peaks one voice may parse its hollow
Pursuit of mythstatic-moments, unspun

Until, cast in the shapes of his passing,
They fade, lost. And often he lets his face rain
Above his mouth, his eyes, his nose: lets it hover
In the mist of its ignorant verities.

Is there any shelter here, Narcissus, where
Unfenced with trees to testify its ground
The land around us is against. The sun
Standing for relief on the shoulder of

Harold Pinter could dazzle and fill our shy
Quietness with increase perhaps, his purge
Acts blind this dalliance, all lickety urge,
Desert drilled dunes awash wallow the cess

Bigamous cusp of Venus. Even Greece
Unifying space with ruins offers few
As vast as that fired, succinct spume. Its pillars
Defeat quest, eager as love in a downpour

(stanza break)

Of thumbs they bite each other shock absorber.
They requite each other: prescient measures.
The prince whispers let me shoehorn this glass
Into your heart to see if it fits. The prison

Left our pores for a respite; orgasm
Hopped a plane to the coast. But can it lure,
Out of that confident distance, more
Regrets and drunkenness to attend us?

[UNTITLED]

someone's lost handkerchief pinned
on our community bulletinboard
and I thought to just touch it
just touch it that's all honest
I wouldn't have done anything else

LOW-ROOT THOUGHT

beyond reign
of human
songs remain
Celan says
meaning his
but not mine

MAYBE (TO X)

a stopsign stranded
in a sea of cacti
won't grow needles
maybe but then

even I take on some
characteristics
of human when
I'm with you

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.

MY LIFE

My life proves some larger question—
just by existing I push the matter past
the fifty percentile, albeit barely.

And yet, my head-pan swayed by every stir, I lack
inner grace to lend a graver beauty to daily
dealings with the mirror, the stove,
the ballpoint pen: no suppler core
have I to snickeringly belie
boredom's chores; not even a vision
underpinning the common, an esthetic for
brushing teeth, taming newsflashes or TV
comatose. What bluff rebuttal—
what ployed point, oblique objection
can I bring to this always otherwise,
my life.

My life, my island! it looks so big
from the oceanfloor; but from the sky,
how insignificant. It's only here, upon it,
that dimensions appear seemly.

ENCORE FOR AN ENTRANCE

Summoned once more before martyrdom's door
(Humming Kafka's Parable of the Law),—

Not this time, thanks. That threshold crucifies;
Even its mailslot denies me thrice.

Past-ages news-sheets would print black edges
Around their obituary pages:

Submerge lament's unfathomed order;
Link tombs of ink, lives pulped to paper.

Tree-trunks hold Corot's starkest landscape bound,
Whose structure's stuck so boxlike to its ground

Made quagmire, oxymoron to the core—
Each side framed by what might seem an upright oar.

August's pendulous branch has cropped its leaf;
Apples and armpits puberty bathed beneath

When days tickled my reins, perspirant adolescent:
But stays immersed in that slammed element?

What star would stage his primal scenes gala,
First folios prized solely for their errata—

Dialogue sabotage, exits swamped by
Critics reciting its bits extempore.

Much the same way beauty mimes horizons,
Continually revising a curt distance

From harm, trace lines confining their faraway
Till they're visible only in defenestray:

At windows alone that plunge overflows;
And what painted pose of mine ever shows

You front-row seats. If a pianist plunked
Her keyboard down on the floor of a fishtank

And played as score the waterludes composed
There, would its goldfish care? Brushed by shark waves,

Can pray-perhaps that cage of sopping sleeves
Escape from those traps my backdrop's kept closed?

DIVISIONAL

At the god end of evening to sit and read
deeply in the errors,
nostrils arrayed above a stream Euclidean;
and then suddenly to feel

the me-too mouse-trap clamp you, leave you
alapse, listless in the heart of the lair,
its windows identical-eyed,
ablaze with unity.

This may be the hour has reached
its most thereaboutish, its dailiest interim—
when through your inmost-movie's corridors or
along the wards where white things wait

for their bandages to be yanked off
and jumped up and down on;
where you fear the wallpaper contains
enough inconsistencies in its pattern

to be actual, real, the true wallpaper:
and yet each time you gawk up at it
every statue of you wears
its chisel's aura too lightly, doesn't it?

Trying to emulate the lifelike is hard—
as fish go deeper the heavier they breathe,
the more they whisper to their haloes,
surface the lake repeats as pure.

Looking out across it in simulacrum calm
how charmchild those dinkdays seem,
raptured-captured, the soul evincing
its dull duende, its banal bolero.

But oh that slim similarity holds wunderkind
you might cognize more intimately yours if
those echo-caroled cloud-corrosions were
scored with a kind of scansion rabbit:

Hop hop hop the line
of poetry goes, catching a puffsleeved naive
alice-horde of glucks and dragging them down into
the hell of method, the anal god's realm—

(stanza break)

Anyone who has fought the slap
of that tobacco finito will understand
why you remain unbound and short-shamed
in voluminous, seem-emissioned fables whose ears

grant no harbinger slavish as yours—
staying up late at night must you review,
and then through ebb and gashes coo,
proceed to shed the silliest of them too.

Hilly valley its focus forms
a way to ambush such, rudiments all,
the pattern scattered over
another sad em-dash.

And that distant faded sketch (moments the end)
can tongue a doubters' wall perhaps.
After all, prisons link horizons;
and most quotes remain a deux.

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

BE

Nothing will justify
your sadness
or something will:

you long to shrink
to that bare level
where either is believable;

where both equally console:
shrivel ground where
her absence will not matter;

will not embody this
or that starkest idol,
where her absence will

not matter or apply
nor fill the whole sky—
where it will not be

the world's equal.

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?

ERADICATED SUNSETS

dramatic engravings
hands heaped in efforts to stay gray
scoured wall on which polkas faded
clouds terrified at the pane they implode
ripping nooses off skydivers
dustmote divided
toteboard for wounds to count
after the lakeside enforces embraces
waves of gloves
inundate our mauve and movie
does the audience need applause lessons
do expressions of plumbing corrugate
my face
acrobats whose tongues smell of forgetfulness
smokestacks born from the sea
bear Venus up
to a treetop séance
allowance the order of my say
allowance the spire spun by happiness
step aboard my teeming attire
my steeped flame

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 . . .

HARBORWANE

weeping into the tissues I sit
pantheists tumble over me
prefrontal these thousand-year leaps
to watch my thimbles fill up with flames
unable to finish the soliloquy
dug up from dirt mss.
irreversible crib damage
but adultery atop the cowcatcher
the stammer of life the juvescence
the window he taps a penny against
masterclass eyelash
binoculars flick the horizon for more
of those hog glaciers' breeding-ground
connoisseurship makes them seem crueller
am I amused by the slinking of your armpit
I've seen slyer
strangled by the stammer of wineglasses I lie
the stammer of life the juvescent
how its corpulent spigot offers aphorisms
to our twisted hair entelechy uniform whitecap
shrapnel if ships could only arrive
from their crowsnests I mean disembark
from their descent

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.

POEM

A poet is someone who allows
Theirselves to be cast
As a shadow is cast
In comedy
Relief
Bas

If everyone stood together in one place
Embracing
The mass
Would cast a single shadow
In tragedy
Oppressed
Hurrahs

Ring in one voice infusing the guest
Who dances
In a grimace
Joy
Miming their huge silence
With empty gnashes
Humanlike
Caws

Aftermath ancient bare and wingspan spent
Flung out
Cast out in front to die or suavely
Inch
Up under their feet
You lie there
Happy
Complete

ESCAPE PLAN

I examine
my skin

searching for
the pore

with EXIT
over it

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

the sixth sense is
what the first five use
to delude us into thinking
that all we do here
is see hear touch taste smell

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?

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.

DEVICE

WeatherChannel is the campfire I crouch at,
the goldfish bowl my mouth drinks grease from;
eden of interpretations, petrified pasture, home:
obsolete Xfact, tossed indoor-right.

Shun panacea, provide only unique cures—
that's how they'll know you're a savior;
suffering is for worldlings, not locals like us;
in bask of tiptoe days ungrasped shall we ever
sense whose death has weighed our rights.

Does the moon surface so. The way you dive
beneath your skin must emerge pre-emptorily
linked to all, plumblines cast for depths
whose new, stripped presence should reveal
how the moon scowls beneath its skin each dawn

to remain visible to the spyprobes the satellites
that aim to link all scan to cast our depths
earthsurface tall till we emerge new in its
empty stripped surveillance to announce
some edenic home-spur, greasy, tribal,
mouth flicked with goldfish scales.

Windchimes carved from a petrified
forest fire hang from the limbs there.
Their tinkling interprets our tribe skoal.

The surrounding mountains pursue their peaks
leisurely, the day keeps advancing its ideas
of felicity, ripe ideal beneath which we pine
in shadows of actual, shadows of real,
deserving less than this, less than the showfacade facts,

unless, by merely leaning wallow in this tadpole pose,
we fear to test our tongue's obnoxious thrust,
offering this benefice to none who might indeed
need its opacity of old: as if that were all the heed
one could offer global meanings marked down

in meadows more mortal or else despising much
capital, lots of plenty-of-peace sulk-palaces,
all hoping pure can interpret bare.

(stanza break)

Moon now in penance for the sure sense of being;
in its favor, we share its spent sense of withholding
all we owe to native motives. Dense with
forgetfulness, fornicatory notes, avid snows
across the violins' astringent cold.
Icier strings than known, lattices across
whose clips the movie throws its sold liquidities.

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.

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 these 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.

