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NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM
AND OTHER POEMS
NEW AND OLD

*

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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.

SECRET PLACES

I bite the screwtop top of a
bottle of naivete steady in my
teeth and slowly, by
rotating the bottle's body in
my hands, open it.

Christian crap, jewish junk,
moslem muck, buddhist bullshit,
the days all begin and end.

Pain is the absence of repetition.

Eventually the soles of the feet
will infect the palms of the hands
with their hiddenness.
Their remoteness.

Until then
I remain a door-deep animal,
embracing every room
shy of welcome.

(WINTERSHADE)

*

The candle's blue fingers trace
a window skyline. Its ice
an archery of needles. I seek
the sign, the making known
to me of now. We live in a land
we can see to disappear.

*

The wither-gathered wind
rivering through a grove
of non-leaved nouns: these are
the months one must cling hard
to his habits, that mean horde.

*

Winter. We must lean closer now
to see in each other's eyes
the cleft of witness
gape itself to give.

*

Closer. Closer. At times
we must even haven this
our place.

*

A miscellany of poems old and new.

The order is random, neither thematic nor
chronological.

For me, every poem is a "one off"—

I don't care where the poems are placed as
they follow or precede one another in my books
(with a few obvious exceptions).

No sequencing or positioning within a book
will make any of them better or worse.

Each poem will stand or fall by itself, of itself.

*

HITLER YOUTH

If I mispronounce ouroubouros as Oral
Bore us (from the mouth we emerged) or
You rob our O's (to repay our A's), I am
Simply saying if there were a line painted
Down the middle of this line, a poem
Inscribed down the middle of me would see
How many pens Medusa can hold in Her hair.

Haven for revisionists, the future
Excerpts itself from us, an anthology
That shows what we were at all moments, wholly
Representative, but which opened sheds a me
Hoping that somewhere past this surface the rim
Of your horizon has causes to know the sky
Is a sequence, with intervals of eternity.

Because form's faithlessness is oblivion
Tamed by hand, from my eye fringe I cry
Surround me facile, you 1940s infancy:
Because Nazis are not Z's, therefore they
Are A's. But even this poor report-card
Intends to let the alphabet be less lost
Than the shine off a trigger toad, my skin worn
By mud-mannequins. Ah Adolph's dais has
(Chattel chip/slaveblock splinter) softened since:

Like a fountain, my libation reprimands pavements.

PASSING

A hailstone finds flaws
 in the storm, while
 below we quarrel
 over whose lord
 was base for more terror
 than ours.

And yet the letters
 of the words in this poem
 consist of each other.

Could we not forth
 in like-guise go?

The boat passing
 whispers
 about those
 on the shore.

But we
 never mention it.

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

*
 A museum is too many rooms
 where nothing can be moved;
 one is forgotten in most of them.

*
 A tiptoe theater, full of shushes
 and overly-lit faces whose big
 scene seems always imminent.

But if the cue is anything more
 than a coin-toss, a chance word
 from a spectator's bypass glance,

this expectation of response
 is your guess, your great stance,
 the stage you hem and haw at.

*
 How the overflow of doorways
 that link all these galleries
 interrupts the paintings' spaces,

adjusting the land with lack
 and lacunae, thrusting gaps into
 the hushed square of our attention

and ushering us to the question
 of absence, that thief peering in
 on these always-without scenes.

*

Are we outside what is shown?
 Made audience, do we attend
 a pageant patient with our pauses

in perception, the solipsistic
 tunnels we hug. Why otherwise
 is there almost nowhere to sit?

Isn't it, that the viewers must
 move in order for the viewed
 to remain still. The authorities

curate these corridors with us—
 offscreen captions ape our attempts
 to evade rigidities they'd impose

until our amblings became
 a Nazi lockstep across this grid
 that exists mostly to secure

the screws that make sure
 the patrons' plaques are more
 the wall than we are: hungworks

belong to the victor; postwar
 reparations are a chimera—
 this world is bolted in place.

