

"[Bill Knott's] poems are so naive that the question of their poetic quality hardly arises. . . . Mr. Knott practices a dead language."

—Denis Donoghue, *New York Review of Books*, May 7, 1970

[Bill Knott's poems are] typically mindless. . . . He produces only the prototaxis of idiocy. . . . Rumor has it that Knott's habit of giving his birth and terminal dates together originated when he realized he could no longer face the horror of a poetry reading he was scheduled to give."

—Charles Molesworth, *Poetry Magazine*, May 1972

"[Bill] Knott's work tends today to inspire strong dismissal. . . . [He's] been forced to self-publish some of his recent books. . . . [B]ad—not to mention offensively grotesque—poetry. . . . appalling maddening wildly uneven . . . adolescent, or obsessively repetitive . . . grotesqueries [His] language is like thick, old paint . . . his poems have a kind of prickly accrual that's less decorative than guarded or layered . . . emotionally distancing uncomfortable. Knott . . . is a willful . . . irritating . . . contrarian."

—Meghan O'Rourke, *Poetry Magazine*, Feb 2005

"[Bill Knott's books are] filled with venom. . . . Knott seems to hate himself . . . and he seems to hate his readers."

—Kirk Robinson, *ACM (Another Chicago Magazine)*, date?

"[Bill Knott's work] consists almost entirely of pointless poems, that say disgusting things. . . . [His poetry is] tasteless . . . and brainless."

—Michael Heffernan, *Midwest Quarterly*, Summer 1973

"Knott is making capitol on poetic fashion, attempting belatedly to enter the canon of the Language poets by reviving the idiom of Ezra Pound. [His poetry] so successfully defies communicating anything that one wonders what [his publisher] had in mind. . . . Knott, it may be recalled, "killed" himself in the early 1960s."

—R. S. Gwynn, *The Year in Poetry*, *DLB Yearbook* 1989

"Bill Knott's poems are . . . rhetorical fluff . . . and fake."

—Ron Loewinsohn, *TriQuarterly*, Spring 1970

"Eccentric, uneven . . . poet Bill Knott is not [fit] to win prizes . . . [His work is] thorny . . . rebellious, avant-garde. . ."

—Robert Pinsky, Washington Post.com, April 17, 2005

"[Bill Knott's poetry is] queerly adolescent . . . extremely weird. . . personal to the point of obscurity. . . his idiosyncrasy has grown formulaic, his obscure poems more obscure, his terse observations so terse they scoot by without leaving much of a dent in the reader. . . . There is a petulance at work [in his poetry]. . . . [H]is style has grown long in the tooth. . . . In fact, [at least one of his poems is] unethical."

—Marc Pietrzykowski, Contemporary Poetry Review (<http://www.cprw.com/Pietrzykowski/beats.htm>)

"Bill Knott's [poetry is the equivalent of] scrimshaw. . . . [It's] either self-consciously awkward or perhaps a little too slangily up-to-date."

—Stephen Burt, New York Times Book Review, November 21, 2004

"[Bill Knott is] incompetent . . ."

—Alicia Ostriker, Partisan Review (date? 1972?)

"Bill Knott . . . is so bad one can only groan in response."

—Peter Stitt, Georgia Review, Winter 1983

"Bill Knott [is] the crown prince of bad judgment."

—Ron Silliman, Silliman's Blog, June 26, 2007

"[Bill Knott is] a malignant clown."

—Christopher Ricks, The Massachusetts Review, Spring 1970

"Bill Knott should be beaten with a flail."

—Tomaz Salamun, Snow, 1973

EAR QUIRE

/

all the rhymed sonnets 1968-2008

/

Bill Knott

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

Intro

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I recently vanity-published a selection of my end-rhymed poems in all forms, including sonnets, so I thought

why not do another book, one that would put all the rhymed sonnets together—
hence this collection.

Maybe "rhymed" should be qualified. Call them poems where rhyme became a major concern in the composition's completion.

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I've included "transversions" from my *Homages* book. The apology for their existence can be found in an afterword to that volume.

