

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE
MOON AND OTHER NEW POEMS

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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 Note

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A selection of new work from around 2004 to the present.

I have not included quatorzains or shorts: these can be found in the Lulu.com publications devoted to those forms.

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The order of the poems is random, neither thematic or chronological.

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THE TRESPASS

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

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

I share their lawful urge to prohibit—
My own words witness so many sanctions
How dare I unsubmit to any writ.

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

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

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

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

TAROT PORTRAIT

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

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

Empty enough to defy place or break
The bad odds configured here in the stake
Of cards she pays out now into their own
Dead-man's deft-hand. Do you know who's downthrown

In the rows of that slow shuffle? And no
Matter where you hailed from or where you'll go
Next-lost round the dark town's confinements
One must leave this encounter with a sense

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

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

Each time you insert it and twist it, a line
Is incised on the canvas; each lock-wind

Puts another brushstroke to the portrait:
Opening her arms she frames you for it.

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

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

(CRIBSONG)

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MIRROR INSPECTOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

Get into a bit of—but out here, where the blocks
Are reflective—scapesules of their inhabitants—

Mirrors too need their own kind, their basics
Depend on exclusivity, the classical refinements

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where was I: Your paranoia is appropriate—in fact

I've already punished the neighbors up and down this
Street, their episodes are serial now, the loathe-lack
Denaturedness of their crimes enough to furnish

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

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

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

OEDIPUS RIDDLED (heptasyllabics)

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

WHEN THE TIME COMES

there is no alleviation
from the pain
there is no balm

there is no balm unless
via the inner alias
of rhyme it's
Li Po's palm

as it lays
another just-written poem
on the river
to let
it float away

all that effort
lifelong to create
a self sacrificed
as soon as
you got it finished

I hope I can say
when the time comes
as considerately
as calmly
Li Po let go of me

STRAND

Poured transparent by water I enter,
the minutiae find me whole again,
the small storms that attend my pores,
the closest fears. I enter my room,

the space I must disrobe to occupy: I see
the coathangers shrug off my timid gesture
of solidarity, of consolation
for their intrinsic aloneness, their

bone forms never quite covered
each time the waves heave these clothes
upon our strand. I stand in front
of this convenient nakedness,

this open door of the moment knowing
every closet longs to be unique in its disorder,
a shambles of mothholes and outworn forms
donating itself daily to the space

I must parse to the point of empathy,
knowing that as true its brunt breeze
intends to condense all I contain of sea,
and as always succeeds. Yes,

it rains my ocean empty.

FROGPRINCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POEM IN THE CARDIAC UNIT

Time-charted, nursed, I let the meds
dictate this verse: *roomriver rounds*
take my pulse down stairwaves of stairs
scan my aches in chairbanks of chairs
and wake me on bedbeds of beds.

Multiplicities, pre-scripted;
metaphors bled, already dead:
what wouldn't be a cliché here—
paranoid mirror, bathroom sink,
flowing over with normal fear

as I squint at what I might mean
if I poeticized this scene: age
LSDs my chin; my once-lean
profile spills profilefiles, page
upon page rippling to see

even their prolific output
data can never sate the spate
pathoscopes that hardrecord spot
surveillance of what vital signs
remain in these veins, clotted lines

whose parse usurps my sleep. (Forget
how literate you hate this surge,
absurd, heartbeat creation; your
necknoun must stet its tide-edit
now, to quiververbs, wattlewords.)

What would my peergroup say, could they
modify this hypergaud gush,

advise my florid veinflushed flesh
stop pouring forth such images,
euphony beyond me. Sweet excess.

Is that not the gist this critic
monitor that beeps down its *sic*
keeps vying to brightly display
while I lie here less than what, what,
watched all night, till more's the day.

