

TWO BOOKS:

COLLECTED SHORT
POEMS 1960-2010

and

SELECTED SYLLABIC
VERSE

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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.

BOOK ONE:
COLLECTED SHORT POEMS

INTRO

*

When I began writing back in the 1960s, the short poem was popular. That vogue soon ended, but stubbornly or stupidly I continued trying to write them.

All my poems and my short ones in particular are indebted to Robert Bly, who encouraged my early work . . .

Regretfully over the years I failed to live up to the promise that Bly and a few others thought they saw in me back then when I was young,

a failure evidenced by the fact that this book must be printed as a vanity publication.

*

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

EXAMPLE

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

PROPHECY

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

LOVELADE

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

[UNTITLED]

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

SONG

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

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

IDEAL ESTHETIC

I only keep this voice to give to anything afraid of me

MY EPITAPH

WANT
TO EARN
BIG MONEY
CARVING
TOMBSTONES?
CALL NOW
FOR DETAILS:
217 1910

Note:

unfortunately snow or grass obscures
most of the phonenummer.

PRISONER

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

GOODBYE

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

HOMEWORK

Dear boys and girls,
please don't forget to
underline my words
after you erase them.

MISANMYOPE

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

HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE

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

One in my hand,—
one in the air—
and one in you.

TO A DEAD FRIEND

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

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

DEATH

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

MESSAGE

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

AT THE CROSSROADS

The wind blows a sheet of paper to my feet.

I pick it up.

It is not a petition for my death.

FRAMEPOEM

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

SHOWER

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

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

MY FAVORITE WORD

"Attentionspan" is my favorite word
because I can never finish
reading it all the way through.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

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

VOWS

The commonplaces of
the wedding ceremony
would like to go back and marry
the proposal's florid words—
But isn't that love?

THE FATE

(for Anne-Marie Stretter)

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

WISE SAYINGS

Sitting under a tree in the forest
or under a chair in the house
wise sayings may pass by unheard
or worse may be misheard
through all these leaves and legs.

EN PASSANT

While orbiting
the earth
at a height of one millimeter
I notice
it tickles.

PENNY WISE

well alright
I grant you
he was a fascist
ahem antisemitism the
er war and all
I'm not defending them
but at least
you've got to admit
at least he
made the quatrains run on time

Note:

2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, pound foolish"—

And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time."

[UNTITLED]

The trafficlight on Lovers Leap never changes to red.

[UNTITLED]

scarecrows placed on
the airport runways
to frighten the fish
away ah if only I
were as admirably tasked

SKIRT

My hem has a snake threaded
through it to hold it down
when the wind blows and
then when the wind is still
to give it a twist of tremor.

POEM

the door is open
but the wall
which the door opens
continually waits for it
to enter

FAITH

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

TO X

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

[UNTITLED]

Before going to the palmreader I glued
mirrors to my palms, so the irrevocable
lines and configurations that told my fate
were merely reflections of the reader's eyes,
eyelashes, retinal imperfections which time
will perhaps deepen to blindness . . . I was
about to p.s. this poem also. What do you see,
O Sibyl?

SYMMETRIES

How mirrored this merging: it's like lover/loved—
The poem aligns us and aims to make our skins
Correspond, each of your pores barrel-grooved
With one of mine, clone-gunned: then void opens
Onto void, grid-ideal, union, see, it joins!
First of course the skins have to be removed.

NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

NAOMI POEM

The beach holds and sifts us through her dreaming fingers
Summer fragrances green between your legs
At night, naked auras cool the waves
Vanished
O Naomi
I kiss every body of you, every face

UP TO THE MINUTE

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

[UNTITLED]

on the one hand
but on the other hand
I rest

NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a
right where the nipple cheeps
kiss in each nest
of the black bra
hung inside your bathroom door.

THANKYOU, TANKA

Was it out of kindness
I dropped a compass
into the volcano
so the lava will know
which way to flow.

SANS

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

Grasped at or loved—

It's a cease orifice.

NAOMI POEM

When our hands are alone,
they open, like faces.
There is no shore
to their opening.

POEM

The pose heightened in desires, the pose.
The several lovers in their young arms.

MUTABILITY (Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado)

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

SLUM SCENE

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

NAOMI POEM

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

ANOTHER COLD WAR POEM

So what if you lived only
One second longer
Than we
Did: to us
You will always be known as the Survivor.

RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS

The centuries like barges have floated
out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged,
but to be unloaded.

Note:

See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last poem of 'The Poems of Yurii Zhivago,' the verse supplement to Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*.

(POEM) (CHICAGO) (1967)

If you remember this poem after reading it
Please go to Lincoln Park the corner of Dickens Street and sit
On the bench there where M. and I kissed one night for
a few minutes
It was wonderful even if you forget

BANG BANG GLUB GLUB

My ark/my life's-boat
had two of everything
necessary for salvation
with the exception
of two bullet-holes
in its bottom hull.