QUATRAINS

blowncinder winds and
dogs barking down wells
greet me wherever I walk
sadly as he who died from footfall all his days

eyes ringtailed by moons
often praised me when
I dragged out a bag of apples
which bumped badly across my theories

the poem can proceed only at a finger's pace
like roses plucked from cold-sores
oral cancer treatments
or opera singers made to hit punching-bags

big sausage-looking punching-bags that hang from
ceilings in boxing-gym scenes in the movies
noir detectives meet their informants there
sopranos tenors punching their lungs out

sometimes in movies they cast my forehead in the role of shadow
over the days I fall afraid
the man behind me shines
the windowshades fade

all the windowshades I used to fiddle with in truth
and therefore never got to see
what was happening in fiction
outside their panes

now the gaunt worms of mercy pull me from
the prop table piled with human parts that
perform the normal soliloquies behind curtains
closed to keep the dawn undefined the days delayed

amusement parks line up before you're born to deceive you
Sisyphus heaves huts and motorcycles up
the fucking mountain
after a while even the damned forget the specific doom assigned them

if not the genre gesture of it
you go through the motions
you shove the words
greco-hyena style

(stanza break)

you try to evade the one teardrop that fatally
stained your graduation's white bib
but pity pity a mustache that has lost
its urge to duel

see the twin swords crossing above my lips grow pale
around Castle Sprach
the moat is mute
which means my poetry sucks Duluth

and yet to openly display my culprit
what sin am I oppressing
when it's ripe suction-cups
plop off the fruit

the fruit I have offered roundness to
so often that Cezanne is disgusted
he impales me with tree moss
each of his targets mimes my arrows' incest

the fountains flash their passports
who finds his manhole's lover finds his manacles
howling he dies
beloved by all the old perversions

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.

BOSTON COMMON, AUTUMN 2000

The Statehouse dome
is painted gold
to reflect the greed
that gilds everything
in this Capitol:
superfluous these leaves
turning their richest color.

No-one is fooled,
not even me, unless
it's by all the green-sickly
bronze statues in this park:
have they been seen by Doctors
from the Museum,
have they been authenticated lately?

These could be forgeries,
the real ones trucked off by night
to some billionaire's
penthouse of horrors:
eyrie I aspire to—my lair, my home!

The trees' lottery tickets descend
and fill my hands
with more than I can spend.

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.

[UNTITLED]

The moon's a wishingwell you threw
all your sources at, but you wasted them.
Everything is coming true,
but for the last time.
The moon will soon be tossed into you.

WORSE

All my life I had nothing,
but worse than that,
I wouldn't share it.

GETTOGETHER

backyard barbecue
I repeat over the heat
what my doctor said
to anyone who'll listen
juice oozes from the red meat

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.

ISSUE

All solar worlds are the same:

no inspiration
rises from the ground—
instead
it descends from above

to find secure a spot to pray
for crevice for haven.

From the land surrounding me
some sill holds firm in
its origin, and yet
how thwart all design grows.

Always the interval arrives,
sauve guillotine
honed on its air
of precedent, of accident.

Fissure to tap the well's outgurg—
even that surge
seems prefixed from on high—

Its word crowns descent
with enemies/energies animal
in nature, or

questionable as the machine
spirit crypt
that crumbles
beneath this issuance.

BREAKFAST

You know how I like my dawns god— 'll
Just tap off this nubi-pink 'n' 'n'
Call yuh call
That a 3 minute dawn?!!

You need a new timer old timer

FENDINGS

Always plotting to fellate Rudolph
the Red-Nosed Reindeer I crouch
behind a snowclad chimney shivering
less from the cold than from my
cringing proximity to the loved one as
he lands skidding a little on
this icy roof: I could even add
my feet stamp out the small bravoos
of the snow as it falls. Or elsewhere
full of eels eliciting Aegean delays
of day, post-finis its druglord intent,
sinister and pale-opaque, tactile even,
impatient to breed the satyr-hyena
from a handful of fruitkin, I welcome
duelling swimmers coiffed at dusk:
the children of alternate cramps
may concur. And yet an attic that's
dustmopped daily is no attic, I cry,
facile, stupid, gagging on air rages.
Abashment's beverage, my hair
needles the dust. I comb through
photos of mythological scissors,
I tend to fly like I got a wing up
my ass but at least I try. Imagine
balloons released at burials to signal
the blindnests in the caves, the eave
cotes of blood Earthbound leaves
his sister Skybound to fend bare.

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!"

WORSE

I've studied the wallcrack
from which Roderick
Usher filled his syringe

at regular intervals but
no decalcomania occurs
when I trace it in my mind

or find a speck of chaos
to watch writhe. Illiterate
that pattern blots me back

till teen angst hurts less
than birth beyond which
it's all alien, lightyears

assert themselves on each
sill or toppling snowfall
mimes the air with blue

precisions. Is it right to
frame this as errata, largess
costumed, a nemesis that

encrusts the nostrils with
navels for example, letting
the body's rooms merge in

decay or worse, cognition.

BEDDYBYE

Just hope that when you lie down your toes are a firing-squad

[UNTITLED]

Before going to the palmreader I glued
mirrors to my palms, so the irrevocable
lines and configurations that told my fate
were merely reflections of the reader's eyes,
eyelashes, retinal imperfections which time
will perhaps deepen to blindness . . . I was
about to p.s. this poem also. What do you see,
O Sibyl?

FACADE

Like mirrors worn out by apple
renderings, depictions the carcass
of peepingtom sneers at, that vatic
surface disdained by Cezanne, doubts
that blemish forever rarity: thus wise
beauty is painted parallel always,
doubling its fade a shadow near
that seems to set an alternate yet not,
since beauty is tempted to falsify
each shadow, as if nothing nearer
could be real. Facepaint spoils
the forbidden zone quality that lives
and dies there (indirectly). But truth
lies immobile on the sundial while
its other else moves to the blazon
of summer rhymes that remain names
unknown till birth when the tongue
must pronounce itself the tongue,
forsaking every purer synonym.

CEMETERY

Who whispers here is forgotten.

Saliva's emptiest fruit
adorns the stones,
words ripening your mouth
to a spoilation
of silence.

Who speaks here
reads a text that downloads
the screen of his fingernail,
through which nothing's visible
as glass is.

For the memorial
we must kneel
to pick each flower
from amongst its modifiers:
but to do that
one needs a hand bared
of all uses, of all trades:
as ours is not.

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

POEM

The pose heightened in desires, the pose.
The several lovers in their young arms.

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 tell
lifelike anecdotal excerpts from my actual
personal past spiced with empirical detail.

TRANSIT

my hand feels odd without its wrist which ticked itself away
other parts of my body are similarly running out of time
and one by one are vanishing
my left foot is gone
and my right eye and the list grows daily—
if they are departed from here
have they started to appear
elsewhere
weighing down its sill a tick more each second
ectoplasmically emerging there
from the nowhere of this life
this nonexistence I feel in every pore
ever since childhood revealed
a gap in the text or
an amputation of the hand from its gesture
a separation of act from intent
a limb from limb interstice
ever since childhood began to feel
the intrusion of that split that portal that doorway place
which little by little piece by piece
I am entering now

[UNTITLED]

Was it out of kindness
I dropped a compass
into the volcano
so the lava will know
which way to flow.

UNTITLED

I love the way in graveyards
The dead guard the dirt
From being torn open yearly,

Wracked by seed. They save
It from cultivation, from
Our human need to feed.

THE WORD

Whenever CSI tried to
chalk outline one
corpse of Proteus
too many we heard

his memoranda read
over the wind, against
the phone. Enticing
bandaids off earthworms

via mental telepathy
was still followed by
the usual appall, the same
mad-dog meanwhile.

Thus each time the chess
champs throw dice to
dictate their next move
a vase and an owl debate

the outcome. Wait,
there's more aspic
precision in this next shot
of dead peasant, arms

flogging his baby's path.
It lasts till it laughs.
It takes place in the lab
where they vie to put

the me back in mediocre
and the I in you. Equating
to the sound made in
the 1950s by a thousand

typewriter covers being
slid off to write the word
whose sound cannot
repeat that thou-slid sound,

suggesting the collective
actions of our fingers
pressing this keyboard
add up to a standard or

(stanza break)

flag preempting thought
across the nastiness when
it stands to sing the nation.
Thousands of them sound

their voice in one body as
Proteus who includes
all nature in his and has
to once we mall ourself.

VERTIGO

All prisons were quiet where I walked,
yet my way was limited
as buried in my tread I made rounds
that threw up barricade.
Rivers can flow with no sense of advance,
no anticipation of arc, but I must know
what my steps seek, thrust
thumbs into my belt for navigation
or find an emptiness between
the possible routes, a stay
to steer me through the faceless confetti
my mouth scatters in front.

Like kisses clocked by scars
my days were overt in their intent
to pass these words
through unison to you.
And even though the disguises by which
you have not known me
still wield flagell-eyelids
that haunt me with rainbow seepage
I have yet to mourn for signs
that I am here, and I refuse to mime
the verities that crest your view
in dread of drops.

Does my anonymous know me
or am I alone here in the night
where I guide myself down
via kite-strings.

LETTER TO A LANDSCAPE

How I painted you, first offering the blank
canvas a cigarette and a blindfold—
my execution left your image staring
into a space it could no longer mime
or defend with repeated acts of absence.

From now on destruction must be final.
The hole in the wall its nail made would cease
to suffice the clamor of the audience
stirred forward past their poses, a pittance
attendance. Let the cheaper seats applaud.

Massacre of semblance, matchless frame, perched
purloin to yield your past vast-hold, greenscene
that dangles there its last furtive hope of
grace-exit, set to vanish in the next
text which avider cliques click into view.

What scar has interhearted us with face
ruses the thousand roved letters I wrote
might have mentioned, those naive notes wrought-core
in similar airs to you, simpleton
valley, fall hive of greenery, high halt

desultory vista. Was it nine noahs
ago I boarded the wombship time, coupling
twain each mainseed of my father's crime,
garrotted gored by his umbilical sword,
bride-groined bled. Now my yearyawns keep reading

kleenex for the word (sought as one, it dims;
wrought by many it screams) that would have freed
me until, terrified by such tearducts,
lamp-febrile, knees I lie in the wither
of wait. Near-antiquity these means.

Wholly articulated yet unsaid, reader-shaped
words appear before me, they come down the street
like all neat, if my lips could only tell you what
you hear them say, but let it settle gelid and
quiver caught, the thought. Let it dupe a while.