*

The order is mostly random, neither chronological nor thematic.

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.

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 amongst 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 orchard dormitory 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.

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

STRAND

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

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

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

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

CURTAIN UP

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

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

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

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

THE UNSUBSCRIBER

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to NSL)

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

ROCK PICKED UP FROM THE BEACH

To focus on thing, thing whatever it is,
in some cases a mountain, an object
somewhat more intimate for most of us—
a fate transformed then framed into a fact

plucked from a beach full of rocks the same size
and shape, not much to distinguish it or
confer more meaning than perhaps the eyes'
choice, the hand's: what justifies this favor?

Nothing. And nothing is appropriate
for something common chance has snatched from
phenomena's moment, its montage pace

down the page. One word leads to the one right
for it: that's right. One can reach out random
or one can wait until it's in its place.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE BEACH
(Enneasyllabics)

In retrospect the tragic nature
of sea is a taste wept too freely,
soon depleted by scenes of rupture;
the eyes have other secrets to see

and deeper use for the detritus
within us: the bright effluvium
of ego dries up, mired as it is
in wealth, that remedial medium.

Blame it on fate, on beach memories—
pebble put in the pocket or shell
fragments; any memento carries
us as much as we it. Time capsule

contains every evening's interval.
An ocean observes its own puddle.

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?*

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 booty. 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.

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.

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

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 posted
niched on no good ground.

Whose lost mastermaze
holds this bastard, his
likeness fossed steadfast

in stone. May steeples
hoist up such pure souls
to people their walls.

from 7 1/2 POEMS TO, FOR, AND ABOUT RN:

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?)

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.

(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 your deceitful sweat has no use
but to mold my gold hair
in my cold face's likeness

INSTRUCTIONS TO A MAP

Approach, map; let me spread your lats out here
and shape them to that abject attitude
conducive to embarkation: lie square
while my coarsest cartographies intrude

with plumbines cast that fourways force embrace
newground boundaries as I toss more throngs
of tapemeasures in loops across your longs
and leave them involuted there to trace

fix each secret breach of all our borders
so dumbfound for terra incognitas
where my lost flesh enrobes your erasures:
underfoot I will track these meanders

and stamp down every territory town
till none can ever drive outside my own.

REDCARPET STARLETS

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

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

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

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

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

down foreheads in a stream of them shines.

Touch Connors and Race Gentry attend them—

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

The Premiere can shine no more than this.

Note: Touch Connors and Race Gentry: male starlets of the 1950s.

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

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?

THE SCULPTURE (to SB)

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

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 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.

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.

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

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.

MIRACLE

you know it's wane when you find the one
your omens unlocked seven events for
and in the cries of our sweet vendor
avalanche is added to snow cone

the dream immersed in ouch-like confetti
bursts to gather the given and yet
to crouch meaningfully is difficult while
your gut's authorities bicker in their bile

but if life happens on other planets
without the help of Santa Claus pets
why do we need such monsters here
on long nights impaled by freight-car slivers

you yourself half calf-idol half full-tank
know not what to make of it all awake

COVER STORIES

Exchanging X's 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.

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.

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

HANGSCALES

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

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

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

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

HAVENOT

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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?

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?

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.

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 rappings
with long vowels before

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

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

MORE USELESS ENVY

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

from CROP/NICHE:

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.

from 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.

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
sipping 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 are aimed at a landscape.

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.

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'Aureville 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.)

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.

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?

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.

THE FLAW

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

THE OTHER SAVIORS

For them the defeat was immediate,
I.e., from within. The ribstrokes of my heart
Went and then the rain signed tangent its light
Across things reviving that red desert.

The slim stopsign amid far cacti stood
And made our surest land convert a course
Which every compass felt would rise renewed
If, us-effaced, I failed to trace my source.

See my countries carry their faraway
Farther away each day, hear survivors
Rip my page from their bribed bible and pray
This be the key whose doors collapse all frontiers.

Within the deepest room of which, eavesdrop-eyed,
You surprised a recognition on its deathbed.