RECAP

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

UNTITLED

Unscarred unscratched
Unnicked as the bottom
Of the lost wishingwell.

POEM

See the unicorn's empty sword,
how its lack takes place
in a lack of place.

Nothingness is its own niche.

FRAGMENT

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

PHOLK POEM

The soup is lumpy.

Well then, pour it out.

The soup is lumpy.

Well, pour it out then!

The soup is lumpy, the potato soup.

ALAS

yes I allow each fool
to toss around my skull
but remember I tell
them remember it will
finally always land
in Hamlet's hand

AT THE MUSEUM THIS WEEK

Poland Through The Centuries a touring
Exhibition of maps drawn
By German and Russian cartographers reveals
There never was a Poland.

QUICKIE

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

HISTORY

Hope . . . goosestep.

[UNTITLED]

Photographs—
lightningbolts which,
their shadows having caught up with them,
perish.

POEM

The dead paperweight rests
on my lips, occurring to me
like a cry from the words it
has crushed: think of what it
saves from scattering minds
and windows' wind-drafts,
think of all the blink-wafts
of Argus trying to read this.

POEM

Doesn't each tree throw
its shade to show
boundary to the others'
thirsting thrust?
Only the roots are brothers;
the roots are the forest.

TO COMPLETE

last one in the sentence is a rotten old period

SEANCE

Around the readiest table
a manicurist with a hammer
nails in place all hands together
to hold the ring of our focus clung

and keep this communion open:
like jousling airliners the dead
must circle before they land
along the medium's tongue.

[UNTITLED]

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

HOLISTIC

Before eating the cherries
I pinched my cheeks
to get in tune, in tint—

OLD JOKE FROM THE TED & SYL SHOW

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

ANOTHER RESURRECTION

God sucks off tombstones
until they cum, the soul
up from its finest gloryhole
gushers across His tongue—

Only the premature flesh
(for the last time/eternally)
is left to detumescence, just
another BJ, another JC.

POEM

My cheeks threw themselves as fuel
into the fire of the kiss and then in
succession the rest flesh bone all
features flowed thusward until my
entire body was gone burned away
in the flue space that held between
two mouths turned ash the heart
or hearth that cannot last the night.

[UNTITLED]

each a prey to self's salt
though impervious to sea's
mermaids must never weep
their tears would rust erode
their scales their souls

[UNTITLED]

Fucking; nightcrawlers smashing my anonymous.

JUNK

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

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

HAIKU

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

STUMPED

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

CONTRIVANCE

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

PRISONER EXCHANGE

After I replace the bars of the cage with my bones and
replace the bones of my body with the bars,
will I have escaped?

[UNTITLED]

A nose surrounded
by a flaw—
hark, that's my face

DIRECTIONS

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

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

his hand tugged upward,
disappearing
in salutations.

WRONG

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

[UNTITLED]

Nothing could be born if there didn't
already exist a metaphor for it, or if
the whole world wasn't a metaphor for
the non-existence of this nothing, this
none-too-future something.

POEM

The most private part of the clock is the hour,
no, I mean the minute,
or wait, the forever.

The most private part of me is the heart,
no, I mean the nipple,
or wait, the never.

OR NOT TO BE

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

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

[UNTITLED]

Some have a bodied voice
Their tongue its skeleton
Mine's a wraith
Waiting for a wind

KNOT (Hendecasyllabics)

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

THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest
so that all who approach me
can see themselves
and respond appropriately.

PUTATIVE POEM FROM SAMURAI ERA

he made a haiku
before his blade took my head
why not a tanka
tanka would have let me live
fourteen syllables longer

HUMIDITY'S TONES

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

NIGHT THOUGHT

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

MY RIVER

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

NOTE

After Cocteau wrote in his journal that "Beauty limps" he did not go out and break his leg.

PARANOID THOUGHT

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

PAST FUTURE

Idly wondering
if the underlined items
in one's itinerary
are more likely
to occur.

Ditto diary.

TYPE-CAST

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

STRANGLEHOLD

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

OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down
Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown
Another course for us

FEARS (CONT.)

niche niche niche niche
the birds go seeking a covert

eclipse eclipse eclipse eclipse
my shadow hides behind the sun

this this this this
every corner finds a crevice to keep

wish wish wish wish
the oldest word pacifies the youngest infant

THE GETAWAY

It's 1969—and I'm

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

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

TRIP

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

STORMFORM

All the lines of this poem
would like to contain
the sound of the rain
against my windowpane,
but I'm going to have it remain
here.

FOOTNOTE

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

from A BACHELOR'S TANKA

copulation entries in the diary there are none
I'll never have a daughter or a son
no woman wants my wrong to go on

[UNTITLED]

so here I am
if truth be told
feeble and lame
either febrile or cold
senile-years-old

CHANGE

Why don't the ranks in a marathon
carry little piggybanks, and listen

to the coins clank around as they run:
wouldn't that be an encouraging sound?