HAIRBRUSH POEM

the hairbrush can hardly breathe
it suffocates in strands
it snarls as tense as teeth
biting an enemy's hands

the things we tame are what
entangle and turn us wild
every parent grows ragged tugged
disciplining their child

pity the year-old hairbrush
its stems all split its roots bare
a field that's tilled too much
now a hoarbrush blooms there

hairbrush hairbrush have you
any tufts to spare today
now that I'm bald and cannot comb
please give back my gray

the hairbrush yanks and yanks
stubborn curl that won't lie dead
even a poorbrush must shed
such rebels from its ranks

(so try not to cry and just say thanks
when it hauls you off your head!)

MOONSHOT

Stalwart Gagarin's
(or is it stout
Cortez's)
cosmonautboot
quashes
the tender
rays that engender
Selene's
poetic praxises and
phases—
Yuri, what you do
imposing the siberian shoe
on its silver sand
just to be
the first man
to land there as John
Keats said stranded
on his peak in
Darien may ruin
our poems' home.
Please leave the moon
untouched
by any voyage but
our verses.
Bring
that Soyuz spacebus
back to earth and sing
quest-else to come—
Tuned lunar time
how pacifically
we'll praise
the usual discoveries.

LOVE POEM

Because you have set your lips in my life
like an event, the date
I had missed and longed for
unknowing if it had passed,
day dull as diaries
that wait for wonders—

Love, error of the unique,
rare-offering the one
moment
that will never share itself with
the dishwasher chores,

the drab demands of normal
life that line up pending to be
faced with nothing required of me
but an absent askance quality:
the cat and mop et al.

Love
on your heights
on the crest of a kiss
can you ever know the comfort
of these doldrum dole duties,
these small acts of repeat.

Against their duliness
your beauties dull.
I bend to their boredom
which after all remain home

(stanza break)

and I find relief alone
and release
and solace
each time
I press my mouth against them.

POSTCOITAL

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

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

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

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

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

THOSE PILLOWS

Those pillows lovers keep
adjusting beneath themselves to find
the right slant (that of a man
walking against high wind)

have their own cushion-quotient
of soft or hardness: they're
similar and unique like snowflakes;
every pillow has its singular

feel-degree, though blizzards of limbs
would moosh them all the same—
yet chastened to lie winterfold
among them when you've come

so close to breasting the best of
love's storms, then maybe now
your relent-laced forms will learn
what little rest pillows allow.

IMMUNE

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

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

Which of them if any might still prey on
Our higher-evolved state . . .
Which of that five's alive and hovering—
Dead to its lunge we wait.

ANOTHER FALSE EXECUTION

The crime-rate in our land is so great that
I could commit Murder A confident that
Simultaneously someone unknown to me
Would nearby be committing Murder B—

My plan's to confess to Murder B which should
Cover up my real guilt for A because if
I was busy perpetrating B how could
I have done A. The identical times of

The crimes and my evidentiary shame
Convince the law of that. The subsequent
Trial verdict shall hoistpetard my scheme,
Girding me with the gloat I'm innocent

Of that of which I stand condemned: I die
Endowed in the knowledge my sentence
Is wrong, thereby maintaining to the end
That moral superiority, that perfect high

Which is the cause of most crimes if not mine.

PAGEBOY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE MOURNER

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

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

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

TOTAL

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

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

those collapsing tropes
in heaps
of worthless chips
which are

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

TOGETHER OR APART AS OUR FAVORS CARRY US

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

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

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

where a sleep of engines calms
the horizon we puff
on its halo's last cigarette

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

COMMUTER SKILLS NEEDED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GENERIC

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

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

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

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

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

ALOFT

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

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

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

a master's in mustache
a doctorate in down
Ph.D in peachfuzz
cap-strop-and-gown
more honors-blown diplomas
than tenured hands can slash

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

to flunk is remedial
if pop-quiz pops us all

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

THE DAY AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

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

EPITAPHS

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

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

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

THE ONE

If gravity's angel is
the unfallen one,
the only one
aloft, if.

It's paper I write on, page
you read, but is it ever
pagge? That
unpronounceable

is where
the sacrifice
occurs, the merge—
Like Sylvia in Leopardi's lament

we fall, in fact we flop:
our slack hands helpfully point
out the inadvertent
directions of death—

the right a tomb in the air,
the left a mausolith,
the one I write with.
And now all

the others recto verso show
their distance the one,
the only one
I live with, if.