*

Museums are for the rich: it's just
 another way they gloat and spit

OBSTACLE-ISM

heaven is tired of stepping
 on me and hell of bumping
 its head on me and I am
 fed up with both battered
 by all this inbetweenity

every earth path impending
 over or under me until
 all site is lost or foothold
 in such a stringent merge
 I span the wild subplots

each compass raises lowers
 its binary state of terror its
 contemplate where the two
 pass each other in opposite
 directions home for some

all of them it seems can
 half-palliate imprecision
 with place but I'm nowhere
 unless this always being in
 their way is somewhere

FACADE

Mirrors worn out by apple
renderings, depictions the carcass
of peepingtom sneers at.

Vatic surface disdained by Cezanne,
doubts that blemish forever rarity,
wise beauty is painted parallel
always.

Always beauty is tempted to falsify
every shadow, as if nothing nearer
could be real. Doubling its fade
it seems to set an alternate yet not.

Facepaint spoils
the forbidden zone quality
that lives and dies there (indirectly).

But truth lies immobile on the sundial.

(Its other else moves to the blazon
of summer rhymes that remain names
unknown till birth when the tongue
must pronounce itself the tongue,
forsaking every purer synonym.)

on us, the blunt message is *See*

*twice great am I who can afford
to both buy this board and I
may also throw it away: this view zoo*

*is what I feed the animals
meaning you: gaze-cage where
I nonplus you with my surplus,*

*torture you with my morehood,
here you must worship my worth's
leavings, the Picasso I pissed on*

*before purportedly donating it
you bet to get a big tax write
off that really comes of course*

*from scum like you, you pay the cost
and the critics conspire my con:
I own them and you and all this too.*

*

The poor have no right here,
though ostensibly it's here
for us, its existence is built on

our backs, our lacks of education:
connaisseurs of crap, we'll buy
any crud postcard Impressionist

wallpaperers provide—victims of
fade-forgers who reign everywhere,
enforcers of the de rigeur; their

efforts to convince us this emptiness
is otherwise, succeeds: that's why
nothing here can ever be touched,

even a fingertip would disturb the
dead tenuous alignment of forces
fragility can only lament from frame

to frame until the all but unshown
collusion between donors and whore
curators completes its scam decor.

*

Numberless our looks languish
unable to compose their path,
halting an inch in front of

the canvas; the air is thick with
incomplete glances, gazes that
failed to reach these pictures,

overtures toward an unsatisfactory
climax, unbridgeable the gulf,
still impotent or frigid the mind

feels confronted by these large
garish (i.e. visible) examples of
a wig tossed onto a TV to be

OCTOBER

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

BOSTON COMMON, AUTUMN 2000

The Statehouse dome
is painted gold
to reflect the greed
that gilds everything
in this Capitol:
superfluous these leaves
reaping their richest color.

No-one is fooled,
not even me, unless
it's by all the green-sickly
bronze statues in this park:
have they been seen by Doctors
from the Museum,
have they been authenticated lately?

These could be forgeries,
the real ones trucked off by night
to some billionaire's
penthouse of horrors:
eyrie I aspire to—my lair, my home!

The trees' lottery tickets descend
and fill my hands
with more than.

a diva antenna receiving pictures
from the Tesla Void where
spysats orbit to catch the planet

in closeup, candid depictions of our
centimeter selves, the slimed movement
of border sorties, incursions that

violate the treaties signed by
dignitaries retiring with a wing
named after their Mom and Dad.

*

Though our observances are far
from over, scalped by perspective's
relentless blade we wander home

truant now to our other portraits,
false to their provenance, the lands
we lost by invading the sanctum

of this museum, serene scene
we plebs must abhor in front of
our lives which cannot authenticate

the real exhibit: this wealth of lies
before whose truth our face is
forgeries; our eyes un-nude, unseen.

*

THROWBACKS

I want to take your place in my life so
 I lie in wait for you everywhere. Once I used
 To lie down in the paths of steamrollers, my teardrops
 Where photographed at the feet of glaciers
 To prove if they were advancing or retreating
 Like positions in a kama sutra: after the cold
 Juggernauts passed over I was fed lingeringly
 Through printer-outers. It was read then that the
 E-pore is used most frequently by my skin,
 Next came x, p, o . . .