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

WHAT I SAID

Humor is banned in hyena heaven.

[UNTITLED]

are there some
invulnerabilities too
hard to bear perhaps
the bulletproof vest
stabs itself in secret

'QUOTE UNQUOTE'

Who wrote that we use our children to forget
the size of our parents, or is that really
a quote? And if it isn't, and if I forget
to write it, does that mean that someone will—

But what if someone forgets to write the words
that bring me here, that let me be born?
Oh micro-mini-soul, you, my shirking ego,
your quotemarks would just hang there in the air

like wings without a bird.

MAY EAGLES GUARD YOUR GRAVE!

The weird thing is,
I can't remember if the above
is a phrase I read or heard somewhere,
or if I wrote it myself.
(And, is it a blessing, or a curse?)

DAYS

Ceilings ring with morning's occasions;
but evening's toll us to the floor.

[UNTITLED]

I beg myself bare
I cry my knees
For a penny please
A share

[UNTITLED]

in case it forgot
was the apple not
reminded to rot
before being put
into Eve's hand

POST

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

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

have to suck the brains
out of if no food remains

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

AUDIENCE

Murderous the fist
of their paws condemns
us all to die of applause:
in this circus minimus
even Coriolanus must
nurse and gnaw and showcase
his scars when the next
closeup comes.

DEAR ADVICE COLUMNIST

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

[UNTITLED]

only when
the welcome-mat is
exactly centered
at its core
can a labyrinth
begin

ANCIENT MEASURES

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

TO X

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

MY LIFE BY ME

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

HAIR POEM

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

ALTERNATE FATES

What if right in
the middle of a battle
across the battlefield the wind
blew thousands of
lottery tickets, what then?

PERFECTION

Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids

3 A.M.

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

POEM TO POETRY

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

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

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

THE THIRST

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

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

TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine
of thumbs revs
and purrs—

Oh:
I am all
fingers now.

2. [Plus ça change . . .]

When young
I was attracted to what they call
Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women.

BEDDYBYE

Just hope that when you lie down your toes are a firing-squad

I SHOULD HOPE SO

Next year when this book is
pulped and the pulp recycled to
print your Collected Poems, will I
still be here still writing this?

SECURITY

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

POEM

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

SLEEP

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

POEM

All my soapbubbles dance on daggerpoint.
I throw dice while jacking off and cum snake-eyes.
Where there are twins one is wearing a mask.
My enemies list consists of nothing but autographs.

[UNTITLED]

that poem I was working on in 1959
and the half-done one-act play from 1969
the novel I spent 1979 starting
the painting I made sketches for throughout 1989
and the website I planned to debut 1999
are around here somewhere
maybe I should
 finish them up today

WHERE

are the arrows that
bear bandages instead
of feathers at
their ends

OCCUPATION

Error is everywhere,
but one might hope
that the graves of surveyors
would at least be dug
the correct distance apart.

POEM!

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

POEM

Night, in whose death did your ennui take refuge?
The women all lay their kerchiefs on the water, and
stepped back.

POEM

The brow is the face's map,
on which can be read
the twists and turns it took
to get here. Yet the seams
and cracks on one's footsoles
show that only through detour
can the road reach itself.

WHAT ABOUT PENS?

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

LOVE, HATE, LIFE, DEATH, MAMA, WATER, ETC.

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

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

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

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

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

MINOR POEM

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

HOLY SHIT

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

Note:

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

THE FINAL WORD

Our farewells lack the plausibility of our departures.

STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers
and creeks of lightning
till thunder
split my covers

and down I drowned
lung by lung
to a stone
of salt the cows licked.

TANKATOWN

This island has
Been discovered by a great explorer,
But fortunately,
News of the discovery
Has not reached here yet.

BREAKFAST

You know how I like my dawns god— 'll
Just tap off this nubei-pink 'n' 'n'
Call yuh call
 That a 3 minute dawn?!!

You need a new timer old timer

POEM

The amputation of
my stilts has left
me leveled, eye
to eye with what
should have been
cut off, myself.

ADULTERER WITH NO MOUTH AMUSES WORLD*

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

* Newspaper misprint

THE RUINS-READER

I-beams uphold that wall—
You-beams bolster me: guess
Which one is going to fall.

[UNTITLED]

I tried but
they wouldn't let me put
tombstones on
the merrygoround
for a ride

EVICTIVE

If the body is a house,
eventually that house
pushes us
from its rooms
out
onto its ledges.

Age must live on a ledge.

COURSE

Our ship needs wheels
to sail across these
waves of stone if
Medusa is our
figurehead.

[UNTITLED]

Nakedness exists only an instant—
Quickly becomes flesh, becomes thought:
The night is a torch of comas . . .

