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CRIBSHEETS (poems)

BILL KNOTT

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

SUMMIT

on this hill at sunset
I will feel the contrast
of it going down
and me up here for
a moment as total

VISION

moon of all means
sun of all ends

my TV screens
whatever day

or night sends
my way

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 urging 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.

INTRO NOTES

*

Old/new poems.

A raggle taggle bunch, an olio of efforts.

*

The order is random, neither thematic nor
chronological.

*

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.

IN ORDER

the dead you
wrote about
in order to
forget about
so you could
write about
the living are
still living where
you aren't

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.

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 the symmetry. The food should rot while the diners gaze down dazed.

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

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 my name stuck on all their efforts. . . .

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.

SAY TO SAY

Say ten snowflakes light on your fingertips,
 one on each, the ten snowflakes that match
 your ten fingerprints in design 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.

get piped together in sate
 instant to create a kiss
 memory, whereupon that

template that heartpump aims
 to fructify the waste
 render the 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

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—.

POEM

1

the same face peered from both our eyes
but not to say goodbye

the scene rejects your precious how-to

pervaded by dripping moments
notice the immobility of one

see enemies free of their graves finally

2

more born than alive
too born to be alive
the penis rides

through a bullet palace

(aboard the meow express
or the purr local

even a snowfall
unveils its air
of sole percussions

on wielderwings

the ideal of what's goal, be
the great meet metaphor
to greet our roamer with as

he returns from the endless
crash, the west of his word.
Pilgrims of the accord,

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,

shedding its 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

If I were linear called
and kin of rails, my schedule
my purpose with no choice, set

to refuse the switchshuttle
intent of this; and
say weather for instance

were similar, if rain
were the rain: like an express
it would never stop but

express itself in drops,
its destination contained
within the figure, no need

to take the Noah needle
swerving single-mindedly,
bound to change at the next

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

3
beyond reign
of human
songs remain
Celan says
meaning his
but not mine

4
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

5

He found in lapse
his body's solo data—
it left him whole
without the halve-of-love.

6

I was eager to play place,
to bet the the blue racetracks
that run beneath my skin—
and even to dare win.

7

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.

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.

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—

(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.

(CRIBSONG)

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

if baby brains break fragile
 shall butterfingers refrain
 to un-fontanelle their eden
 all it takes is one fall

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

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

which creature cuddly come
 makes 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

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-focussed fetish-trained mysat was finally and totally locked onto us, what secrets could we exchange with it, how confide its include-codes could 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 to us. Unfortunately that many satellites in the sky at once would form a hatchshell shield surrounding the planet like a renewal of Ptolemy's cosmos and 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 known.

NO

If only no-man's-land
were not nomadic; if
that disarmistice place

were meant to be mapped
and did not constantly
waver between us shifting

reserves; if there were a cease
in which to find peace,
a lull to sing among,

to sing our bye to: a site
in whose endless sign
genesis could be lost.

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."

EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

Hair-line where the facial knife drives
 its two blades further up the forehead
 to slash these widow's peaks: weakly
 it fights back with feints and fends,
 each day fewer gray-strands save me.
 When this duel ends I will cease to be.

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.

CONTRARY

Dawn leaks consequence. Where it will,
 hovering over appletree or railroad, all
 bright angles, letting the hopes happen.

Maybe the day is blue, meaning south,
 meaning drought can find a path in it,
 lack can offer it reasons for not being—

But if the day were gray, would plenitude
 negate it? These eithers make a laugh.
 They do not consider my health, how

it depends on neitherness neutrality,
 on tepid clemencies and staling bread,
 room temperature always preferred.

My armchair sits beneath a glowing
 antenna which even hums a little to ease
 what I concern. Twilight, chores done,

the overflow of panting elevators appears
 frayed, decayed, despite ferocious washing;
 a wasteland imposes grateful ants. Some

say the afterlife will console our taste
 for communism: faraway docility, dog-boy,
 can you restore such douceur? Transitory

I LIVE ON THE LOWEST

ledge it's still fatal
 to fall from while

my neighbor on
 the below-one

merely loses any
 skeletal integrity

and lives to stab coupons
 for lowyield posterity:

he's lucky
 compared to me

and to all
 the tenants above me

because when we fall
 we die.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envy young poets the rage
 You wish you could reverse your night
 And wake up days upon their page
 As old as them, as debut-bright.