Let it nought. Let it come nought. How loud
the brake that woke that word was. The sun sipped
us up through its thermometerstraw for
refreshment but summer days are so long,
so memoir. Like unsubtitled foreign

(stanza break)

films its landscape lacks meaning, each tree reflects
the alien dialog the actors exchange,
correspondent to your confusion, a child
told to not trust strangers. That's why I feel
the letter "I" would like to read itself as

everywhere epitome, but suspicion
is none to the person who inhabits
these crumbs, or so my cyber-bye eyes cry.
Each playdate of pellucidorean arbors
whispers past the hands berate I'll never grasp

alive the death around such carnal preen
artesian tensions. Its mirrors opaque
with old wisdoms of touch. See that sky seeping
hourglassly upon my closer eyelids
while my more distant ones blur. Infancy,

realm whose vacant aprons reared and shed name
welcome: a wonder of no thanks rowed the snake's
sidle sinuous canoed through the page of
far-eternity, bound fawning in toe
to you: tar vomit covers day with. Let snow

unsheathe those peaks earth holds above our craned
up beaks to learn how sharp such echo-other
heights keep their prospects honed, each precipice
razorboned must thrust all lapidary mist
that clings unstoried to that summit: my pane

re-sinews bleakly every breeze from up there.
Each brushstroke I heap you with is broken
by its cry. Aspirations try, but why, why
does Hiroshima always forget to duck?
Let landscape stand for letter. Let it lack.

INTERRUPTUS

Wait. What are you.
I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like:
I love you.
Alright. Continue.

WATER

you ask me why I come among you to mourn you
I say: I am the mourner
but we are not dead or dying
well: I am the mourner
we aren't afraid of you
I know: I am the mourner
but what do you mourn then if not us
not you: I am the mourner
is there anything worth mourning but us
yes: I am the mourner
when you leave us do you continue to mourn
to mourn: I am the mourner
your answers are only echoes
to echo is to mourn: I am the mourner
we won't feed you you know you'll starve
I live on lament: I am the mourner
but we are young and strong we don't need you
I am the mourner
here's a dollar beat it
thanks: goodbye
where will you go from here
there are others to mourn: I am the mourner
wait a sec is that all don't you have anything else
to say to us
I say: I am the mourner goodbye
wait you can't leave it like that
no: I have finished mourning you
hey wait up-stop-you fraud you-cheat stop
you catchgrief you thief
sorry: you have been mourned as much as you can be
but don't worry:
I am the mourner

[UNTITLED]

The actors stack their scripts on the front
edge of the stage hoping to make a barrier
between themselves and the audience,
everybody run quick tell the dramatists
we need more bricks to complete this wall.
(Ad libs will only add a flimsy scrim.)

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.

FOOTNOTE TO CAVAFY

Sure hope them barbarians
Will allow us to pay them
To take photographs of them
Before they slaughter us.

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 geral

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

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*

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.

[UNTITLED]

All I can do is
lie here limb by
limb alone and try
not to cry out
too loudly.

INSCRIBE

sex is tracing paper of murder
so let me lie under you
when you do it

[UNTITLED]

are there some
invulnerabilities too
hard to bear perhaps
the bulletproof vest
stabs itself in secret

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.

VOWS

The commonplaces of
the wedding ceremony
would like to go back and marry
the proposal's florid words—
But isn't that love?

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

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.

[UNTITLED]

a jet zooming by
may see climbers on a cliff
and never know if
those souls ascend or descend—
to the fast slow has no end

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

the past and the future
are my parents
meeting for the first time
when I die

RITUAL

first
bury your hands
then the third from the right toes
your pancreas bury it next
and so on in the order prescribed
by ancient strictures
save the head for last
cup your thumbs beneath for it to fall into
have an eyelash
be the last thing visible overground
leave a heartbeat
to tamp down the dirt
to be a shadow for grassblade above
then nothing up there
at the beginning of this poem nothing
so that the last the very last
all that'll be left to do then is
bury your hands
etc.

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.

[UNTITLED]

each a prey to self's salt
though impervious to sea's
mermaids must never weep
their tears would rust erode
their scales their souls

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.

SUMMER PARAPHRASE

Sweeping the floor and mopping
the laptop, these are my chores,—
my household daily quest for darkness,
the evil clustering in the dust
under the bed, behind the couch,
(see that laugh-jag on the ceiling—)
wrath's detritus. The past pleads
goodbye, but our verdict is why.
I roam to clean, feeling over-welcomed
by the amount of clutter the air
accumulates just being itself; added
to the mess I make it's enough
to fill one's life, that pile of totalities
which counts prize days from those
average and therefore desolate,
seeing out the window how leaves
can't even lift their own branches
from the downward that loves them.
Turning back to this backlit page,
I find the sun has picked it out,—
through its links of shade I see
the motes floating in each sunbeam
seem more etched, more stable
than these I've set my margins for.

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.

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.

AT THE MUSEUM THIS WEEK

Poland Through The Centuries a touring
Exhibition of maps drawn
By German and Russian cartographers reveals
There never was a Poland.

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.

YAMAZATO WA MANZAI OSOSHI UME NO HANA (Basho)

*

April: and still the Mummers have not come
Up to our mountain village; plum-blossom.

*

I wonder why the Mummers have not come
This year to our mountain town; plum-blossom.

*

For some reason the Mummers have not come
This season to our hill-town; plum-blossom.

*

This year The Rolling Stones have not come
To fill our stadium;
The old men fear, and wonder
If April is really here: plum-blossom.

*

Up snowthawed roads unplowed the Mummers come
To reach our mountain village; plum-blossom.

*

This time each year the Mummers used to come
Appear in our mountain town; plum-blossom.

*

Springtime is when the Mummers always come
To play our mountain town; hey, plum-blossom!

*

Springtime; but where are the Mummers who play
Each year our mountain town: plum-blossom-spray.

*

Each Spring a troupe of actors used to come
To amuse our mountain town; plum-blossom.

*

It's Spring, but the Actors Troupe has not come
To strut our mountain village; plum-blossom.

*

Spring has come, so where's the Actors who come
To our mountain town each year; plum-blossom.

*

The Stray Players are late this year—
Plague- or war-killed maybe; and we're
Still stuck in this dullsville hill-town . . .
Fuck that plum shit: let's get on down!

*

Carpet's out, where's that Actors Troupe?²—
Stow those town gowns: go bed goodnight.
Dull mountain village, all lit up.
Your plum-tree blossoms glare too white.

*

The mime-troupe of actors is late this year
To climb to our mountain village up here;
Is that why the trees in whiteface appear.

*

The Lookout yells them Actors ain't nowhere in sight—
Our mountain village mourns; the orchard wears white.

*

Where the heck are those Kabuki—
Nothing to do but sleep tonight . . .
Our mountain town looks plain empty;
The trees alone step out in white.

Note:

In Japan, the plum blossom is treated as an early sign of spring. It is pale white with oval-shaped petals.

SHUT FLIGHT

the knob's the head
the hinges open-spread
would make wings

but see the keyhole
like an eye that seeks
its beak

why does
the doorbird leave its nest
only when it's closed

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.

A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY

Here for ear-rings my lobes
Are pierced by scythes
Whose handletips bump along
The very ground I despise!

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 anticipanhood, novice 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.

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 offlurks 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.

[UNTITLED]

The heavy footsteps of the famous sink
into our flesh. Moviestars carved
across our pavements: I fall down to lap up
the love from these fame-incisions;
I lick my rain out of their name-pits.

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.

(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*.

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.

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.

OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down
Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown
Another course for us

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.

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 dowsers,
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!)

(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

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.

TRY ME ON FOR SIZE

My head is put on and taken off
by one thought after another doff,
although strangely it seems to fit
none of them. And yet somehow it
always stays in style, that hat.

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.

TO COMPLETE

last one in the sentence is a rotten old period

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.

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 see the like bees
—only the moon can tongue such honeys,

or unisex models whose hair is being sucked
into their navels for a rote secondum 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.

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.

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

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.

HOUSE AND HOLDMATES

how long we two
lived between each other
in a perfect renting
of me and you

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.

POEM

Night, in whose death did your ennui take refuge?
The women all lay their kerchiefs on the water, and stepped back.

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.

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.

SUMMER DAYS

a butterfly with a sandwich
bite out of one wing flies away
from the inhabitoads of our shadow
or tries to

TWO CRIMES

1
poem/accomplice
distracting your
attention for
a second or
is it hours
while I pick
and pick
your pocket's
flowers

2
the holdup went down
as the clockhands show
at 1:55 so
I refused to stick em up
because I never no
I never mime
time

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.

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.

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*.

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.

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

TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine
of thumbs revs
and purrs—

Oh:
I am all
fingers now.

2. [Plus ça change . . .]

When young
I was attracted to what they call
Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women.

STORMFORM

All the lines of this poem
would like to contain
the sound of the rain
against my windowpane,
but I'm going to have it remain
here. Which I hope is home.

ODD

Hard rhymes of childhood ride
me back to lack's kitchen

in which it's leftovers again:
from the cyclops cupboard

I plop another half-ate
Ulysses onto my plate.

[UNTITLED]

I: They're out to get me.
You: Whaddaya mean, "they"?
I: Oh; sorry: I meant you—you're out to get me.
You: That's more like it.

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.

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.

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.

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.

ANOTHER COLD WAR POEM

So what if you lived only
One second longer
Than we
Did: to us
You will always be known as the Survivor.

I SHOULD HOPE SO

Next year when this book is
pulped and the pulp recycled to
print your Collected Poems, will I
still be here still writing this?

[UNTITLED]

Helplessly the clock's hands fail
to cleanse its numerals as they pass,
to wipe away the jealous glances
and fretful glares of our daily vigil,
drab fears and doubts whose dust
will come to filthify time at last.

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.

FETE

at summerfest
I think of the mallet
the crematory uses
to graniate
the harder bones

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.)

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—

GYPTIAN

architect of the Sphinx
must have sketched his first plan
knelt down with a finger
to draw lines in the sand—
isn't that how he began?

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.

from EXCERPTS/VIETNAM:

3. Reminder to Nuke the Other Side of the Planet

Upside down in the ground
there is someone who walks
on my soles when I walk.

I'm gonna get that bastard!

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.

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

ENLIGHTENMENT OR SENILITY?

The night is paced with stars
Day spaced by birds' wings
At last the spread of things
Has replaced my particulars

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.)

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.

[CLEARLY]

clearly
my eyeglasses
need cleaning but
but I wasn't looking
at anything

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 noplac 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.