[UNTITLED]

As a detail in a painting
frames that painting in
the often memory,
so, for me, your face is
surrounded by your eyes. Aura!

INTERRUPTUS

Wait. What are you.
I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like:
I love you.
Alright. Continue.

[UNTITLED]

Once I had to leave you so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you'd think I was caressing you—

THE AMNESIAC'S NAME

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

POEM

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

WEIGHED

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

THE TENTATIVES

If the arrow is merely
An elongated bullseye

Do I know this head
(Target that grins and winks)

Like mine surrounded
By eye speedbreaks

[UNTITLED]

Searching it goes,
alone at night,
—my beacon of ashes.

A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY

Here for ear-rings my lobes
Are pierced by scythes
Whose handletips bump along
The very ground I despise!

[UNTITLED]

trying to find the name
five letters first letter J
of an ancient prophet
or god which I need
to complete my cross
word puzzle and
my cross

SIC TRANSIT

Tangentially
 the sun
unites itself in us,
 forged
by our transparency
 into
another shadow
 to avert
one's eyes from.

[UNTITLED]

They wandered through the hand in hand.

ODD

Hard rhymes of childhood ride
me back to lack's kitchen

in which it's leftovers again:
from the cyclops cupboard

I plop another half-ate
Ulysses onto my plate.

ENLIGHTENMENT OR SENILITY?

The night is paced with stars
Day spaced by birds' wings
At last the spread of things
Has replaced my particulars

[UNTITLED]

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

FLAWLESS

Mopbucket toed across a jeweled floor.

To scrub down between these gemstuds is hard,
and yet I have to cleanse every dust-shard
that might perturb the great ones who walk here.

Only rubies diamonds pearls and other
beautifuls can their bare soles encounter.

[UNTITLED]

Check out the Obituaries—each
day there's another page and
guess what, those fucks,
there's nobody on it but us.

METAPHOR VS. METONYMY

As the hand carries on the function of the
sleeve to a somewhat absurd degree, so you
could take over for me if we ever finish
this sentence, whose period is its cufflink.

VISION

moon of all means
sun of all ends

the TV screens
whatever day

or night sends
me away

SUMMER DAYS

a butterfly with a sandwich
bite out of one wing flies away
from the inhabitoads of our shadow
or tries to

[UNTITLED]

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

LUST

The parachutist wearing stilts so long they reach the ground
Wants
To jump anyway.

SNAGGYPOO SNUGGUMS POEM

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

FINALS

My classmates
wrote the answers
on my skin in
invisible ink then
during the Test
set fire to me

They passed
I passed away

PROGRESS

I advance a few whines,
then am driven back
twice as many whimpers.

WINTER SUN

Full-stop, period, dot,
erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote
clouds our breath with words.

THEIRTOWN

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

TRY ME ON FOR SIZE

My head is put on and taken off
by one thought after another doffed,
although strangely it seems to fit
none of them. And yet somehow it
never goes out of style, that hat.

[UNTITLED]

the past and the future
are my parents
meeting for the first time
when I die

[UNTITLED]

now that I die
my past becomes as endless
as my future used to be

[UNTITLED]

Eternity gnaws its thirst.
Its tusked planets rut suns raw.
Its grapes mist the sea.
But sleep flows to the fallen.

MAYBE (TO X)

a stopsign stranded
in a sea of cacti
won't grow needles
maybe but then

even I take on some
characteristics
of human when
I'm with you

[UNTITLED]

Silence disguises itself
as vowels, but the loudness
of consonants is also a ruse,
a mask worn to betray
the words we chose to say
only for their echoes.

[UNTITLED]

a jet zooming by
may see climbers on a cliff
and never know if
those souls ascend or descend—
to the fast slow has no end

[UNTITLED]

The shorter the poem the
longer the words.
The shorter the poem the
more endless it must be.

[UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands
with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced
to secondchild. My skin is
smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure
my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

31 SYLLABLES

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

PAINTING VS. POETRY

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

FOOTNOTE TO CAVAFY

Sure hope them barbarians
Will allow us to pay them
To take photographs of them
Before they slaughter us.

BAD HABIT

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

[UNTITLED]

mute/hard
forboden
words
line the mountain
down which we melt—
stones that wore our
trickle tongues away

LESSON

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

ESCAPE PLAN

I examine
my skin

searching for
the pore

with EXIT
over it

BASH (ten versions of *furuike ya*)

If I were a pond
and some frog jumped into me
I wouldn't respond.

I am a pond but
when a frog gets intimate
I keep my mouth shut.

I may look like scum
but some frogs can poke this pond
to orgasm come.

This pond is so old
even its frogs want it sold
to build the new road.

This pond is old as
me. That's how bad-off it is.
Frog-visits, I doze.

You're old, pond—the same
as me. But when your frogs come
you recall each name.