I want you to take my place in my life so
 I follow you everywhere. Once I used
 To follow burglars around: waiting at the window till
 They ransacked a house then fled, I'd enter
 Run my hands through its emptied drawers, degleamed
 Jewelboxes, my sole thrill was to rub the feel
 Of deceived receptacles, rifled pockets.
 I'd wait outside, then rush in, clambering like an adam's apple.

I want to take my place in your life so
 I go with you everywhere. Once I used
 To accompany myself, I had a passport to the xerox,
 The unanimous aimed its initials at me on the run,
 When my died my clones were laid out at the funeral
 Beside me, then a heckler who's amnesiac, anybody, some
 Forever stranger was blindfolded and led past the coffins to
 See if they could get the right I by feel but failed
 And so their life was took in place, and so I took your life
 As place, so I must now keep placing your life in take,

In sudden give and take:
 I want you to take my place in your life. Please.

DEATH AND THE MOUNTAIN

“There is no theme for old age
 but death and the mountain.”
 —Arab proverb

You should see the treeline on
 that mountain
 of update bulletin news;
 no avalanche can blacklist me—
 The twigline on the tree
 said: You should see him on talkshows

sandpapering his
 mug off totempoles, carved
 of old, of pine—
 Just past the christline
 on that cross is
 one sitcom one summit of this; scarred

as a skyline of thorns it grew
 up, imperious, pious. . . . To
 blindfold the precipice
 before leaping
 from it, okay; but try keeping
 a straight face

when the punchline comes “kersplat”—
 There, old skin-quilt,
 saint peacock hedge! Feverchart
 that wedges the door shut.

I see it
 he said. I see my mountain's peak-sized fate.

BEACHED

Thaw, summer, melt from pastel to pastille—
 a fruit's sweetness warning the greatness of death
 to back off: hornbeeps, skidmarks so new, so fresh.

Cars, go and surround each beach.
 Where drowned armpits flower toward the word.
 Where even the sun refuses to be an icon.

In my room stand two razorpoles. I rub
 back and forth between them. I vacillate
 love, hate: it's exhausting continually

wiping the spittle off your face,
 though the spitting itself is of course
 quite effortless. Simile for waves.

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?

SAY WHEN

I write poems that consist of nothing
 but the word attentionspan
 attentionspan
 fills all the pages of all my books
 of course it's boring for you
 to read the same word
 printed over and over again
 I agree it's a waste
 of time and patience in fact
 I know you probably won't even
 read past the first thousand or so but
 that's okay I am not hurt by the fact
 that you never read my poems all
 the way through because (and get this)
 wherever you do stop reading
 wherever you toss me aside
 is where I triumph
 is where I impose upon you
 the term for that limit which
 you have haughtily and
 eternally tried to impose upon me
 right there
 wherever you stop
 will be the word for that stop
 the true word the word
 made deed as we say in the trade
 you will have reached your attentionspan
 and I will have put it there
 waiting for you
 writing it over and over for you
 sitting in this crummy room day after day
 gloating over this victory
 over your usual tyranny
 over me

GOLLY MOUNTAIN BLUES

Up on Golly Mountain all the lovers are parked
 Wish we could be up there enjoyin the dark
 But you don't wanna I'm sorry I come along
 Cause you won't stop the car hon all night long
 Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
 Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
 I know you ain't to blame but
 Our love's about to flame out
 Can't you smell the rubber burn
 As you keep riding them hairpin turns
 When you told me you loved danger I said then I'm your guy [girl]
 I been dangerous since I first learned to kiss
 Let's go up on Golly and give it a try [whirl]
 But when I said I loved it I sure didn't mean this
 Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
 Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
 I can't remember your name but
 Our love's about to flame out
 Can't you feel the floorboards burn
 As you keep riding them hairpin turns
 I heard about some funny ways that people get their kicks
 From runnin round upon the town to gettin hit with whips
 But you take the cake my friend you're oddball number one
 I admire your nerves but I got some curves where you could have
 more fun than these here
 Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
 Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
 I guess it's all the same but
 Our love's about to flame out
 Can't you taste the seat of my bluejeans burn
 As you keep riding them hairpin turns
 Poor baby I know it ain't your fault it was your mama daddy musta dropped you
 on your brake when you was born cause if you don't know that lovin is the
 deadliest thrill there is you don't know nothin I shoulda known somethin