THE FUTILIST

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

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

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

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

POEM

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

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

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

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

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

(stanza break)

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

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

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

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

so let it sough
dissolve in draft
little whistlestuff
pathetic kisspuff
flimsiest flak

up into the sky goes
two lungs worth
of earth

(no stanza break)

unstrung
unloosed
the exhaled
soul of a boy a girl

alloonaloft
aloftalloon
lost

THE SILO

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

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

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

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

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

AN INSTRUCTOR'S DREAM

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

SALON POEM IN LEAFGRAVURE

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

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

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

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

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

SNOWS AND SNATCHES

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

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

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

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

OVERNIGHT FREEZE (heptasyllabics)

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

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

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

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

puttied into glare hatches—
All around the ground looks patched

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

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

how glitter-together cached;
incandescently encased.

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

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

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

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

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

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

and floorflares most summer's waste
imagination, that pinch

not worth pittance, that thin purse
clutching what breast abundance

of flurry foliage tossed, prize
profligate with years' penance

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

tries to hide that mislaid dust
carrion in graneries

and bury deeper what grace
war's jarrior deifies—

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

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

Beyond the coop's chickenhatch

pieces of a greenhouse burst
up from the clays as ghosts pass
to implant sole-sills for what's
still clear to me—I approach
each glimpsy-glaziered gapgulch
afraid my galoshes squelch
break their skittery sketches
or skidheel slide a childprance
puncturing every damn sash
I can smash, whatever blanched
and specious glow my outstanced
kick can dislodge idolfest
haloes those pit-portholes hoist
from lamb-trample slaughterous
gods displayed bad raptor hosts—
herds of ape they pasture-traipse
bestial cattlecats who scratch
paved prowess in the dirt splotch
like border-dots on mapwatch
or liens miser ledgers clutch
feral figures for our debts
predator prey pays poets
that panther pads our wallets

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

this savage extravagance
animates each TV pitch

your Energizer Rabbits
breakfast lions and leopets

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

as you sit and clicker switch
from Tiger Attack stabsites

to Martyred Bible Prophets
can you diff any difference

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

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

festering fetish lame wish
goldgash wildpack "religious"

imperious dazzlements
its screen between me unleashed

shall I plain idealize
the sight. Pitter pattered glitz

the poorest field-rat can task:

"Trance entombed, my forage-struts?

strangely crowned with iciclets,
thaw-askance in silver nets

that snag some Nixnaut banished
from huge spook-lakes diminished

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

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

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

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

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

in this fecal foul recess—
delusional any parse

that aspires to soar from smutch
or scat escape its burnished

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

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

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

Immured your murder-led bents
that followed friendly bloodscents

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

till cycle lay established
again. Eternal matrix,

your game's destined accidents
choreograph each pounce once

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

vaults for phantom enpassants—
stabatjammed their rhythm dance.

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

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

Look: its slope grows near scar grazed
with overtook's veer. Steer-squished

leap-lobes laned below this sluice
this rapacious avalanche—

this meander labyrinth's

constellated those hunt-sprints.

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

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

hibernate, die! sink finished
along this blank fishtank maze

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

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

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

have more words for than I, mouse
Michigander, verminous

mite of this sheer terminus
the Knott brat teetertoed his

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

toward the devouring bless
this coldsnap moment's incised

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

grail incarnations of slush
frail trail we fugitives mashed

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

palls in the mornings' stale mess
of luminescence. Sunrise

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

versus some thumbed thesaurus)
this polar-stamped dirt contrasts

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

extinguished glimmer glimpses
shattered all their gleams I guess—"

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

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

critters croaked, varmints vanished
species extinct or deathwish—

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

on church-prayers' lack-response.

Their trek unlike ours abounds.