This pond is year-scored
as me. But frogs that shake it
up just make me bored.

I'll float in this pond,
fearing each frog that jumps down
will wash me aground.

This pond is old too—
But when a frog jumps into
It, it still sounds new.

This pond is dead earth
But listen to its rebirth
When frogs take a bath.

FURU YOU, EEKY YA

*

Ya, the old wash-hole—
wait-a-fuck—a frog?—oh, no!—
goes splasho Basho.

*

Ya, the old North Pole
where Santa Frog (ho-hop-ho)
chops a splashin'-hole!

*

Ya, old-boys brothel—
watch Oscar Wilde get Basho
to wet his tadpole.

*

Ya, here's to Basho!—
there's one frog-boozin' dude you
should raise your glass to.

*

Whoa, Ranger Basho!
frog-herd's at the water-hole—
leggo your lasso.

POEMPATH: PERIOD

Each syllable
a steppingstone
till you stumble
on this one.

EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

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

[UNTITLED]

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

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 clerics may disagree
with me, but look, see every galaxy
sneak out the back, starcase in hand?

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.

MOVIE-Q's

*

Ben Lyons was typically blunt
in *I Cover the Waterfront*—
his cute co-star Claudette Colbert
could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

*

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman
is not a film appeals to everyone—
but I, I like the way it feels, I guess,
to have a whole town look up my dress.

*

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney
he was loved, and loved sincerely,
Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty.
The flick? *Night and the City*.

*

*Those Incredibly Strange Creatures Who
Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies* blew
my mind, man. Like wow! (—Was I crazy? Was I sick?
Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

*

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of the first one
by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon:
its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean
vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the
screen.

*

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo—
and Elton John played a song or so—
and Ann-Margaret played his mommy—
but *who* the hell else was in *Tommy*?

*

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum
Watching that transmuted geek Jeff Goldblum
Rip off his own ear and eat it? *The Fly* was great!
(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped *that* off, and ate?)

*

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God,
seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of *Panther Squad*
—auteur divine, Sybil Danning—opt to not go topless!
(Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

*

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore
To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der *Grand Hotel*.

*

It's a crime shame that that scene where
Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair
and then put on her dress and licked her thighs
got like totally cut out of *Shanghai Surprise*.

*

*

Note: I don't know if the Movie-Q constitutes a form per se,
but I made up some rules for it: the complete name of the film
must appear within a quatrain rhymed AABB. The Movie-Q must
try to be funny, or piquant, or pointed. Etc., etc., though
actually I can't think of any more rules.

POEM FOR NOW

I live bent over now
like pages folded down
in books, the ones
I meant to get back to
but won't.
These are my dog-ear years.
What I write now
will never
be read again.

[UNTITLED]

perhaps I still wake up

I still live perhaps

but I hope

I hope I do it for sloppiness sake

POEM

The thumb is
the scoop of the hand
and often
it empties it.

Tongue
head
ditto.

GYPTIAN

architect of the Sphinx
must have sketched his first plan
knelt down with a finger
to draw lines in the sand—
isn't that how he began?

AND SO ON

suicide sex it's so much fun
you take 3/4ths of a fatal dose
and then fuck till you pass out
you cunnil her or fellate him
while they slit their wrists and
then you call 911 and so on

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover.

LOW-ROOT THOUGHT

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

SUMMIT

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

[UNTITLED]

The snowman's luggage
is always enroute.

INTHREADABLE

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

[UNTITLED]

mirror smashed in a snowfall—
the flakes will find each face
like themselves to be unique
as long as it remains lost
in the blizzard of shards

WAS

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

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

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

POEM

Even when the roads are empty,
even at night, the stopsign
tells the truth.

WORSE

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

[UNTITLED]

having found a penny
atop a weed's aureole
however it got there
is it wrong of me to look
for bucks on roses

[UNTITLED]

someone's lost handkerchief pinned
on our community bulletinboard
and I thought to just touch it
just touch it that's all honest
I wouldn't have done anything else

[UNTITLED]

clearly
my eyeglasses
need cleaning but
but I wasn't looking
at anything

IMPOLITE

in the conference den
impolite to strain one's neck
past all the faces talking
to read what someone left
scribbled on the wall

IN VAIN

I like to look at myself in the dull gold
of the frames that contain erotic paintings
and, as I gaze, ask, as if I cared,
"Will moonlit lashes continue
to surround sunlit eyes?"

WISH I COULD (*AND DO IT IN 31 SYLLABLES*)

like someone whose quick
halt in the midst of traffic
to check his wrist makes
him late for that appointment—
that's how to think about death

[UNTITLED]

the sixth sense is
what the first five use
to delude us into thinking
that all we do here is
see hear touch taste smell

THE TRINITY

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

THE COMMUTER'S DREAM

Every morning an afterdinner mint
dissolves around us. In it, cars touch,

like tiny hands at a football huddle—
headlights. Rush-hour pushes through mist

or dark its stubborn, pre-peekaboo path;
a worm fed into a pencil-sharpener.