CRAPSHOOT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BEST WAY TO KEEP YOUR ANKLES AWAKE? SNAKE SHOELACES

Only a scratch, but its bandage patrols the walled city, assuming this mystic furrow has taught such fangs repose. Past suburbs skilled with ash, past evaporated sculpture, blindpond bodies. Or is it

like maples, learning their craft of syrup—years of drop on drop, step by step—have we, life after life, a soul-spoor gradually maximizing its sugar? Or is Nirvana bitter—a clockmarked zero, a pine-

needle's grudging eye. A void, propped up by simplicity. Where someone exhausted by the justice of his meals pauses in the street, the proof his feet make gathers, gravity snatching to earth all

sweets. Even sprinters, on their starting-blocks, hold hands. Love? A sideways noise, a tidings via toe-graphologists, rumor as raw as cold as saliva crawling on the floor of a crematorium, straw used

to sip frogsweat from sleeping lily pads. More?—Mourners, televidilevitated. Birth, its strength of recap. The yacht of yet, the boat of but, have never saved us from sinking in dreams where the dead

must keep their day jobs: imagine going on working like a compass on the thrust-out palm of some lost Victorian's corpse near the North Pole: think how tired it is by now of sticking to the point, the poem.

when you picked me up inside the movieshow way your windshield wiper kept gettin into my popcorn here let me take these hairpins out my hair and let it fall into your lap don't that make you want to love me and cuddle and lay your head on my soft soft shoulder . . . Soft Shoulder? Hey! Look out!

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside

Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide

It's a dirty shame but

Our love's about to flame out

Can't you tell my poor heart yearns

But you just keep on riding them hairpin turns

Yes you just keep on riding them

hair-

pin—

Get your tongue off that gaspedal baby

You tryin to love this thing or drive it well then drive it drive it

Just cause you ain't got nothin to live for . . . heck, come to think of it I ain't got nothin neither

Hey you know somethin? I'm beginning to like it

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside

Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide

I know you ain't to blame but

Our love's about to flame out

Can't you smell the rubber burn

As you keep riding them hairpin turns

SUDDEN DEATH STRIKES JET SET

well racecar driver Peter Revson's
 luck
 ran out today
 the Rev revved up once
 too often

despite his rugged
 good looks heir
 to a cosmetics
 fortune he

was driven
 daredevil
 death defy

once
 before a big race
 his mother told him
 he was crazy

Rev
 age 35
 one year older than me
 a playboy
 millionaire frequently
 seen with the world's most
 beautiful
 and glamorous
 personalities all

during his
 150 thousand
 dollar racecar Nascar burning
 crash Miss
 World the fiancee was photographed
 repeatedly

seconds after
 the fireball burst his friends took
 their friends aside
 brusque to confide
 that most eligible
 bachelor of

VISITS (to X)

Belonging to all that moves through me,
 I always go to look back through
 the rearview.

Trees upholster the car in shade,
 but no comfort can delay
 its start. Its way
 is laid out, is you.

A rushed goodbye is truer
 than leisurely adieux.

Refined from the sun's raw fire,
 our farewells are polite;
 appearances maintained.

We say we want to stay but never do.

SWIMSHORE: TO X

alive at least as long
 as nothing is our own
 we hover above
 this line of ferryfine waves

where rocks sink in recital
 ocean or lake
 marine and mute
 each toe is cold at first