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.

AMERICAN LOVE SONNET

My kiss was like our incursion
of Guatemala in 1954,
or was it our intervention
to save Venezuela, 2010:

Congress yes-sirred all
my caresses of your rebel
breastholds—my freedomfingers
storming southward quelled

the clit-tipped capitol ripe
for my liberating lust:
each commie labia fell until
I regained the land at last:

FoxNews huzzaws as I install
El General in his palace.

FEBRUARY FOURTEENTH: FREEZEFRAME

(to James Elroy Flecker, with thanks
for translating teardrops into handcuffs)

Please press a valentine shape tool to my chest
And extract from it what was never there
Then singe your ciggie on this thing that mists
Over only when shattered 's no mirror

I lie beside you my caresses deepmeant
Though they fade as fast as escape plans traced
Across a prison blanket by an absent
Fingernail whose blood you piss in my face

Is that it is that why I cry for more torture
That way you look at me pityingly
Iffen I say things like rain ice drops cling

There our branch out there like someone been trying
On all their bracelets at once to see
Which is prettiest but of course none are

Note:

Flecker: Parnassianism (his list: "Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Samain, Henri de Régnier, and Jean Moréas"); *le vice anglais* (the home version); death at age 30 (consumption).

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 wedding ring 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.

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 gnarlgargoyle.

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.

PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond
a paper boat; something about a child's
act, dropping a pebble upon that boat
to study the effect: but then to let
other pebbles fall to see if it holds,
to kneel there spilling them one after one
until, until finally . . .

If I weigh
this poem down with much more, it too will sink—

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

VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER
(to Carolyn Kizer)

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

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

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

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

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.

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 reach 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

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:

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

TRANSHENDECULOUS

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

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

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

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

Note:

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

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 placemap, 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 always a profile compared to the fullface original.

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*.

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

all 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—?

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.

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.

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.

FERNAND KHNOPFF

Days in the lull, gathered afternoons of it,
—A touch of star-decals on one's bookbag,—
Silence, like a vast confetti of souls, and that
Torporic breeze: oh how difficult

The culling of love from our facades is.
Once, never to go the cling thing seemed what's
Sublimest. Look at those cobwebcroats,
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?

AFTER BORGES' "TO A MINOR POET OF 1899"

Who sought that sad height and that constant change
Laboring on an extraneous verse
Which through the dispersion of universe
Might elect one second whose spectrum's range

Was so capricious it broke the scholar
Caught in daily efforts to confine the eye
Pursuant of ceruleanesques that lie
Against each longing to fling a color

As brief as my life if I am alive
And am the one 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.

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
Blurled 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.

RILKE (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.

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

skreakedy skreak suckin' soot-sticks
makes me blind but I find my fix
when I unearth my undead stash
I slake its flake through a neck-gash

bat-weed bleeds me butts in gobbets
can't switch to cygnet cigarets
flick and sip those swan-white filt-tips

no heck I'm hooked black-hack bad-toke
what a tough puff bite-you-back smoke
Vlad the Inhaler loves my lips

from BREATH/LOST:

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.

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*.

OVER AND OVER

A child recites the alphabet
but you in years still hard to learn,
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 frequents stays you repeat.

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.

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 unmasks 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?

MEMORIAL GARDEN, NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY, ARLINGTON,
VIRGINIA, U.S.A.

Where every rose
blows more bellicose
than the killer heroes

below: 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 translator of the above to change "Arlington. . ." to the name of their own country's national military cemetery, and to use the colors of its flag in substitution for "Red White and Blue."

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.

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.

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

THE POSTHUMOUS APHORIST

I said the red and blue you haven't lived
will be the green and yellow you've died.
I guess they might be the colors that fade
when I see you to one. Is that your shade?

(A dozen acrobats debating zero:
trapped in a hurry circus at center
ring, my pyre prepares to free its hero.)

(A maniac unwrapped from the moment;
like a satori triggered by sneezes.)
(The symptoms named our sin a trance.)