TOWERS

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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

4 TRANSVERSIONS OF GOETHE'S *WANDERERS*
NACHTLIED II

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

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

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

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

THE CYCLE

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

[UNTITLED]

in the hand's cup
the palm is
an irreducible drop
a shrunken gnosis
no one can drink up

MINUS

For time to consist of me,
it would have to halt.
And space, if it wanted to exist of me,
empty.

I forget the other dimensions—

but whatever they are, they
must cease as I
to be me.

THE WOULD BE NONCHALANT

I try to shrug it off, but when my shoulders poke themselves up
to form the shrug they get stuck, and I slump down trapped
inbetween these shoulder-peaks; so I live in the valley of a
shrug, in its perpetual shadow.

TROTH

if you drew a string through
the entwined fingers of lovers
might it come out all knots
which would then in theory right
be too tight to be untied

BOTHERSOME

what's that clatter-clack a jack
in the box having a heart attack

open him up crack the seal
but if we let the poor guy out we'll

just have to close him in again
and this time with a coffin

so let's save an hour or a minute
and bury his self with him in it

FLAKE TAKES

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

Like truth
the snowflakes peek
from behind a veil.

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

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

UNSPEAKABLE

A comma is a period which leaks.

TWO CRIMES

1
poem/accomplice
distracting your
attention for
a second or
is it hours
while I pick
and pick
your pocket's
flowers

2
the holdup went down
as the clockhands show
at 1:55 so
I refused to stick em up
because I never no
I never mime
time

[UNTITLED]

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

SHUT FLIGHT

the knob's the head
the hinges open-spread
would make wings

but see the keyhole
like an eye that seeks
its beak

why does
the doorbird leave its nest
only when it's closed

VALUE

the weapons I purchased
didn't finish off the fascists

the love I sold my own for
did not put paid to them either

why'd I never think to try
whatever it was I got free

NOT THIS WAY

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

LEAD

If I could fill these lines
up with pencils instead
of letters I would. Less

metaphor meaning or
superstition might adhere
to those writing-sticks

than this. Let the tool be
a substitute for the work;
the eraser for the point.

POEM

Here in town the sound
of bells must compete with
me for room, but out
over the waves can zoom
alone. Across the sea
bells travel unimpededly.

SAY TO SAY

Say ten snowflakes light on your fingertips,
one on each, the ten snowflakes that match
your ten fingerprints in pattern the most,
the closest it's possible to get and yet remain
a similie, since similies like M-and-M's melt
not in your hand but in your mouth say.

IN ORDER

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

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

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

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

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

[UNTITLED]

Long candle, ponder, short candle, think.

A MEDIUM TO DOUBTERS

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

[UNTITLED]

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

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.

[UNTITLED]

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

STRUNG

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

THE SAME WITH POEMS

When you set the table you want to
place the knives and forks and napkins
so perfectly, so alignedly, that everyone
will hesitate to pick them up, to break
the symmetry. The food should rot
while the diners gaze down dazed.

DISCRIMINATION

Although not lab-test verified,
I would guess that the pages of porno
magazines turn yellow and crumble
from the sperm shot onto them
faster than the poems in my books
turn yellow and crumble from
the saliva spat at them by readers—
or is it a fallacy on my part to assume
that the products of love are always
more acidic, more corrosive
than the products of loathing?

SIMILE FROM THE PAST

When a felon was condemned to die
they would place a black cloth upon
the white wig of the judge before
he pronounced that sentence high—

And that heritage is what this page
shows, words, words in their fatality,
solemnly lowered in curt characters,
whose bald ink declares me guilty.

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.

IN PASSING

in an opaque ocean
the transparent fish
reflect each other

WEBSTERS OFFICIAL ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN POETRY

doesn't exist. But
if it did, they wouldn't
put me in it.

SEE

in the country
of the blind everyone
points at me

INSCRIBE

sex is tracing paper of murder
so let me lie under you
when you do it

HAIKU IN H

that cloud overhead
has a hundred places to go
and none of them here

PRIVATE SCREENING

My soul fell asleep
during the beautiful part
of the mirror, leaving
my body
to watch it alone.

HOUSE AND HOLDMATES

how long these two
lived between each other
in a perfect renting
of me and you

FETE

at summerfest
I think of the mallet
the crematory uses
to graniate
the harder bones

EMBRACE

the problem with the end is
that you have to start reaching
out for it beforehand and often
your arms find themselves filled
with the penultimate instead

HERE

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

BREAKFAST RHYMES

I suspect the obverse of this cereal
box is blank and that all the colorful
imagery on this side would vanish too
if I turned its cardboard 180.