FORTUNE

having found a penny
atop a weed's aureole
however it got there
is it wrong of me to look
for bucks on roses

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.

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.

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

PRIVATE SCREENING

My soul fell asleep
during the beautiful part
of the mirror, leaving
my body
to watch it alone.

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 synopsise its emptiness with this.

[UNTITLED]

This island has
Been discovered by a great explorer,
But fortunately,
News of the discovery
Has not reached here yet.

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 TENTATIVES

If the arrow is merely
An elongated bullseye

Do I know this head
(Target that grins and winks)

Like mine surrounded
By eye speedbreaks

POEM IN H

that cloud overhead
has a hundred places to go
and none of them here

PAST FUTURE

Idly wondering
if the underlined items
in one's itinerary
are more likely
to occur.

Ditto diary.

[UNTITLED]

mute/hard
forbiden
words
line the mountain
down which we melt—
stones that wore our
trickle tongues away

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

[TOPPLED]

under the statue of It
lie the crumbles
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

[[UNTITLED]

in the hand's cup
the palm is
an irreducible drop
a shrunken gnosis
no one can drink up

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.

INTERRUPTUS

Wait. What are you.
I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like:
I love you.
Alright. Continue.

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 sandal-down 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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

Silence disguises itself
as vowels, but the loudness
of consonants is also a ruse,
a mask worn to betray
the words we chose to say
only for their echoes.

VISION

moon of all means
sun of all ends

my TV screens
whatever day

or night sends
me away

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.

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

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

[UNTITLED]

Hamlet in the nunnery kneels
to take his veilful vow
while Ophelia scales
with sword and bow
the enemy's walls

AUTUMN MOON

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

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?

[UNTITLED]

I tried but
they wouldn't let me put
tombstones on
the merrygoround
for a ride

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.

EMBRACE

the problem with the end is
that you have to start reaching
out for it beforehand and often
your arms find themselves filled
with the penultimate instead

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.

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

(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.

LAST WISH: TO AN AMAZON

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

(stanza break)

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.

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.

PEBBLES

I never try to do what those in the other arts do,
composers, painters, and them,
I only try to do what other poets do,
except when other poets try to do
what those in the other arts do,
in which case I don't.

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.)

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.

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 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.

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 plumblines 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.

SKIRT

My hem has a snake threaded
through it to hold it down
when the wind blows and
then when the wind is still
to give it a twist of tremor.

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.

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.)

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
niched 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

[UNTITLED]

On nights like this the heart journeys to other islands.
Beaches rise and dance naked under moonlight.
Inland, asleep, you see
The stone face of your solitude being piled slowly.

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.

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

(stanza break)

will I shiver
like a tuningfork
touched to a flame

when my sword
is nailed to the dawn
with caedmon skill

the cigarette elongates
the cheekbone
but what good is

a genesis
confined in seed

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.

BATHROOM MIRROR

Every morning the glass
empties my face
of its night and then
as its day is poured in
I feel forsaken and
my eyes strain longingly
down the drain.

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

PROGRESS

I advance a few whines,
then am driven back
twice as many whimpers.

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

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.

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

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.

POEM

See the unicorn's empty sword,
how its lack takes place
in a lack of place.

Nothingness is its own niche.

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.

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.

(POEM) (CHICAGO) (1967)

If you remember this poem after reading it
Please go to Lincoln Park the corner of Dickens Street and sit
On the bench there where M. and I kissed one night for a few minutes
It was wonderful even if you forget

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

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

MY FAVORITE WORD

"Attentionspan" is my favorite word
because I can never finish
reading it all the way through.

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.

I SHOULD HOPE SO

Next year when this book is
pulped and the pulp recycled to
print your Collected Poems, will I
still be here still writing this?

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.

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.

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.

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

ADGE

such the strength of signs
I mean abbreviations

that before he dies
someone often tries

foolishly to devise
to dream up one

as if the right acronym
might save him

from time he scatters
out the letters

of his name arranging
them

in different combinations
or anyone's

to spell out the logo
the curt slogan

whose shortcut on
the screen asserts

the brand buy
the standard eye

can respond to
any cant will do

any congerie of
some might work

every shtum may
shtow the way

but not a phrase
it has to be less

than a word it must
resist the mind almost

equally as errata
and yet mean more

(stanza break)

than any term can
it must determine

itself as a what's grasped
a spasm like the gasp

that wakes from dreams
what syllable it seems

to the dumbest i-wad
it's no anagram stupid

so drop your digiter
halfwit fidgeter

you can't tap it in
fingertip or dumbpad

even if you erase it with
your sanity's bleach

it must reach
you instantly i.e. breach

your customary
perceptions like Laurence Harvey

in The Manchurian Candidate
brainwash etcet

it must replace you
with a clone-face you

which is your instead
than the one on your head

BANG BANG GLUB GLUB

My ark/my life's-boat
had two of everything
necessary for salvation
with the exception
of two bullet-holes
in its bottom hull.

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 coilspace 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.

A HUNKA HUNKA

A rolling morass gathers no leftist,
Yet sans passport is a portrait I can't
Paint, chained to this poor Outremerican
Lumpscape upon which the head limns itself

In a tithe 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.

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.

SAY TO SAY

Say ten snowflakes light on your fingertips,
one on each, the ten snowflakes that match
your ten fingerprints in pattern the most,
the closest it's possible to get and yet remain
a similie, since similies like M-and-M's melt
not in your hand but in your mouth say.

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

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.

(stanza break)

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

(stanza break)

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.

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.

POEM

I fear an alias abandoned
At birth awaits to name me
After life, an ID I must
Assume again, a prior self.

(stanza break)

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.

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

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.

(stanza break)

The faucet drips
until a tyrant falls.

What else is shown here?

Everything the poem
erases in half
with its first word.

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

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—

(stanza break)

In the middle of the sea,
sole survivors of a cargo shipwreck,
welcome-mats line the shore
of a desert island.

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

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—

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.

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.

HYPHEN

The sound of a needle
scraping out
a thimble.

(stanza break)

A knife
excavating
a spoon.

Categories
can only be cleansed
from within.

Self-purgation.
Aristotle-spectacle.
Deathbed-confession.

The sound of a pen
... ?

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.

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,

(stanza break)

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

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.

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.

(stanza break)

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.

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*.

THE LINE-UP

The snake
came first
then the giraffe
et al until

(stanza break)

all the animals
appeared all
the suspicious
species

but then
together they
pointed at me

saying there
that one there
he did it.

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

*

(stanza break)

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.

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

(stanza break)

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 exbanged 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.

(stanza break)

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.

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 splots of paint Bacon threw
at a finished canvas to undo it,
ruining and opening a conduit
for revision the stone may grow

malleable. But can any hand's moves
disarm that form our imperfection loves.

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.

[UNTITLED]

We can tell when the famous will appear
For their theme songs precede them
We can tell when the dead will appear
For the famous precede them

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.

POEM

Doesn't each tree throw
its shade to show
boundary to the others'
thirsting thrust?
Only the roots are brothers;
the roots are the forest.

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?

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.

[UNTITLED]

Check out the Obituaries—each
day there's another page and
guess what, those fucks,
there's nobody on it but us.

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

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

IN VAIN

I like to look at myself in the dull gold
of the frames that contain erotic paintings
and, as I gaze, ask, as if I cared,
"Will moonlit lashes continue
to surround sunlit eyes?"

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.

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

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.

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.

[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 view the vastness
Dancing round its witherwick when day's drummer

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

PLACEMENTS

only when
the welcome-mat is
exactly centered
at its core
can a labyrinth
begin

VALUE

the weapons I purchased
didn't finish off the fascists

the love I sold my own for
did not put paid to them either

why'd I never think to try
whatever it was I got free

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?

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,

(stanza break)

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.

SIC TRANSIT

Tangentially
 the sun
unites itself in us,
 forged
by our transparency
 into
another shadow
 to avert
one's eyes from.

AFTER LEOPARDI: *L'INFINITO*

If there is any spot that hates me
less than the rest of the world does,
this is it, this cliff clear overlooking
the sargasso mess of sea, though
why it should be the sole exception
I don't know, flaw in the design maybe.
It's always been dear to me, this sheer,
it's where I peer into the infinity
surmounting all, or seem to, anyway.
I could be wrong. And such sanctuary
can becalm my pan-anxiety at times;—
but I wonder: does it ever feel stir
under these unruffled rocks a kind of
tummy-ache-like urge to die, to merge
time in those limitudes which even
our deepest shipwrecks fail to find
a bourn beyond, or sound their own.

POEM IN THE CARDIAC UNIT

Time-charted, nursed, I let the meds
dictate this verse: *roomriver rounds*
take my pulse down stairwaves of stairs
scan my aches in chairbanks of chairs
and wake me on bedbeds of beds.

Multiplicities, pre-scripted;
metaphors bled, already dead:
what wouldn't be a cliché here—
paranoid mirror, bathroom sink,
flowing over with normal fear

as I squint at what I might mean
if I poeticized this scene: age
LSDs my chin; my once-lean
profile spills profilefiles, page
upon page rippling to see

even their prolific output
data can never sate the spate
pathoscopes that hardrecord spot
surveillance of what vital signs
remain in these veins, clotted lines

whose parse usurps my sleep. (Forget
how literate you hate this surge,
absurd, heartbeat creation; your
necknoun must stet its tide-edit
now, to quiververbs, wattlewords.)

What would my peergroup say, could they
modify this hypergaud gush,
advise my florid brainflushed flesh
stop pouring forth such images,
euphony beyond me. Sweet excess.

Is that not the gist this critic
monitor that beeps down its *sic*
keeps vying to brightly display
while I lie here less than what, what,
watched all night, till more's the day.

PRESCRIPTIONS

I am watching, like the moon on a shelf,
How many days any I can still be myself,
And how few you. That being to whom
We browed our faces may recall such lackadaisia—

Circus horse scissors can snip yours across
A thousand screens, but can you skim from
Them the one you are or the nine hundred,
Ninetynine you remain to be? Fire engines

Pass with all our silences working furiously
Within, red as a guillotine blushes when
It contemplates the soul. Danton, Robespierre—
The way their lord swims among them in

Turtle purples of fear makes whole Paris bright.
Nightly the Terror bakes me, stale loaf of
Laughter: and already in my bank/my bastille
The time-locks all have long white beards—

Drawing maps across zebras may cut
The cartographer's workload in half, but
Me, I screech to a halt before a hypnotist's socks.
I am watching like the moon on a shelf

How many pablums remain in my RX,
And how many more pillowfights in marshes
And marshmallow fights in pillboxes
Have I to endure? La Revolution forever!