It likes to dress up in creation and
take us for a walk. But can a maxim be
revised to include doubt? Any obit
presupposes a life if not its opposite.

AS USUAL

Immediately I'm dead
Body laid out straight
Please don't hesitate
Just cut off my head

Lift it and lay it a foot
Or so below my feet
Shift it till I look like
An exclamation mark

Overt sign of joy pain
Surprise consternation
Despair exuberance

As usual a metaphor
Meant to make up for
My lack of coherence

HEILSTYLES

Of course the Spring fashions buried in Fall
And dug up to wear in boisterous April
Make the models even more skeletal:
Body by Buchenwald; shade by Chanel.

Nazi nurses infiltrate CIA hospice—
At Safehouse Haven the dying agents
Are coaxed by swastika sisters to confess
A. Hitler was their greatest influence.

A disappearance echoing with shoulders,
A veinburst serpent evolved to doubt all,
Still these lifecopy killers follow me.

Wise fashionists resist history
By staging it over in stale revivals.
To stay in mode, though, one must grow older.

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,
both eyes bearing out his bared bereavement.

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 won't renovate

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.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envy young poets the rage
You wish you could reverse your night
And blaze out born on every page
As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight
Whose wattage now is theirs to wage—
What gold star rite you wish you might
Raise revised to its first prize stage.

But listen to my wizened sage:
He claims there's one disadvantage
Should time renew you neophyte—

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite:
Remember if you were their age
You'd have to write the way they write.

ZENITH

Once a rocket lived in the soarway
Now it's gone
Only a bird fills our sun socket
Then travels on

Hovering at all angles to
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 had

I wanted to stay there
But I failed at the sight

OVERLIFER-BAG

Age is a case 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.

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 this 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?

CELEBRATION

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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

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.

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 denial?)
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.

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.

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.

HERITAGE

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

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore 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.*

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.

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."

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 shining normal 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 clean of blue
to leave only immense endless light and hot

sun nothing but sun from horizon to horizon
allpoints eye-encompassing gorging 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

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): "Bashō 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.

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.

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.

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

All of them show a swan bedded in blood
Her advertised blue eyes lidded with mud.

Note:

after "Époques" by Jean Follain—I worked from the French original, and a trans. by Serge Gavronsky.

OCTNOV AGAIN

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

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

SALOME SALAD

these veils you shed
make any eye
weep their beauty
even Herod cried

striptease finished
those 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

LAST ON EVERY LIST

Each schoolroom tells them who they are,
But rollcall always goes too far

So what boy listens any more
Beyond his own responsive roar—

If names get lost in roster blur
The zed lad's shout may not occur:

Throughout that endless classmate choir
His final voice will still aspire.

Like him the poet waits aware
He'll harken heed all others there

While he of course remains obscure,
His word ignored and ergo pure:

Unheard it screams in every ear
Its absent claim of being "Here!"

DEPRESSIONISM

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

AFTER THE BATTLE (based on a translation by
Stavros Deligiorgis of a poem by Nichita Stanescu)

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 me it overflows
a valley stacked with soldiers, dead in rows.

MY PLEA FOR SANCTUM IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN OF MEDUSA

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

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

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

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

Note:

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

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.

And if 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.

RILKE (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, nevermind
The source we seek in meager things like house
And hammer, hoping his Amen bloodline
Can be found in lost items, by the tools we
Set aside unthinkingly: may they occupy
Our sills those days we stray from dailiness.

ADMASS (enneasyllabics)

The comet whose path is contentment
shall seldom appear: compared to it
Halley's daily. What eye flared to it
espies that rarest speck in the spent

of space debris, moonspat asteroid
magi orbiteer Bethlehem by,
bauble the Hubble holds in gem-high
illumination. What vocation void

I have to pray for that view ray caught
by two poets I admire, new converts
Karr and Wright. Well may they sing as sought
in such light, but I will not pay church

no matter how witch-burn its tail sphere
nails up in flame that sale-sign Christ Here.

POEM

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.

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.

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