To feel the jolt when words go right,
 To suddenly hold each phrase tight:
 You wish you may, you wish you might
 Rise revised to that primal 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.

commensurate, the body's border throws
 that origin an old lens stained with
 the remoteness of incest. Tilled bare,

ground mutes me, bored rascal ill;
 I maladministrate the war of handshakes:
 sweet rain nets too much pit. Covert

holes perforate air. Then hints of dark
 guidance—are sky's ways unsullied by
 route or is it all pre-mapped, programmed

by fate? Here you and I are loath: we
 conspire with appears, coy counterfeits,
 zeroing in on the spoils that fill spoons

daily with hesitation while intention
 awaits all festivity. All reception. Or else.
 I'd sink sulkwise if it weren't such regress.

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 the backlit page,
 I find the sun has picked it out,—
 through its links of shade I see
 the motes floating in each beam
 seem more etched, more stable
 than these I've set my margins for.

QUEST

Hooking itself on a penis of alas,
 certainly the waste won't acquaint us.

Yet grapes the glassblower finds wicked
 may pass through fishgills quickly;

so a rose in its vein is a niche
 nearer another no longer at reach.

More mail stamped with confetti comes.
 Why does the carrier not care?

But I prefer a gravel of nutshells—
 if my bare soles are to be hurt

let it be by the cast-offs of growth,
 by seeds that swelled to cullflesh

and filled each hull to burstness:
 please pierce my feet with their overt.

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?

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
Our 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 lived

I wanted to stay there
But I failed at the sight

DAY-THE-VERGE

for days the ceiling was racing
 and the silhouettes clung to seance
 the wind champed at their scornful habits
 dangling a snowflake over the edge of a mirror

manholes stood on ladders to see
 a rocket fail to ignite itself from a sundial
 while a slim coitus of wands held the room current
 must I exist in these saliva-idle breaths

fever chalks the roofs where
 I imagine my venom is at home
 with everyone tidy in their thimble poses
 it's like pricking your finger with lambs

now I sleep where oceanmere falls
 exile exile to the instant islands of my pulse

PATIENCE

Snapshots rot first at the edges,
 little cracks like escape routes
 point beyond
 the frame home.

Silhouette stabbed
 by a treeleaf, night
 at the window. Gushers
 of headlights, cars
 that chase the blinds
 across the ceiling.

The face always expects
 to perform
 its own innocence.
 Beyond question.

Just squint into the sun
 until the camera calms down.

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 whish 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.

PICTURE

Meadow of matchsticks,
 soon to be rekindled
 by Spring the incendiary.

The exact flame of your blossoms
 will ignite the passions
 happily sapped by time—

Dripdrop their excess went
 and now miners' hats
 light up like love before

your vein, the frame of which
 is there to depict the drift,
 the waste when I painted

all the review copies
 they sent me. But those books
 open to polar pages where you

and I weigh the ends of this
 teeter totem down, you
 at the head and nadir me;

there where postmortem is
 the aura of self-portrait,
 its other half regained at last.

PRE-PINDARIC

they starjump General Brecht in
to a proving ground moon
to examine our poems for
possible use 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 naught-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 eck-logues ago
when all the oceans went ebb
what we really need you see
is a blurb a lend of your celeb

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 have always remained
immune to meaning, whose plot is
not subject to that mute truthserum.

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.

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 poetry journal

PERSONALLY

I saw this screenlegend guest on TV
 promoting the need for everybody
 inbetween plugs for the 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 remember that admonition,
 and then sometimes I 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.

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
 to gaze down at their former homes.

TO YOU

If I were gravity I would
 increase my grip exactly
 at noon, knowing then the sun
 is furthest away and least

able to help you resist
 the urge to slacken all
 and to fall down still
 into death's ergo siesta.