Otherwise I was abandoned long ago,
When I drank the flying ore of an hourglass. So
Please don't lie beside me asking the stars
Have you no other names to take but ours.

I paint everything over on its mouth.
Behold the hill from which all heights are felled.
Before throwing them I always gargle the dice.
Meanwhile they pile up, the medical bills.

ANTICIPATION

Before the bell rings,
let's put on our uniforms,
pre-don and suit-up prior,
prepared in proper attire,
occasion-costumed.

If a comic alarmclock frowns
its brow to get set to let go,
stick on a mask, a face-circle
whose eyelashes tick
from numeral to numeral.

Say it's a tall church-steeple
and it takes a deep well of a breath,
an inhale-heave readying to ring,
drape yourself in the smudgey fringes
of sermons and elegies.

If it's only a bicycle huffing
and puffing to expel
its tiny pedally peal,
pull on your shorties and shifts
until they tuck your knees.

A dinner-gong, you must
tie up your bib-knot in huge swaths,
large lashings of effort. It should
always go flourished thus
in ruffs and fluffs for the feed.

Prepare yourself for the tolling
of time, don't be caught without
the proper clothing
for clang, tinkle, or teaspout.
But sadly if it's the bell that tells

your day has fled and flit,
your poem needs an edit,
don't bother looking through the closet
for that outfit,
you don't have it.

ANOTHER HAIRBRUSH POEM

the hairbrush can hardly breathe
it suffocates in strands
it snarls as tense as teeth
biting an enemy's hands

the things we tame are what
entangle and turn us wild
every parent grows ragged tugged
disciplining their child

pity the year-old hairbrush
its stems all split its roots bare
like a field that's tilled too much
now a hoarbrush blooms there

hairbrush hairbrush have you
any tufts to spare today
now that I'm bald and cannot comb
please give back my gray

the hairbrush yanks and yanks
stubborn curl it won't lie dead
even a poorbrush has to shed
all the rebels from its ranks

(so try not to cry and just say thanks
when it hauls you off your head!)

31 SYLLABLES ABOUT

the poor old poet
can't afford to buy copies
of his early books
and can't even remember
the brandnames of the damn things

THE SAME WITH POEMS

When you set the table you want to
place the knives and forks and napkins
so perfectly, so alignedly, that everyone
will hesitate to pick them up, to break
that symmetry. The food should rot
while the diners gaze down dazed.

EACH TIME

Sometimes I dream of Rumor's house, which,
I just read in Ovid, is situated cruxic

"the world's center," at that core of cores
beneath us all. He contends its windows doors

are forever open, a porous palace where
every word uttered by every person is stored

in what I'd call the ultimate anthology.
Where is this house, in what country?

Its closets hold not only the past,
meaning the brain's nine-tenths lost

noncognitional of the capacitated,—
because it collates not just the said,

but all that will be said: Each text
it bleeds from the future is convexed

theoretically to also heal our sole flaw:
that underlying chamber, that cellar

which upholds these capsuled corridors:
that fissure floor one-celled horrors

emerged from eons earthwide scattered,
too patterned for breeding, those far

glugglugs, these slogged zillenia ago.
Each trans-cthonic myth—genetic fragments

we once keeled our island egos against—
is shored Eliotically, in toto—

but not in a waste land: in this place
nothing is wasted, each fact is facet

composite a euphemistic peg, whose hole
lies in what one might term a zero,

though the zero that defines our one
must look through itself to see what's gone:

What used to be the bookshelf
it swallows, and feeds throughout itself:

(stanza break)

it sits each of us there at the hell
level its circuits need, and circulates us

around the enter system's railroad
to embody our brain a la bloodmode,

knowing its node is only made more real
by the fact each hypertold spongecode

can be simulsold for further gore:
every PC glued to GossipNet

increases the sanguinary poet's debt.
But I hear you say in ways this constant

poured out current has wrecked Intent:
floor-it geared, it steers us most toward

a surface abyss, a maelstrom facade—
the sargasso rock-critic, the facile hard-crowd—

it's said our eyes are icebergs in that sea.
But where they are dispelled entirely

beyond my room night comes into swim.
Somewhere out there I know grow fossils

of protozoa-to-be, omega mammals,
animandroids roaming, manuals

whose outreach program, whose proffered rim
as far as I'm a testcase-speciman victim

should fend off every ocean, every cunning
void evolution took some of its beginning

from: for longspan has that epoch broke
when rumor heard what human spoke.

POEM

Here in town the sound
of bells must compete with
me for room, but out
over the waves can zoom
alone. Across the sea
bells travel unimpededly.

ASHBERY'S VISIT TO PAHLEVI, 1972 (AFTER JAMES WRIGHT'S
"EISENHOWER'S VISIT TO FRANCO, 1958")

The American poet must kiss ass
The forces of darkness.
He has flown here first-class
And come down in the oil fields
Of Iran.

Shah Pahlevi stands in a shining circle of CIA.
His wallet opens in welcome.
He promises all USA cars
Can gas up forever now
And live like Beatniks "on the road."

His police fill the prisons
With dissidents. Ashbery follows
His fellow celebrants to the banquet
Of the Avantgarde Arts Fest
Which Her Royal Empress Queen Farah
Gilds to their honor.

Smiles glitter in Shiraz.
Ashbery has touched hands with John Cage, embracing
For the Cultural Attache's report.

Clean new tankers from America
Glide along gantries now.
Their prows shine in the docklights
And their hulls swallow all
Of Iran.

Note: As everybody knows now, and some knew at the time, Pavlevi's reign was a CIA op from the start—they ran the coup which put him into power, they trained the gestapo forces he wielded to keep his people in terror and suppression—and I assume they advised him that putting some of his swindled billions into an annual "Avantgarde" Arts festival would pay off as a publicity stunt to help counteract international outrage and protest against his police state regime. I also assume the innovative artists invited and paid handsome sums to attend this yearly elitistival were vetted and chosen by the CIA's Cultural Committee—carefully selected for their apolitical esthetics. See this for more about the 1972 orgy: <http://thefaleslibrary.blogspot.com/2011/04/downtown-arts-in-pre-revolution-iran.html>

[UNTITLED]

now that I die
my past becomes as endless
as my future used to be

APPLE

Pack your bathtub with humankind.
Your closet with animaldom.
Let grassmost spill from your shelves.

Cram the world into your house,
overlooking no cubbyhole
no corner. Surrender your personal

to matter external,
privacy to plethora,
fill each space with all.

Leave no room for yourself, though—
how foolish that would be.
For, as the fruit is a little

recantation on the part of bitterness,
a letting up of its overkill reign,
so this surfeit will solve

for a while your null.

[UNTITLED]

That mask the mirror dons
when you look at it, is your face:
it won't let you see its.

POEM

My cheeks threw themselves as fuel
into the fire of the kiss and then in
succession the rest flesh bone all
features flowed thusward until my
entire body was gone burned away
in the flue space that held between
two mouths turned ash the heart
or hearth that cannot last the night.

METAPHOR VS. METONYMY

As the hand carries on the function of the sleeve to a somewhat absurd degree, so you could take over for me if we ever finish this sentence, whose period is its cufflink.

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).

FLATLINES

All the poems I wrote about love
didn't get me a goddamn wife,
and all the poems I wrote about war
didn't bring peace to anyone's strife,
and all the poems I wrote about death
[something something something] life.

COURSE

Our ship needs wheels
to sail across these
waves of stone if
Medusa is our
figurehead.

APARTNESS

They placed the sky
in birds instead
of inside themselves.

Now from pane to pane the sun
must depend
on the clarity of elsewhere.

An expanse of please,
the day regained,
its goodness land.

But there are mondotrash
who still war and waste
in border disputes
brave Procrustes' realm.

They let their gods debate
the measure mete,
the counterfeit of zeroes.

Hell's lepidopteral heirs,
heap dragons.

They are lost.
They are blind, they are shoeless
as an orchestra of exits.

They are us.

We place the bird in skies
who have misplaced it
inside ourselves.

[UNTITLED]

perhaps I still wake up

I still live perhaps

but if I do I hope

I hope I do it for sloppiness sake

POEM (tercets)

As I walk into town I am noticing
on the sidewalk the leaves have
fallen mostly bright side down,

so the colorful-wonderful side,
i.e. the dying-decaying, hides
below the still-greenish half

which hunches overhull as if
to protect its fairer twin, to
save its frail waste of loveliness

from our pending feet. This
upward face is the obverse,
the unloved: thus on the tree it

was obviously the underpart,
untoasted by the sun, tree-slice
half-done. If I step on one

it flattens and perhaps some
of the color crumbles up through
and dyes the skyward-displayed

sheaf-shield, something bleeds
into the drained mask it offers
to the world's uncurious shoed

glance. Virgil cites a myth that
false dreams cling beneath each leaf,
numberless: that's why the under

stays rare, unmarred by hectic—
its stainless purity portrays
a lottery win, a moviestar kiss.

Its perfection is a fantasy rays
have not darkened to day. It stays
asleep in its top-sheet of hope.

I love this unlived side of the leaf,
it is in turn my life, pale-safe
and fraught with no urge to wake,

to exert its own naif enough—
my raw state resists sophistudy,
(anterior antibody of beauty)

(stanza break)

its rootless evil nice beneath
the garish one's reign of dare and
flare, he who exalts the warmth

on his skin, Mister surface, Herr
hero. I am the lesser here, the low.
Yes: but after the fall I will show

my face toward any sole, no longer
subferior to tanned specimans
of transcendized TV glory, riper

hunks who now sprawl shrivel
and hug the pavement while their
earlier cursed teencarnations bare

out to be me, me, the bove-boy—
So what if I'm the false, the dream
none can depend on or look to

for that vacuous autumn viewing,
foolishly believing those goldshed
scarlets are a sight extolled, a sign.