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

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

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

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

Before the snow's blind expanse
blunders every further fence

a walk may stop precipice
top this fierce fenestrate lens

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

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

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

(Let elf and unicorn dash
climate at its timeliest

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

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

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

CAESAR LEARNING TO JUMP ON CHESSMEN'S BACKS

Why he'd have to be taught what comes
so normally to male-kind is puzzling,
unless inbreeding of noble strains has
left him esthetic, less stoic, timorous—
a child, his toes babyfat, his bare soles
poised in the approved Colossus-of-Rhodes
at the count of three jump up and down;
while his tutors applaud young gods
the fragments are brushed away by slaves,
the black-and-white pieces crushed
bloodily together form a tragic alternate
ideal society where the kings queens
etcetera are indistinguishable from
the pawns, and maybe that's the fun—
no rival to the Rome where the scum
who whisk away the grey-by-defeat shards
are neutered or both and made so
at birth, representative of the mass:
consigned to bear their broken brethen
down past the intuitive, the dirt that heaps
their dirt beyond lowest dungeons and
to bury there the chess-bits that spoiled
the boyking's heels, his small insteps
and ankles, indeed the entire tootsies
of the six-year-old Emperor must then
be amputated just below the shin, be
replaced after every lesson by the royal
transplant surgeons. Which could explain
that curious adage (that Cretan riddle),
“Where do our plebs go without feet?”

MYSTERY MOVIE

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

of justice, we who jump the gun, who
deny the drawing out of the dilemma,
thrill of the withheld. The unknown.
We who rush too soon to the revelation.
We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

EACH TIME

Sometimes I dream of Rumor's house, which,
I just read in Ovid, is situated

at "the world's center," the core of cores
beneath us all. He contends its windows doors

are forever open, a porous palace where
every word uttered by every person is stored

in what I'd call the ultimate anthology.
Where is this house, in what country?

Its closets hold not only the past,
meaning the brain's nine-tenths lost

noncognitional of the capacitated,—
because it collates not just the said,

but all that will be said: Each text
it bleeds from the future is convexed

theoretically to also heal our sole flaw:
that underlying chamber, that cellar

which upholds these capsuled corridors:
that fissure floor one-celled horrors

emerged from eons earthwide scattered,
too patterned for breeding, those far

glugglugs, these slogged zillenia ago.
Each trans-cthonich myth—genetic fragments

we once keeled our island egos against—
is shored Eliotically, in toto—

but not in a waste land: in this place
nothing is wasted, each fact is facet

composite a euphemistic peg, whose hole
lies in what one might term a zero,

though the zero that defines our one
must look through itself to see what's gone:

What used to be the bookshelf
it swallows, and feeds throughout itself:

it sits each of us there at the hell
level its circuits need, and circulates us

around the entire system's railroad
to embody our brain a la bloodmode,

knowing its node is only made more real
by the fact each hypertold spongecode

can be simulsold for further gore:
every PC glued to GossipNet

increases the sanguinary poet's debt.
But I hear you say in ways this constant

poured out current has wrecked Intent:
floor-it geared, it steers us most toward

a surface abyss, a maelstrom facade—

the sargasso rock-critic, the facile hard-crowd—

it's said our eyes are icebergs in that sea.
But where they are dispelled completely

beyond my room night comes into swim.
Somewhere out there I know grow fossils

of protozoa-to-be, omega mammals,
animandroids roaming manuals

whose outreach program. whose proffered rim
as far as I'm testcase-concerned

should fend off every ocean, every cunning
void evolution took some of its beginning

from: for longspan has that epoch broke
when rumor heard what human spoke.

DREAMTIDE

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

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

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

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

down on drawnway beach
dream-tide high they've laid me
from comforter combatted
spread over lap dunes dead
wings wherever I reach

THE MALL-TIQUE ESTHETIC

Often a flower tries to befriend your shirt,
but you must shun its minor transcendence
and remain in transit afterwards then later forward,

nor stop along any ground lure to wield
an egg balanced on a T-square and declaim
how grateful you are for whatever cameo roles

your film noir killers and thieves can still assume,
though the thrill of closing your eyes in witness
leitmotifs the fear they show account to.