god of the smallest solitude
 I study the nude's description
 in personal gaps

hair like a spark of armor
 sun
 sun each one of your laps crests

THE QUESTION

Far off, demimordial, I hear an epitaph of ears, someone
 Collides with a stopwatch, innocent mincemeats rise steaming and
 Sporadic laughter, cardoors going slammed. Then, static-ier voices,
 Through blood jettisoned by mimes statues reminisce, reveal how
 They subsist on glimpsed nubility, personal-touches in crowds who
 Traipse past. In rooms where you heard the sound of a teardrop
 Striking the bloodhound surface of perfume which sat in a
 Washbasin, chipped fake porcelain, who poured it in that? in
 Those rooms (where you were so strangely audient!), others, like
 Me, are listening. Outside, in the city, the minstrelshow
Pollution (which paints us all in 'blackface') continues, corny
 And racist, sexist, lampoonist . . . humanist? Ashes watered
 By hell, kisses skimmed from doveflight, cream from silk, what-
 Ever rises, curdled, from depths as fraught with else as these,
 Far off. . . . Yet I would encourage your traits your tricks individual
 Of speech, you crowds who gape on as those rooms all rush toward
 One room, whose doors part now like a mouth pried in cry
 Silently, stifled by its openness. Will my voice receive me,
 Will my cries still have me? will not be the question there.

them all is a mess

hell
 he was positive
 meteoric
 to say the least

but don't worry the
 whole thing
 will be hushed up

a quickly announced
 memorial foundation of
 lipstick
 nailpolish
 nailpolish remover
 eyeliner powder
 puffs and pomades
 proved useless
 when applied to the burnt pan
 cake skin

in
 New York
 Lauren Hutton is reported
 to be devastated on
 behalf of VIPs
 everywhere thank you

one year older than me
 hmm
 say why am I writing this poem

is it to gloat
 glad he's dead
 glad I don't have to try to be
 him anymore a poet
 penniless frequently
 seen with the world's most
 ugly and worthless
 nobodies

and that's just what
 I have to put
 Pete down for

in the end
snobbery

even his pigheaded death
wish was a kind
of social
climbing I bet
he thinks he made it
today
into the not set

fat
chance
capitalist
rat

Note:

The factoids came from People magazine. Revson was (an) heir to the Revlon cosmetics dynasty. Lauren Hutton: actress, spokesmodel for Revlon. Miss World is replaced annually by a duplicate Miss World.

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

MY THEORY

The universe's mission is to expand,
all scientists now agree; yes, but why
should that be its quest, they question—

Based on my experience, my theory:
if one remains in the same place, one
must pay rent, life's made me understand.

Landlords and gods may never agree;
but meanwhile, see every galaxy
sneak out the back, starcase in hand?

POEM (HOW I LOST MY PEN-NAME)

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

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

But no again

It stayed down

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

TODAY'S STORY (OH, SYNESTHESIA! #4)

Somehow this morning light
 diverted to my ears, while
 soundwaves ricocheted my eyes—

For hours I had to twist
 sideways to walk
 without tripping, and each carhorn
 made my eyelids
 whip like a hurricane awning,
 as I squirted eyedrops in ears eardrops
 in etc., gradually
 things returned to normal.

But I feared tomorrow:
 “What if my molars salivate
 at every inner or utmost attar;
 if eon-brandy I cannot savor but
 through thy swart chute, oh nostril!”

In fact by the time this evening came
 I was so worried I had to call tell
 my friend X—
 who said: Well, look,
 just tell me one thing: can
 you feel the phone?

What do you mean, I said,

Can you feel it with your fingers,
 X said, is your sense
 of touch still there, where it's
 supposed to be?—
 Yes?—Well, in that case,
 get over here
 and give me a backrub,
 right now,
 right this minute,
 before it's too late.

RUBBERNECK

Hey Rubberneck
 'S what they call me
 Rubberneck
 In all the streets and alleys

Rubberneckin
 I'm just checkin
 Diggin everything like a quicksand parade
 Ridin herd
 On the curbs
 Copying down
 All the stopsigns in town
 Erasing all the ones for walkin

Anywhere a crowd
 Is leashed out loud
 I'm on the nod to prowl
 That's me
 You see out stalkin my gawkin

Hey Rubberneck
 'S what they call me
 Rubberneck
 In all the streets and alleys
 Rubberneck
 But I don't care
 Hey what's that goin on over there

Rubberneckin
 Inspectin
 Where the sirens' screech
 Directs my feets
 I'm takin a butcher at
 Everymeat I meet
 Gonna glue my shoes
 To the avenues
 And my eyelashes to my cheeks

Anywhere a group
 Has got itself a grope
 Hangin on the ropes
 I'll poke my periscope
 Cause you're my only hope

BATHROOM MIRROR

Every morning the glass
 empties my face
 of its night and then
 as its day is poured in
 I feel forsaken and
 my eyes strain longingly
 down the drain.