UNEARTHED TO EARTH

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

WOULD IT KILL YOU

Desiring your love I am
like a mendicant asking
an angel for a feather,
uncertain if what he
requests is nothing much or
too much, something that
would never be missed
or something vital—

*

whoa angel lend me a feather
got a match to light it with
cool puff puff PUFF oh my
god is this what they mean
when they say you're *on high*

[UNTITLED]

you wake up only when
the dream you're having
can no longer come true

you wake up only when
it's the same old you again
and not that dream person

you wake up in suspense
at what will happen next in
the dream that just ended

EMPTY

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

[HAIKU]

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

[UNTITLED]

high over the event
how the cliff laughs
at the dour devotion
of its abyss

[UNTITLED]

hope the mortician
remembers to put
mothballs in my pockets

(FROM GOETHE'S *WANDERERS NACHTLIED II*)

Hear the hilltops lapse
Until each copse of trees
Drops so still that there
Is scarcely an air
Left for the birds to share
Their songs: slowly, by degrees,
Like you the forest stops.
Where is this place? Nowhere.
Tear up your maps.

SENIOR DISCOUNT

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

STURM UNSTRUNG

storm performer: see its tree-toss rage,
like a pianist's hairdo soliciting bravo;
can wind-cringed powerlines engage
the debut of this ever-new virtuoso—
weather is the prodigy of every stage

A COUPLE MORE "MOVIE-Q'S"

*

Casting, like ripeness, is all: and thus the Dantean vision of love that moves *Basic Instinct 2* improves on 'BS One' by removing all moviestars save that heaven-own Sharon Stone. (Which leaves just me and Her up there on the screen, alone.)

*

Basic Instinct . . . what a waste to cast Dorothy Malone: she's just lost in the young star-geist of that Sharon Stone, so stone-perfect for her role as an ice-pick dildo— oh! my '50s-favorite Dot's got stuck with a bit-part cameo.

[UNTITLED]

Helplessly the clock's hands fail
to cleanse its numerals as they pass,
to wipe away the jealous glances
and fretful glares of our daily vigil,
our fears and doubts, whose dust
will come to filthy time at last.

EXCURSIONS

1

have you ever swallowed
a sinkplug and drowned

has someone pulled your navel
till laughter gurgled down

2

let's go buy a roundtrip ticket
to the maze today

oh wait a ticket to the maze
is always one-way

APPENDIX

This one was published in Robert Bly's anthology of short poems, "The Sea and the Honeycomb" (1971) . . .

I don't really think it worth inclusion here, but I defer to him—

[UNTITLED]

On nights like this the heart journeys to other islands.
Beaches rise and dance naked under moonlight.
Inland, asleep, you see
The stone face of your solitude being piled slowly.

*

BOOK TWO:
SELECTED SYLLABIC VERSE

INTRO NOTES

*

I've done many syllabic poems over the years.

In addition to all my other faults as a poet, I have a tin-ear and no skill in writing metrically . . .

It's that particular shortcoming which led to this counting and curtailing of lines as a means of measure.

Many if not all of these are rhymed—

Elizabeth Daryush in her 'Note on Syllabic Metres' advises:

"Rhyme is almost indispensable, but since it can be unaccented need be neither over-obvious nor monotonous."

*

I think my interest in syllabics began when I started writing sonnets—they seemed to demand a rigor I was not capable of, and in my need for a work-method of composition, I found that restricting each line to ten syllables often helped the process. This became a deliberate strategy at times.

So probably most of the syllabic poems I've written are sonnets, some of which are included in this selection.

*

Where there are variant lines, I note them.

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.

(octosyllabic, with a variant last line)

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

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.

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.

(decasyllabics, line 12 variant)

31 SYLLABLES

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

(tanka)

EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

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

(decasyllabic)

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.

(octosyllabic)

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.

OCTNOV AGAIN

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

To present the godsend, the great last gifts
Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget
The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed—
(Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare,
Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow
Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains,
We crave our carton, not what it contains.)

(decasyllabics)

TO MYSELF

Poetry
can be
the magic
carpet

which you say
you want,
but only
if you

stand willing
to pull
that rug out

from under
your own
feet, daily.

(alternating trisyllabic/bisyllabic, with a variant last stanza which reverses the pattern of this weave to trip up the toe a sprawl or two)

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff
most parents splurge on the average kid,
orphans, I submit, need more than enough;
in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid
the tree where sparkling allotments yearly
guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed:
(did each boy there feel the same denials?)
to share my pals' tearing open their piles
meant sealing the self, the child that wanted
to scream at all You stole those gifts from me;
whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists
they'd made us write out in May lay granted
against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

(decasyllabic)

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.

(octosyllabics)

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?

(decasyllabics)

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 and 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

(octosyllabics)

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.

(decasyllabics)

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).

(hendecasyllabic, with a variant last line)

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.

(decasyllabics)

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!"