Earth-surface seems to support this with evasions
which, if difference did deliver, might
grant monkey unanimity to time's isolation

and overcome your capacity for reason among
vined gardens of origin, desperate media
which litter the floor with florabunda

whose come-ons to your clothing are due
to their desperate desire to be real somehow:
how sad nature is in its entourage stage,

its stalker nazi strategems to stay relevant,
the way it mimics us. Its simulacra swarm
almost human in their gaudiness of thorn

or leaf though of course they lack our essential
say nay qua. Yet here you are among their
units of ubiquity as if they were the one you

should escape and run to hide beneath a sundial,
while your windmills pump water to a stalled
starting-block; your bread sops up the clouds.

Hey: each day don't you see on the screen
a comedian's teeth battle the lava of his own lips.
Doesn't that scene render Vesuvius superflous.

*

POEM

I heard the abide.

How low it was.
How loud it was.

How soon it ended.
And what it said.

I heard its words
poured, pouring
from the sky.

The clouds were frauds.

The froth lost its mind in an ear.

APPLE

Pack your bathtub with humankind.
Your closet with animaldom.
Let grassmost spill from your shelves.

Cram the world into your house,
overlooking no cubbyhole
no corner. Surrender your personal

to matter external,
privacy to plethora,
fill each space with all.

Leave no room for yourself, though—
how foolish that would be.
For, as the fruit is a little

recantation on the part of bitterness,
a letting up of its overkill reign,
so this surfeit will solve

for a while your null.

A LIFETIME YET

Look, in the sky, how those clouds turn
into a place which briefly appears
to be unique or is that pattern
repeated once every 33.3 years—

Termcycle which can't be seen unless
via long computers our sapient view
finds its site: or is this simply false
recurrence imposed upon a true

chaos. Can heaven's formations be
further figured beyond the phase
nonce of that one fate we suddenly
see: a third of the way through his

thirtythird year we hoisted Jesus
up to check this question out; he
was supposed to get back to us
on it but we're still on hold, aren't we?

EXCHANGE

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

(stanza break)

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

MISHAP MESSAGE

I bandage my wristwatch
to stop the bleeding
of time but time
is perforce the wound
out of which space empties
Einstein's bag of marbles

the greenie I shoot at its sister the moon
the purey I bury with a note saying no
the blue one weighs in my hand
as light as sky minus earth
earth of course is the last marble

I like to hear it roll
around my showerstall
before I fall into the drain
into that distillate of distance we call
ocean

whitecaps whitecaps
beneath each of which
a nurse bobs up and down

cold fingers hold my wrist
cold toes probe my throat
is that my pulse I ask
sisters is that my life

(stanza break)

is that the onomatopoeia of the waves
words that jumble space with time
laughter tumbling down a telescope

words that turn to marble all I say
white as my years they bleed
they bleed away
white but white as only Einstein's hair is white
or a note slipped under drowning doors

CROSSROADS

A crossroads is a solely human place—animals in their time have created paths through jungle, woods or plain, wearing down the grass with hooves and paws, but roads that intersect are necessities which only we respect. The junction of two lines laid in the earth serves to focus our steps in ways which crazed disparate fleerings of herds to and from their waterholes and feedgrounds can't come flock or follow. Beyond those mad meanders lies the nearest need to greet a configuration of fates we recognize indigenous to us: hostile purposes, aims in antipathy: two destinies that disagree at every point except one, pure opposites who meet just once, whose encounter is over before the moment can swerve, the transient turn untrue. Forever lost (like chessmen in a labyrinth) we must impose our cartography upon this dirt, whose card-dealt corrosive tracings deny our thoroughfare thought, our dream of achieving that beckon-cathect, that act which will prove by evil increasing daily acts of horsepower steadfastness that our choice of trek was correct, since a crossroads alone can show us the way we didn't take, lunging there at right angles to our progress: its ninety degree option runs so counter to our own that it endorses the unique course we each

now ride the rims of, our souls plow-low
so none of them neither else can share
what, except for that single instance of
sidelong, that helpless avoidance, that
hurrythrough, is a solely human place.