POEMPATH: PERIOD

Each syllable
 a steppingstone
 till you stumble
 on this one.

THAWDROPS

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

For some lovin
 So step to one side please
 Quit shovin
 I am a witness for my enemies
 I am a witness for my enemies

Hey baby what you
 Got to show there
 What's shakin down around
 Your corners
 Let me sneak a peek
 I can't be any bolder
 I'll watch it all
 Right up across your shoulder

Hey Rubberneck
 'S what they call me
 Rubberneck
 On all the mountains
 Don't forget the valleys
 Rubberneck
 Hey what's that I see
 Everybody's standin round
 And they're lookin down
 They're lookin down at me

MITTS AND GLOVES (for Tom Lux)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[UNTITLED]

Hamlet in the nunnery kneels
to take his veilful vow
while Ophelia scales
with sword and bow
the enemy's walls

*

[UNTITLED]

perhaps I still wake up

I still live perhaps

but I hope

I hope I do it for sloppiness sake

*

[UNTITLED]

The moon's a wishingwell you threw
all your sources, but you wasted them.
Everything is coming true,
but for the last time.
The moon will soon be tossed into you.

*

PITY

inside his pane
 the window is a man
 like you or me
 at night he walks the ledges
 at night he walks the sills
 restless in his frame
 veins full of glass
 at night he walks the sills

at day his head rises
 and shines through his body
 and soon he worries
 that the coming night
 will undecapitate
 that the homing night
 will rejoin him whole

inside his pane
 like you or me
 fulgent full of future slivers
 fallen whole
 foretold and free

at night he walks the sills
 his head rises
 his head falls

held together by none
 his jaggedy slitted body
 glazed and gone
 his beauty putty

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

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

scratches its stitches and wonders
 what it will look like tomorrow

when it wakes up
 and the doctor removes its bandages—

Coda:

Mitts versus gloves. Mitts—mitts
 are pro's at what they do.

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

the glove is a prole
 a tool

a brute built
 on the manipulative; purpose vital

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

to be migrant. It
 can be employed

phased in
 used

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

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

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.

NOTES

Given the fame
 surrounding
 the recent book
 or unfinished or
 abandoned work
 by Elizabeth Bishop
 isn't someone
 now planning
 another book
 consisting of her
 scrawled instructions
 to the maid
 the menus she
 handed the cook
 the lists she left
 for her secretary
 and what about
 her stockbrokers
 the notes they got
 regarding assets
 should be included
 along with those
 she wrote to
 the wine steward
 the chauffeur
 the groundskeeper
 the poolboy
 the dressmaker
 the therapist
 the masseuse
 and of course
 the lawyers on retain
 not to mention
 the critics on retain

Note:

Or any poet whose financial wealth was a significant factor in the character of their writing. (Lowell, Merrill, Matthews, Gluck, Howard et al.)

DUMP

I seem more in this poem than
I am. It covers me, icons me,

I hide under its knoll.
A knoll, or as

the old English word KNOTT
means, a small hill.

Sanctified, whole—
it was my bent led to this bind.

It was my own,
puckered with similarity.

Kaput in a canoe,
done-for in a dogcart,

does every demise
suit my sangfroid.

Cease, I wither, I curl up, I
shroud in shrivel to make

disposal easier—
a packaging handy for death,

Santa's bag.
(Slag, not swag.)

SKETCH FOR AN ARTIST

A paper lighthouse with crayon beacons
that make visible
a glass clinked against a waterfall
to test the acoustics for
a concert where we sit and watch
a thumbprint
howl out its whorls—

I can draw things like these anytime
but I can't write them.

[UNTITLED]

no one wants to snowride
on a slowsled
pulled by a glacier
but at least in this traffic
it gets you there

THE WISHINGWELL STANZAS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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