I would ease up gradually
 throughout the day until,
 post-midnight, freed a bit
 from that bright counter-tug,

I might even doze
 briefly if I were gravity;
 as long as I knew you
 were asleep, too, that is.

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.

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.

DOLLY THE EWE FIRST CLONE OF THE WORLD

Turfclods 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

each time it injects my replicant's
 empties at trashcan allah horizon:
 I innoculate that termongrel daily
 until he has his waste's worth of it
 or 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.

DREAMTIDE

downways the beach
 where waves battle shallows
 I thought of maybe
 a pillowfight with the sea
 using hearts for pillows

sownways their feathers
 would drift all day on me
 childhood-hoarded could
 I let my hours
 finally jet free

but flownways the days
 must wait to bare
 that blood which neither
 wound nor water
 adulterates

yawnwaves waken when
 every sandgrain sifts
 its one memory pure
 of the breakers taken
 the oceans endured

on drawnway beach
 dreamtide-high they've laid me
 from comforter combatted
 spread across lap dunes dead
 wings wherever I reach

SETTLERS (MICHIGAN MEMORY #6)

a child careening evening
to intersect with his hands
his so-lending touch underlining the offense

the field's blinding surrounds them
binds them where formerly
the eye was pronounced

fenced in by freezeframes
marshcupids frogjacuzzis
dawn pushing a whiff of whitecaps

acrobats portraying smoke
what horizons hold
the hammock's voluptuous veto

wasteland where nails love
to discipline our house
its noise drinks the little names

may eagles guard your grave
is this a blessing or a curse
hunchback crushed to a hunchfoot

what face without finding its lips has kissed me
fountain whose yield is field is fall
a white animal edits our cradle

NO ITALICS

My window hints at
the redeemibility 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.

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 hellbent
 blueprints, lawnhover leaves,
 the blown I lives. No italics, please.

*
*

BONUS BOOK BELOW

>>>>

FOLD AND STAPLE

SEPARATELY FROM

"CRIBSHEETS" ABOVE

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING

THE PDF OF MY NEW BOOK,

"CRIBSHEETS"

I'VE ADDED A BONUS

PDF BOOK BELOW:

A REVISED FINAL VERSION

OF A PRINTBOOK PUBLISHED

IN JAN 07....

FOLD AND STAPLE IT SEPARATELY

TO MAKE A BOOKLET

BONUS BOOK BELOW

FOLD AND STAPLE IT

SEPARATELY

AFTER YOU FOLD AND STAPLE

THE TWO BOOKS,

THIS INTERIM SHEET

OF PAPER CAN BE THROWN

AWAY

THANK YOU

this edition: June 13, 2007

pdf: revised/second edition of a
printbook titled "Stigmata Errata
Etcetera"

BILL KNOTT

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.

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.

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

The order of the poems is random, neither
thematic nor chronological.

*

Note: this is a pdf of poems from the printbook
published in January 2007 as "Stigmata Errata
Etcetera"—
and is in fact a second, revised edition of that book.

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 ringlet

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.

THE MOURNER

Cast in the shapes of his passing
he goes down ended avenues.
A lament-*passant*, he longs to
rub his ass antlers on statues

of the moon. He swans whether
he has a shelter where unfenced
with trees to testify its ground
the land around him is against.

And often he lets his face rain
above his mouth, above his eyes,
his nose: lets it hover in the mist
of its ignorant verities.

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 inside 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.

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.

MYTHICAL RITUALS

Every day another roc moults,
 every feather crushing
 another town where
 Notnose and Shyeye
 and Wrongtongue
 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.

NOVEMBERNEW

Scoldingly, the way a nurse
 waves a thermometer at a corpse,
 branches thrash above us.

I've read the instructions how
 a compass should always go
 consulted beneath a Maypole.

If space orientates with time alone,
 our position fixed by Newton
 may now be nearing Einstein.

Quickly I place a teakettle
 atop a dead volcano
 and learn to wait for its whistle.

North lost, the needle pierces my wrist.
 The mist is in the forest.
 Our sighs are in the farthest.