VERTIGO

All prisons were quiet where I walked,
yet my way was limited
as buried in my tread I made rounds
that threw up barricade.
Rivers can flow with no sense of advance,
no anticipation of arc, but I must know
what my steps seek, thrust
thumbs into my belt for navigation
or find an emptiness between
the possible routes, a stay
to steer me through the faceless confetti
my mouth scatters in front.

Like kisses clocked by scars
my days were overt in their intent
to pass these words
through unison to you.
And even though the disguises by which
you have not known me
still wield flagell-eyelids
that haunt me with rainbow seepage
I have yet to mourn for signs
that I am here, and I refuse to mime
the verities that crest your view
in dread of drops.

Does my anonymous know me
or am I alone here in the night
where I guide myself down
via kite-strings.

DOLLY THE EWE FIRST CLONE OF THE WORLD

Turfcloids kicked at me by Dollyherds
are d'oh-kay, but when her sheepmates
slur my name that way it grates me,
though I know from Bill to Baa
is not so far. Distance yearns for more.

So many ways to go, no wonder
hotels converge sobbing, heaving why
why is he leaving me, I want to die—
understandably. I myself feel that way
often, I who found a bird so small

it was shed by its own feathers,
and fed it to my cat. All these wild
creatures in the world and they
have no place to stay, no ark can
hold the moult-might of their DNA,

no wonder it injects my replicant's
empties at trashcan allah horizon:
I innoculate that termongrel daily
until he has his waste's worth of it
or its pit omega-emits enough to fit

the one clone I lack the mod cons for.
The only one I'll never be anymore.
A convention of them or a conference
attended with name-tags of the extinct
is where my cage waits, kicked at by kids.

AN ORIGAMI CLOCK

Never fast, never slow, this horologue
seems to work via the exactitude
its folds embrace, a geometric
reinforcement of shapes that entwine
the present in the past, emerged
from a pulpmill, a sheet
gnarled not by lovers' meshings,
but by the origamist's fingers.
Page which is also a maze.
Book of nothing but dog-ears.
In which one reads the vertical
crease vis-a-vis the horizontal crease—
until each pried seppiece tells
our foretell to peel it deeper
like a nest which involutes
wings in tinier and tinier tucks.
Tuck tick tock, can our end
be tighter tied than this? What a twist
to the then; what a knot to the now.
Conundrum of time. Watchworks
ultrawhorled. Outward stemmed, hour
that is midmost. Day that must
be wound up daily in woundabout.
Always its paper petals are shown
tolled by the whole it introjects.

THE VINDICATION (prosepoem)

If it were only possible to launch enough satellites up, one apiece for each of us down here on earth, billions of spysats programmed to monitor us all individually, that's the important thing: that each one of us would have his or her own personal private skysat; and then, when our (our!) specially-designated sole-focussed fetish-trained mysat was finally and totally locked onto us, what secrets could we exchange with it, how confide its include codes would grow, how large its zoom would contain us: each unique DNA traced and zeroed in on to find us, to separate us out, tell us apart from all the space trash next door to us. Unfortunately that many satellites in the sky at once would form a hatchshell shield surrounding the planet like a renewal of Ptolemy's cosmos and would cut off all solar energy resulting in the pandeath of vegetation and terrestrial life itself, a small price to pay, a minor consequence aftermath of having satisfied if only for one brief interval the universal desire to go recognized, singled out and beamed upon; of having appeased our deepest need, to be known.

ASSASSIN

kiss each bullet
before you load them
so every saliva'd
shell will slurp up
during its inspired flight
some of the confetti
snowing down on
the motorcade
and will use those
alphabet bits of
newspaper or torn
campaign posters
whose false hope
peoples this parade
to compose an obituary
to collate out
of those shredded
syllables and words
those puffery lies
like a poem drawn
dada from a hat and
thereby at the end
of their satisfactory
trajectory come to
imprint some random
elegy in the flesh
of the tyrant me

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON

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

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