(octosyllabics)

RODIN'S THINKER (pentasyllabics)

To reduce my thought
to none is my aim
to spite the trite name
that bit chisel brought

me knee elbow bound
thick fist to forehead
pedestal pasted
niched on no good ground.

Even Rilke was
caught by the craft craze
of this forger, this

make god. May steeples
hoist up our pure souls
to people their walls.

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.

(decasyllabics)

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.

(octosyllabics)

ADMASS

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

of space debris, moonspat asteroid
magi orbit-site 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 witchburn-bright that tailsphere
nails our night with its sales pitch Christ Here.

(Enneasyllabics, line 13 variant.)

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand
On top of our Capitol's highest highrise,
Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore
 themselves,
Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands
A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust
Doled out to me each day by our State, by you
The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there
And being thus empowered begin to pour
The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms
Bare, please note that length of project will vary
Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in 'The Origin of the Work of Art.'

(Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.)

TEMPTROUSSEAU

The clock is dressed in drag, I mean it wears
space instead of its own proper aspect—
but if it wore *time*, would it disappear—
isn't visibility an effect

of transvestism, that shield/pastime whose
crosscausal aim unmask the eye: must you
assume the costume of the other to
be here, to present the sense with an ess . . .

Narcissus saw his guise decked out all ruse,
but if there were none, what would our true clothes
consist of, our rig rags, our regalia—

Whose dapper element dons us: Einstein's
continuum, or Flaubert's confidence
that come the same the Bovary c'est Moi?

(decasyllabics)

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.

(dodecasyllabics)

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—?

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?

(decasyllabics)

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

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

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

(decasyllabics)

A MEDIUM TO DOUBTERS

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

(hexasyllabics, line 7 variant)

WISH I COULD (*AND DO IT IN 31 SYLLABLES*)

like someone whose quick
halt in the midst of traffic
to check his wrist makes
him late for that appointment—
that's how to think about death

(tanka)

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.

(decasyllabics)

PUTATIVE POEM FROM SAMURAI ERA

he made a haiku
before his blade took my head
why not a tanka
tanka would have let me live
fourteen syllables longer

(tanka)

KNOT (Hendecasyllabics)

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

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.

(decasyllabics, with two variant lines: 9 and 14)

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

(decasyllabics, with a variant last line)

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.)

Spurts of rhyme, suicide-sparse
For obvious sake. Because

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

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

(there is one variant line here—perhaps you noticed
it?—

:

"silly syllabic sets of rows" . . .)

MIDDAY WORKBREAK (after Montale)

Lunch to forget the morning's sweat
Against a wall along whose top
Broken glass has been set to stop
Thieves' incursions: sit back and let

Each limb find ease in dream beyond
A rest-time undisturbed by cries
From highest nests when summer tries
To place entire its days upon

The hour we swelter in down here—
Even those nearest earth, the ants,
Even they can't span more distance,
Or map one noon-nap's short career:

None of us can orienteer
The maze sun sees in that mirror
This wall uplifts in rifts of shards
Wherein our lives all labor towards
Their end and never quite get there.

(octosyllabics)

POEM

You'd have us compare madness in a glass
and then for contrast's sake strike one face from
that frame, one name off that list just to see
who's left. But all the asylum I am,

that whole alpha-non-grata of heads torn
from the page can't disengage your veil slur
stare where I sit, I wait, I browse my state,
I collate these collected offlurks of.

To attain the state each stark strives for, all
that sill is unevolved, a thumbless clone
halfway home, desiring these threshold scenes
be furthest strand. These never near at hand.

To die in a once sense, once in a sense.
My necktie longs to rise and tongue my brow.

(decasyllabics)

OFFENSE OF THE MIST (hendecasyllabics)

Stamp inside my bathroom mirror the flesh steams
Pout with desire that must fade awake to find
Adonises never fairer fauned than mine
Whose handsomeness waits just wisps away it seems

To him shivering over the sheenshed glass
Or is he sheer suppressing the emergence
Of many gods who would have succored presence
Once affront such fallen minor forms unless

The vapor kissing my razorblade purepours
Sure its shorebank will brook no pollutant face
Unlookly as this streamyfaux Narcissus
If gendered beauty can fountain up more source

Cognizant as such should any boy grown old
Still feel his tepid taps run their course to cold.

Afternote to "Selected Syllabic Verse":

My next to last theoretically-real book (as opposed to my vanity volumes) was reviewed

or rather reviled in the Washington Post by MacArthur Genius Fellow Edward Hirsch . . .

he drubbed me top to bottom:

of his many condescending scorns and insults,

one in particular sticks in my mind—

as if to suggest that my heinous habit/pathetic practice of writing in syllabics

was indeed an ultimate folly, the worst sin of all,

Hirsch sneeringly noted that, quote,

"Knott is a syllable-counter."

(Poets schooled in the tried-and-trite verities of Romanticism are of course suspicious of any form which is not "organic.")

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