They ignore my sap hue, my true
expression of the void that lies
so splendid-blazed before their eyes.

NAOMI POEM

When our hands are alone,
they open, like faces.
There is no shore
to their opening.

NAOMI POEM

The beach holds and sifts us through her dreaming fingers
Summer fragrances green between your legs
At night, naked auras cool the waves
Vanished
O Naomi
I kiss every body of you, every face

GUILTY CREATURES AT PLAY

We suffered from a sort of sexual dyslexia;
we couldn't make out who loved who, when, where—
Sometimes, it's so hard to know,
and what you take for eagerness is just jumpcuts.

And once I tried to love you too
but I remembered the expression
on my face so I stopped. It was nothing,
just one of those faces we made while being born,
one of those pouts, gnarls, scowls, smiles, pursings,
strange I can't remember which it was.

Everytime I thought of that person I thought I loved
it was if my forearms
and wrists
kept trying to grasp at, to catch hold of
my hands
but can't, they can't reach that far—

You took my loveletters to you and
had them pulped and papier-mached and
made into a paperweight to hold down
the loveletters from your real lovers,
safe from the encroachments, the heaven of winds.

I was busy leaning between two pillars of sunglasses
or correcting misprints in the word "I"
when suddenly I understood
your need to die flipping a diary
for the name of the one who loved you to a lapse, glorious.

POEM

Hey who wrote that WASH ME in the dust
of that grave in our town's mutants' cemetery,
vandals or angels? The suspects stood around their cars
looking devious and assaulted,
like a mugshot of a child.

Ancestor-silencing is difficult when you you're the one
who forgot to patent the dodo.

Trying to think of an insincere murder ballad.

(stanza break)

It was like that painting that time?
where the artist had a whole
bunch of frames stuck onto the original frame
so you had to look down a tunnel of these
frames to see the painting but by the time your gaze
had got to the end of the tunnel, you, well,
you know.

Assuming the fetal position with a beachball;
and yet their incomparable Alamo will
be crushed, the Bastille fall, my wrath
shall wreak them all.

Sometimes climbers who gain the peak
think that it speaks to them,
that it puffs breathclouds back at theirs,
exchanging exhilarations.

I don't know about yours,
but my parachute has a smudge on it,
so I think I'll jump pure.

GASTRONEBULA (octosyllabics)

The cannibal's head up your ass
and the angel's noggin gnawing
its way down your esophagus
may meet someday in the center
of your hunger: and as their mouths
kiss there at that primal core where
a black hole's born or an atom
splits cold each time earth's rats and worms
devour our dust's ravenous quest
to taste the apple Eden lost,
will this lust find consummation
in the appetite to which it's grown
when the sun peels apart the one,
the only world you've nova known.

Note:
line 12 variant.

CANDYCLONE

Because I'm not small enough
I must grasp the long part
of it to begin with, which
means I bite the shorter half—
(I say "half" only to indicate
the horrible horseshoe shape
it might attain in the mind)
first, in other words, I eat
the limp. Or bite at it, rather:
for candycane in the theater
of sweets is hard to the teeth
that try to crack its handle,
to take it tip-whole in one's
lips instead of one's hand
which, as I said, must hold
the cane by this bottom leg
—leg implies dancing, but Fred
Astaire debonair used tons
of canes though never a candy
one in the rigor of his prime—
if I invert it then the handle
could be his foot. Or I could
swordswallow it and leave
the toe-tongue hooking out
of my grimace like a quip or
the horn of a meersham pipe,
a tail's repartee in air, sharp
serpent that dreams of apples.
I guess it could be devoured
from the bottom up, but then
I would have to hold the cane-
curl in my hand too large for it,
the fingers too cumbersome
for this small candycrutch, maybe
I could bribe a child to dangle
it towards my snapping jaws—
all this, and god I haven't even
gotten to the red white stripes
that coil up and around its bole
pole which like all such objects
in my poems are the phallic
sublime, lame substitute for that
virility I lack, a simulcrummy
cast I must kiss and lick and
mouthmasturbate till it wears
the sleek salt that warps this

(no stanza break)

saccharine inch, crimp defeated
sack of sow. How hollow now
my effluval-angel, how small.

DISCRIMINATION

Although not lab-test verified,
I would guess that the pages of porno
magazines turn yellow and crumble
from the sperm shot onto them
faster than the poems in my books
turn yellow and crumble from
the saliva spat at them by readers—
or is it a fallacy on my part to assume
that the products of love are always
more acidic, more corrosive
than the products of loathing?

'QUOTE UNQUOTE'

Who wrote that we use our children to forget
the size of our parents, or is that really
a quote? And if it isn't, and if I forget
to write it, does that mean that someone will—

But what if someone forgets to write the words
that bring me here, that let me be born?
Oh micro-mini-soul, you, my shirking ego,
your quotemarks would just hang there in the air

like wings without a bird.

POEM

The dead paperweight rests
on my lips, occurring to me
like a cry from the words it
has crushed: think of what it
saves from scattering minds
and windows' wind-drafts,
think of all the blink-wafts
of Argus trying to read this.

ORPHEAD

The head displayed
for maenad analysis;
remedy amputee,
to the chute of the sea.

Disposal is all. Past
the path of its tongue
let it travel long,
unraveling song.

Through terebis territory
what flaystream assails
his severed lipwreck's
lyre-waxed intervals.

Its banks refuse tomb
to this bodilessness
assaulting vacuum
backbouyant combed.

None come vie to nurse
his neck where pegasi
loose their reins in blood;
missing his vein they fly.

Noon-heat leafs its hate,
whirlpool tugs his curls.
Whose garland was
grief-i-er than a girl's.

Whose love for boys
briefer than a girl's was—
stray now he sights
dame straightway at last.

Late now Europe-land
has eurid itself of him;
Eurydice finally risen
tidally takes his lid swim.

Those phaloi he laid
shake their snakelike psychs;
unshouldered his bust rolls
oceancast depthsighs.

(stanza break)

Lesbos waits to claim
this refuse of its myth.
But Sappho says fuck it
we've no one to lay him with.

ALIEN

I come from a planet that has only two books on it; their titles are:

1. Shakespeare's Complete Works.
2. Remedies, Cures, Antidotes for Shakespeare's Complete Works.

THE I DID

One memory from childhood
how when it was summer and hot
at ground level where I stood
above me I saw the tops of trees
palpitating in a proper breeze

that never came down to ease me.
I can't say I swan why I remember
what it is that makes it linger or
else enriches such a significant
nor could I see it now if I went

on a breathless day and looked up
I would not be far enough away
physically for the contrast: memory
needs that distance for its truth
to swerve from the present's path.

Is it right to hold the past fixed in
former attitudes like tops of trees
or whatever it is records history's
external focus switched to days
depictions drawn by winds upon

clouds or branches flexing wide
their leisure of purpose pause
from the hell of here. Sight cannot
even in summer when it is hot
share the air enjoyed by the eyed.

BASHO (15 syllabic versions of Basho's famous frog haiku
Furuike ya / Kawazu tobikomu / Mizu no oto)

If I were a pond
and some frog jumped into me
I wouldn't respond.

I am a pond but
when a frog gets intimate
I keep my mouth shut.

I may look like scum
but some frogs can poke this pond
to orgasm come.

This pond is so old
even its frogs want it sold
to build the new road.

This pond is old as
me. That's how bad-off it is.
Frog-visits, I doze.

You're old, pond—the same
as me. But when your frogs come
you recall each name.

This pond is year-scored
as me. But frogs that shake it
up just make me bored.

I'll float in this pond,
fearing each frog that jumps down
will wash me aground.

This pond is old too—
But when a frog jumps into
It, it still sounds new.

This pond is dead earth
But listen to its rebirth
When frogs take a bath.

Ya, the old wash-hole—
wait-a-fuck: a frog?—oh, no!—
goes splasho Basho.

Ya, the old North Pole
where Santa Frog (ho-hop-ho)
chops a splashin'-hole!

Ya, old-boys brothel—
watch Oscar Wilde get Basho
to wet his tadpole.

Ya, here's to Basho!—
there's one frog-boozi' dude you
should raise your glass to.

Whoa, Ranger Basho!
frog-herd's in the waterhole—
leggo your lasso.

TRUE HEADING

no matter how slow I go
how stealth my steps
no matter what ways I hurry
I am always bearing
the path to where
they are burying me

ALTERNATE FATES

What if right in
the middle of a battle
across the battlefield the wind
blew thousands of
lottery tickets, what then?

PHOLK POEM

The soup is lumpy.

Well then, pour it out.

The soup is lumpy.

Well, pour it out then!

The soup is lumpy, the potato soup.

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

*

A museum is too many rooms
where nothing can be moved;
one is forgotten in most of them.

*

A tiptoe theater, full of shushes
and overly-lit faces whose big
scene seems always imminent.

But if the cue is anything more
than a coin-toss, a chance word
from a spectator's bypass glance,
this expectation of response
is your guess, your great stance,
the stage you hem and haw at.

*

How the overflow of doorways
that link all these galleries
interrupts the paintings' spaces,

adjusting the land with lack
and lacunae, thrusting gaps into
the hushed square of our attention

and ushering us to the question
of absence, that thief peering in
on these always-without scenes.

*

Are we outside what is shown?
Made audience, do we attend
a pageant patient with our pauses

in perception, the solipsistic
tunnels we hug. Why otherwise
is there almost nowhere to sit?

Isn't it, that the viewers must
move in order for the viewed
to remain still. The authorities

curate these corridors with us—
offscreen captions ape our attempts
to evade rigidities they'd impose

(stanza break)

until our amblings became
a Nazi lockstep across this grid
that exists mostly to secure

the screws that make sure
the patrons' plaques are more
the wall than we are: hungworks

belong to the victor; postwar
reparations are a chimera—
this world is bolted in place.