ALOFT

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 passed 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
 Ph.D in peachfuzz
 cap-strop-and-gown
 more honors-blown diplomas
 than tenured hands can slash

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 plummet
 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

SNOWS AND SNATCHES

Hurry while heaven's favorite
paperweight descends to press
the verses down that long to lift
us off within their endless draft,
away before that story ends.

Go bind in blind that white sheet-write
or let its stray-sleet countercloud
stay the fables that come to light
unfastening their thrust on. There

are no drifts a man of it might
survive unless he melts every less
word that seams our pupilpane in
streams dividing day's span with
what its windownight withstands.

Now dawn strands his snows and
snatches in fall from all he's lost
unless that book once caught his
page wedged in both its hands.

our blood stays bearded for
that educating puncture
light hearts inflate and then
learn one cut-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

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 the 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

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.

WISHINGWELL

I weigh the coin in my hand
 against the water's clarity
 that shines up at my shadow—
 what wealth to smash apart that
 gleaming calm with my claim
 on the future, my need to be
 rewarded with all I owe.
 I stand above the well wondering
 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-perhaps' deepest ore,
 there where the end gathers
 will my silver ever bring me
 any of the gold it shatters?

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 airs enjoyed by the eyed.

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.

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.

FLEDGLINGS OF THE CYMBAL

Dawn, the ledge of day, is where
 every dreamer's reflexes are tested;
 one misstep is enough. Each waking
 is a fall from that high surefootedness,

a descent from grace. All sleepers
 thread their beds with this steadiest
 of paths that they may arrive at last
 in the plunge, the giddiness of worlds grasp—

Now who shall lift his hands to show
 an hourglass in each armpit: birds emerge
 screeching, we devour his wormgroin.
 His moist declivities scour our habits.

When evening empties the buildings of
 what is tall in them, we will return
 each to his roost, ledging and listening
 to a percussionist lapping against lily pads.

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.

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 so 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 the day ever came
 when I could obtain them
 gee I'd be too old to read
 them then I'd be him dad.

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?

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?

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?

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 insane interruption.
 I crackle my cigarette pack.
 I look at you sideways.
 I don't want to intrude, I'm discrete.
 I sit and drink my capuccino. 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.

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 those 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 not be allowed to live here.

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 did we were often struck by
 how long that understanding took to pass,
 yes, how unnaturally it seemed to linger.

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.

THE SILO

The silo
longs to feel itself full,
if only for an interval—

Its ribs expand once yearly as
the host of harvest
enters a space
unbearable to the nil,
painfully utopian in its display
of plenty.

But soon after that sate
moment slowly
each ear of corn is paid out
over the days until
only empty shucks
and echoes fill the crib-cage,
its grasp lies
reduced to wisps, to waste.

Mice round the slats of its walls
without pausing because
nothing's there
on the floor. Nothing and all
of nothing's needs.
Modest winds brush through.

Circumspect as someone
retracing their signature
on a death certificate,
going over each letter
a second, unnecessary time.

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.

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.

EPITAPHS

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 ubiquitous—
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 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
page? 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.

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?

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?)

APRIL AFTERNOON

From barberpoles the white
should be stripped to bandage
all the bypassers' wounds.

Their clothing seems to consist
of tickets brandished to the theater;
every kiosk's counter is bare.

These shapes are assumed
out of fidelity to the mask
that covers them with less and less.

And yet there is always the danger
of excess. Naked, the street
might lie prey to a merchant's

deliberating broom: birds
and categorical pushcarts might tie
cherrystems to our eyelashes.

Spring imposes its pomp, its priorities.
In the middle of this effortless palace
an orgy takes off its socks.

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.

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 this 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.

THE 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. Part of him knows that even if he found
 that mythical speckpoint, in one instant his mere
 presence would defile it for ever.

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.

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 ulterior—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

(no stanza break)

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.

PERSPECTIVE

I must look down to see
the things that fall
into the well

(coins
teardrops
stopsigns

sunsets
planets
etcets)

because when I don't
look down to see
them suddenly

they all
start to fall
on me

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
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?

POEM

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

(stanza break)

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

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

so let it out
 dissolve in draft
 little whistlestuff
 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