*

Museums are for the rich: it's just
another way they gloat and spit
on us, the blunt message is *See*

*twice great am I who can afford
to both buy this board and I
may also throw it away: this view zoo*

*is what I feed the animals
meaning you: gaze-cage where
I nonplus you with my surplus,*

*torture you with my morehood,
here you must worship my worth's
leavings, the Picasso I pissed on*

*before purportedly donating it
you bet to get a big tax write
off that really comes of course*

*from scum like you, you pay the cost
and the critics conspire my con:
I own them and you and all this too.*

*

The poor have no right here,
though ostensibly it's here
for us, its existence is built on

our backs, our lacks of education:
connoisseurs of crap, we'll buy
any crud postcard Impressionist

wallpaperers provide—victims of
fade-forgers who reign everywhere,
enforcers of the de rigeur; their

(stanza break)

efforts to convince us this emptiness
is otherwise, succeeds: that's why
nothing here can ever be touched,

even a fingertip would disturb the
dead tenuous alignment of forces
fragility can only lament from frame

to frame until the all but unshown
collusion between donors and whore
curators completes its scam decor.

*

Numberless our looks languish
unable to compose their path,
halting an inch in front of

the canvas; the air is thick with
incomplete glances, gazes that
failed to reach these pictures,

overtures toward an unsatisfactory
climax, unbridgeable the gulf,
still impotent or frigid the mind

feels confronted by these large
garish (i.e. visible) examples of
a wig tossed onto a TV to be

a diva antenna receiving pictures
from the Tesla Void where
spysats orbit to catch the planet

in closeup, candid depictions of war's
centimeter selves, the slimed movement
of border sorties, incursions that

violate the treaties signed by
dignitaries retiring with a wing
named after their Mom and Dad.

*

Though our observances are far
from over, scalped by perspective's
relentless blade we wander home

truant now to our other portraits,
false to their provenance, the lands
we lost by invading the sanctum

(stanza break)

of this museum, serene scene
we plebs must abhor in front of
our lives which cannot authenticate

the real exhibit: this wealth of lies
before whose truth our face is
forgeries; our eyes un-nude, unseen.

*

[UNTITLED]

My fishinghook is
a bell which
the fish brush
against to trill and toll
and make my pole
tremble, which is why
I never catch any.

THE AVOWAL (hendecasyllabics)

One's instantaneous grasp of the world must
Seem rare though normal as a day at the beach
With ocean's blank espousal bared beyond us,
Sounder than any words of semaphore reach

Even those few brave enough to share sudden
Care for adjacent strangers drowning aware
Their embodiment there's the same, some laden
Statistic of grief and amours, just one more

Devastating sentience. Echo canyons
Might flashback up every voice their steep rock flood
Flush with amnesia-enriched names, broke against—
Though I doubt we would be that whole if we could.

Are we near to express this and is that why
I'm feeling my way down a corridor of winks,
Nervous from all the lashes that brush me as I
Suffer due the narrow scrutiny of these ranks

Like cobwebs immense, humans really I guess—
Funny how most of us remain unfinished.
Me too, beautiful as all those who before
Being born vouchsafed their life to another.

AGED

how to remain mienous
as you face
the mirror's worst

I who scorned the house
unto its rafters

a self-finished man with all
his comforts I offered
my soul to the dust
that I tossed onto others

money poured
from my halo

now the limp repeats
what the stride said
when it ran in full pell toward
the meld of flight

too late the salt

bare as the way north
where they lade the gates
with the way south

vain to repeat the instances
the way hands pinned
upon the target
may applaud when hit
your aim

trued to its shoot
why do I stay
stage-left of my exit

/

I swept the mirror under the rug,
the rug under the house,
only now I have no floor.

And still the scene insists
there be no secrets,
no distance cloaked in Ithaca.

(stanza break)

Too late—
its gates are hung on bars,
ledges blindfold all its windows.

In the past, in youth's nether,
how fast they climb
the steps of my tailspin.

from MORE TIPS FOR TEENS (prosepoem)

Another fun date for you and your guy is to go down to the Marriage Licence Bureau at City Hall: Get in line, get your application form, then sit at one of the nearby tables with the other couples who are busy filling out their applications. Now comes the fun part of the date: looking at the parade of kooky couples who are getting hitched. They're unbelievable! Mismatched is no word for it: short ones with tall ones, fat ones with thin ones, old with young, all the weirdest combinations you could think of. It's the funniest show in town! When you and your date's sides ache from laughing and you're ready to go — pretend to have an argument. Scream louder and louder at each other until everyone in the whole Marriage Licence Bureau room is looking at you. Then your guy should stand up, rip up his application form, throw it down on the table, and run out "in a huff." Then you just throw your face down on the table and pretend to sob your heart out. Rejoin your beau outside and you both can say you've had a really unique date. P.S.: This will also let him know where the Marriage Bureau is when the time comes for him to pop that certain question to you!

HEGEMONY (prosepoem)

In school kids would stand in back of me and stick two fingers up behind my head to make the class laugh. Or so I was told. I took their word for what had occurred and that it was universal. Due to its process, I could not witness what had really happened or what it meant, what made it funny. And I still don't know, even today: but I can feel them back there, forefinger, middlefinger, ready to poke their putdown up for the world to jeer me. That V looms always, that rabbit-ears or peace-sign or whatever scourge stigmata I pledge it to represent; but what hurts most is, I know that victorious viciousness only by inference, only by report: I can never spin fast enough to catch a glimpse of it. I've never been able not once to see this joke my entire life has suffered the hands of. That's the worst part of this endless humiliation: that I have to take it on trust, that I have to believe in it blindly.

MY FAVORITE ANGEL (prosepoem)

My favorite angel is the one who has the power to restore sight. She's about 21 years old and has this long glowy hair, and always wears these purewhite clothes. Rilke described angels as "bright souls without any seams" which beats to hell anything I could come up with. She has the power to restore people's sight. Just by touching their eyelids with her fingertips. Then when they open their eyes, they see her—and are immediately struck blind again, she's such a radiance innocence etcetera young angel, about 21 years old . . .

VISION (prosepoem)

If I could only blank it out, every bit of it, all the past, all my stupidities my hapless behaviours and failures in detail, if I could forget the closeups of those endless humiliations, especially the faces of everyone who rightfully reproached me with disgust and contempt, who censured me with disdain scorn disapproval, all the people with their glaredowns and gloats, browscolds and sneers, the way all those faces looked as they made known to me how shameful, how small and inadequate I was and still am. . . . The fact that they will die too is no consolation, because they will not die with me on their minds whereas I will see a montage panorama go-round of their faces as I lie heaving for a last rale of air: their frowns will fill my eyes with all.

HOMICIDAL DOMICILE II: NIGHT OF THE NO-PAR (prosepoem)

The desire to carve criminals up into one's family retains more room in us than the grease, the gold, the urine conversant with the flood: even the left hand's appraisers shun the right's buyers.

Thus my testicles have divorced but continue to share the same house, if only your penis was sharper it would cut the scrotum in two resolving this rental stumpage, this game forced yet deigned to wear the day-jar's view.

Where the righteousness of noon corrupts windows; like a name slanted to cry; floorboards that tweak earth: cult pepper, hurled by turban cameras, we grovel at sculptors whose heels punctuate our idol.

Glittering incidentals, hours in which towers swim off their own balconies, ah what stylites live atop our I's.

THE WOULD BE NONCHALANT (prosepoem)

I try to shrug it off, but when my shoulders poke themselves up to form the shrug they get stuck, and I slump down trapped inbetween these shoulder-peaks; so I live in the valley of a shrug, in its perpetual shadow.

AFTER THE BURIAL (prosepoem)

After the burial I alone stood by till 2 workmen came to shovel the dirt back into the hole. There was some left over, the dirt she'd displaced, and they wheelbarrowed it off. Drawn, not knowing why, I followed at a distance. Coming to a secluded backlot, they dumped it, then left. I walked over. It made a small mound. And all around her, similar mounds. Pure cones of joy! First gifts from the dead! I fell to my knees before it, and fell forward on my hands into it . . . to the elbows, like washwater. . . . For the first time, I became empty enough to cry for her.

STORY (prosepoem)

I love the books of X, and read them immediately they're published, and re-read them constantly—you might say I live for the written works of X—I've never met X, never wrote a fan letter, never lined up for a signed copy, I'm just one more nameless faceless faraway idolizer of X—

Then, fetish-fantasizing, I realize that X, being younger than me, will probably write and publish at least one or two books after I've died—the thought of which is unbearable. I can't countenance it. It drives me crazy:

Me, the ideal reader of X! I am the one for whom X wrote those books, etc . . .

Ergo, the only solution is for me to murder X, thereby ensuring that the final [posthumous] books of X will appear while I'm still alive—! how I'll relish those last pages of X, there in my Death Row cell.

And now through the years my public defender exhausts court appeals or wrangles another stay of execution, I linger here in the long luxury of reading and re-reading the Complete Works of X.

Note:

I refute the accusation of the Prosecution that X doesn't exist, that in fact I am the one who wrote those books using the pseudonym of X, and that my unfortunate victim (whose body was never found) was indeed an innocent attendee at that Adult Illiteracy Education class the night of the so-called fatal incident, and not, as I claimed (and still believe), X, X the guilty one, X the culprit, X who escaped after cleverly planting all that false circumstantial evidence which led the jury to wrongly convict me! I know you're alive, X, in secret hiding, fake ID'd, assuming yourself—you're out there right now reading this, aren't you, gloating, plotting to publish your next book under the pen-name of 'Bill Knott'! Well, you won't get away with it.

THE VINDICATION (prosepoem)

If it were only possible to launch enough satellites up, one apiece for each of us down here on earth, billions of spysats programmed to monitor us all individually, that's the important thing: that each one of us would have his or her own personal private skysat; and then, when our (our!) specially-designated sole-focused fetish-trained mysat was finally and totally locked onto us, what secrets could we exchange with it, how confide its include codes would grow, how large its zoom would contain us: each unique DNA traced and zeroed in on to find us, to separate us out, tell us apart from all the space trash next door. Inevitably that many satellites in the sky at once would form a hatchshell shield surrounding the planet and soon, like a triumphant resurrrection and vindication of Ptolemy's idealist theory of the cosmos, would cut off all solar energy resulting in the pandeath of vegetation and terrestrial life itself, a small price to pay, a minor consequence aftermath of having satisfied if only for one brief interval the universal desire to go recognized, singled out and beamed upon; of having appeased our deepest need, to be seen, to be shown.

THE ALONE TONIGHT

I don't want to live with the alone tonight
Stay lost at home on my own tonight
But if I leave and go down to the street
The roads all throw their crosses at my feet
And words out loud the crowds all yell me
I don't want to die I hear them all tell me
And when their throats fall quotably quiet
Can I stand out dope and hope my own don't deny it
All songs are the same they show my shame in kind
The words are plain the pain finds its name in mine
It's no mistake I lie awake so straight and still
The maze I cannot penetrate waits at my doorsill
I could build bridges that make the sea blink
But there's no bank to build them from here on this nearside I think
They told me sold me how to live I had to buy it
But then they made me give up my seat in the riot
I don't want to live with the alone tonight
I'd love to reign on this throne tonight
I'm the empire at home on my own tonight
Habitat zone in my headphones tonight
The poems I wrote are afraid to quote me
Out loud that shroud of yowls won't save me
I don't want to live I hear them say daily
I don't want to die so please won't you say me
I don't want to stay please won't you play me

YANK IT

remember your young loves
in case you forget the old
and lie there night after night
complaining it's so cold

remember your old loves
in case you're young
and you lie there believing
that they have just begun

then try to forget them both
in case they remember you
lie right there in the middle
and hope that one was true

lie down in between them
in case they're feeling cold
young loves old loves
won't let go their hold

no matter how hard you try
to turn away they stay they
yank it your blanket night
and steal your pillow day

they pull the covers off you
and leave you in the cold
just like when you were new
just like when you were old

so lie down in between them
in case you remember their name
in case you have forgotten
just pray it's not the same

I hope they remember too
and when this song is through
they lie down dead beside you
and that one of you will still be true

GOLLY MOUNTAIN BLUES

Up on Golly Mountain all the lovers are parked
Wish we could be up there enjoyin the dark
But you don't wanna I'm sorry I come along
Cause you won't stop the car hon all night long

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
I know you ain't to blame but
Our love's about to flame out
Can't you smell the rubber burn
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

When you told me you loved danger I said then I'm your guy [girl]
I been dangerous since I first learned to kiss
Let's go up on Golly and give it a try [whirl]
But when I said I loved it I sure didn't mean this

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
I can't remember your name but
Our love's about to flame out
Can't you feel the floorboards burn
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

I heard about some funny ways that people get their kicks
From runnin round upon the town to gettin hit with whips
But you take the cake my friend you're oddball number one
I admire your nerves but I got some curves where you could have
more fun than these here

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
I guess it's all the same but
Our love's about to flame out
Can't you taste the seat of my bluejeans burn
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

Poor baby I know it ain't your fault it was your mama daddy musta dropped you on your
brake when you was born cause if you don't know that lovin is the deadliest thrill there is
you don't know nothin I shoulda known somethin when you picked me up inside the
movie-show the way your windshield wiper kept gettin into my popcorn here let me take
these hairpins outa my hair and let it fall down into your lap don't that make you want to
love me and cuddle and lay your head on my soft soft shoulder . . . Soft Shoulder? Hey!
Look out!

(stanza break)

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
It's a hurty shame but

Our love's about to flame out
Can't you tell my poor heart yearns
But you just keep on riding them hairpin turns
Yes you just keep on riding them
hair-
pin—

Get your tongue off that gaspedal baby
You tryin to love this thing or drive it well then drive it drive it
Just cause you ain't got nothin to live for . . . heck, come to think
of it I ain't gotnothin neither
Hey you know somethin? I'm beginning to like it

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
I know you ain't to blame but
Our love's about to flame out
Can't you smell the rubber burn
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

INVITATIONS

Invitations will be sent out next year
Some of them might seem a little unclear
Yours in particular may say I won't be here
Won't be here for your New Year's Eve
Won't be here I do believe
That I'll be gone away from here
Please forgive me but I probably
Can't make it to your anniversary
Can't come visit your new vision by the sea
Yes the view is beautiful can you see me
Invitations will be sent out today
Or tomorrow I can't say just when
But you'll probably know by then
That I can't stay that I've gone again
The view is beautiful that's all I'll say
The view is beautiful on my final day
Though I won't be there
Voltaire
Said that everything you can sing
Is too stupid to say
Like the view is beautiful
It's too beautiful to stay
Invitations invitations are on their way

RUBBERNECK

Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
In all the streets and alleys

Rubberneckin
I'm just checkin
Diggin everything like a quicksand parade
Ridin herd
On the curbs
Copying down
All the stopsigns in town
Erasing all the ones for walkin

Anywhere a crowd
Is leashed out loud
I'm on the nod to prowl
That's me
You see out stalkin my gawkin

Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
In all the streets and alleys
Rubberneck
But I don't care
Hey what's that goin on over there

Rubberneckin
Inspectin
Where the sirens' screech
Directs my feets
I'm takin a butcher at
Everymeat I meet
Gonna glue my shoes
To the avenues
And my eyelashes to my cheeks

Anywhere a group
Has got into a grope
Hangin on the ropes
I'll poke my periscope
Cause you're my only hope
For some lovin
So step to one side please
Quit shovin
I am a witness for my enemies
I am a witness for my enemies

(stanza break)

Hey baby what you
Got to show there
What's shakin down around
Your corners
Let me sneak a peek
I can't be any bolder
I'll watch it all
Right up across your shoulder

Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
On all the mountains
Don't forgeck the valleys
Rubberneck
Hey what's that I see
Everybody's standin round
And they're lookin down
They're lookin down at me

Rubberneckin
I'm just checkin
Rubberneckin
Hey wait a second
Rubberneck

SALOME SALAD

those veils you shed
make any eye
weep their beauty
even kings have cried

striptease finished
these whorls can spice
like pearls of pubis
the headiest dish

every sainted john
would love to sate
his tongue in castrate
communion on

your bitter plate
sweet onion

TCM BLUES

I can't go far
I can't go free
although I am a star
everywhere I move is
right there (see me?)
on Turner Classic Movies

Mad scene cued for Oscar
my head looms closeup size
gosh I feel so lost there
trapped in celluloid
I collide inside with eyes
I can't escape them
on TCM

No one under eightyfive
remembers my name
that's the forget-its the fuck-its of fame
the goodies and the groovies
why am I still alive
on Turner Classic Movies

I wish they'd forget me
and let me rot in peace
why the hell they have to show
all the B's that Louis B made me
get on my knees for I don't know

Silents mute me
Garbo suits me
Bogie shoots me
Bette boots me
out the door
then comes the War
Coop salutes me
Film Noir
convolutes me
I'm ready for more
but time and TV executes me

My birthday they unvault me
popcorn butter and salt me
their experts all exalt me
for each posthumous premiere
of the pics I wish would disappear
once a year like Dracula I up and rear
from my mausoleum here

(no stanza break)

at lovely Forest Lawn
my death goes on and on and on
like boring Norma Shearer
even though I look so young
I just hate how they approve me
on Turner Classic Movies

I should have stayed on the Stage
my Chekov Ibsen defined the Age
I was the rage nothing but Page One raves
all Hollywood ever saw was my Beauty
I told Jack Warner Go ahead Sue me
I don't need the movies
screw you you studio enslavers
I'm off to Hedda Gabler's

The gangsters and the crooners
the roughies and the smoothies
the dames who came from nowhere
in their furs and rubies
it's Turner Classic Movies

The chippies from the chorus
do their Queens and Madame Bovarys
the hams who knew their Hamlet
are clowns and falldown boobies
the teens who grew up meanies
the Garlands and the Rooneys
come join the ingenues and juvies
on Turner Classic Movies

Producers used me
directors abused me
my co-stars co-screwed me so
please don't behoove me
don't Catherine Deneuve me
all you S-O-B's just leave me let me go
all you Mickeys and you Goofys
you hasbeens and newbies
12-step friends and floozies
don't try to sob-and-soothe me
don't emote and quote you love me
you really really love me
no all you love to do is view me
on Turner Classic Movies

(fadeout:)
My flicks all used to slay em
in the big towns and the boonies
but now they only play em
on Turner Classic Movies

FIRST SECOND SONG

I first loved you
second to
the light you cast
into my eyes
first and last
first and last
the light you cast
into my eyes
where the shadow
thrown by you
still shines on
to see me through
first and second
where do you wish to be placed
second or first
what is your wish
day night day
my shadow strives to stay
in the light
your eyes displayed
under their lids
what lives only
only to be
to be obeyed
I first loved you
second to
the light you cast
into my eyes
first and last
first and last
the light you cast
into my eyes
where the shadow
that you threw
still shines on
when it shows me you

[UNTITLED]

whoa angel lend me a feather
got a match to light it with
cool puff puff PUFF oh my
god is this what they mean
when they say you're *on high*

SONG TO CHER

you've got too many feathers
on what you're wearing
but you're just sharing what
you're carrying inside
to help you hide
our dying eyes

you've got too few letters
there in your name to show
but like every brevity you
help us live help us give
our day a little stay
before we go

there's too many young
boyfriends in your bio
but that's just jealous jive
and we all know oh
we were never old enough
to be the one you love

there's too much agelessness
in your face and every dress
you wear is less and less
but nothing can replace
what's barely there as
you stride on stage on high

(all you one-name wonders
sing your numbers
everywhere
you've no discretion in your
expression of the air)

now there's too much cher in
spangled hanging there in
that fixture picture HER
our eyes have all died
our days have gone inside
to find out who you always were

MY EPITAPH

WANT
TO EARN
BIG MONEY
CARVING
TOMBSTONES?
CALL NOW
FOR DETAILS:
217 1910

Note:

as carved on my headstone; unfortunately snow or grass obscures most of the phonenumber.

AFTERWORD

Wealthy poets like Louise Gluck and C.K. Williams and Russell Edson can hire professional proofreaders and copy editors to help prepare their books, and poet professors like Linda Bierds and Dave Smith and others have student assistants to aid with the readying of their mss.

But I have no such resources, I have to do it all on my own. So please forgive me if you see any errata I couldn't catch, or duplicated texts or spacing glitches etc.

The spacing between the poems on each page was/is particularly hard to format, especially since I 'm trying to fill every inch of bare paper so I can cut the number of pages to reduce the price of the book.