

"[Bill Knott's] poems are so naive that the question of their poetic quality hardly arises. . . . Mr. Knott practices a dead language." — Denis Donoghue, *New York Review of Books*, May 7, 1970

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

—Charles Molesworth, *Poetry Magazine*, May 1972

"[Bill] Knott's work tends today to inspire strong dismissal. . . . [He's] been forced to self-publish some of his recent books. . . . [B]ad—not to mention offensively grotesque—poetry. . . . appalling . . . maddening . . . wildly uneven . . . adolescent, or obsessively repetitive . . . grotesqueries . . . [His] language is like thick, old paint . . . his poems have a kind of prickly accrual that's less decorative than guarded or layered . . . emotionally distancing . . . uncomfortable. Knott . . . is a willful . . . irritating . . . contrarian." —Meghan O'Rourke, *Poetry Magazine*, Feb 2005

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

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

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

—Michael Heffernan, *Midwest Quarterly*, Summer 1973

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

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

"Bill Knott's poems are . . . rhetorical fluff . . . and fake." —Ron Loewinsohn, *TriQuarterly*, Spring 1970

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

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

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

—Stephen Burt, *NY Times Book Review*, November 21, 2004

"[Bill Knott is] incompetent . . . " —Alicia Ostriker, *Partisan Review* (date? 1972?)

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

—Peter Stitt, *Georgia Review*, Winter 1983

"Bill Knott [is] the crown prince of bad judgment." —Ron Silliman, *Silliman's Blog*, June 26, 2007

"[Bill Knott is] a malignant clown."

—Christopher Ricks, *The Massachusetts Review*, Spring 1970

"Bill Knott should be beaten with a flail."

—Tomaz Salamun, *Snow*, 1973

UNCOLLECTED  
POEMS

/

BILL KNOTT

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

\*

This is a catch-all collection—

These older poems are not included in any of the other current volumes in this series of vanity publications.

(If there are any duplications, I apologize—proofing is such a difficult process!)

\*

The order is random, neither thematic nor chronological.

For me, every poem is a "one off"—

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

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

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

\*

## RIGOR VITUS

I walk  
On human stilts.  
To my right lower leg a man is locked rigid;  
To the left a woman, lifelessly strapped.

I have to heave them up,  
Heft them out and but they're so heavy (heavy as head)  
Seems all my strength  
Just take the begin step—

All my past to broach a future. And on top of that,  
They're not even dead,  
Those ol' hypocrites.  
They perk up when they want to, they please and  
    pleasure themselves,

It's terrible. The one consolation:  
When they make love,  
To someone who's far or close enough away appears it  
    appears then  
Like I'm dancing.

## LIFER (AKA "HAPPY BIRTHDAY")

our prisoner  
has received a package  
containing a cake  
which of course he thinks  
must conceal a file  
or a hacksaw-blade  
and starts  
to dig down into

actually however  
his salvation  
his way out  
his escape route  
has been carefully laid out  
in brightcolored frosting  
over darker frosting

the crucial message  
the delicate pinkly lettering  
overlooked  
unheeded  
falls shredded apart now  
by his hopeful search

## SAY WHEN

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

## BEST WAY TO KEEP YOUR ANKLES AWAKE? SNAKE SHOELACES

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

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

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

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

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

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

## from MORE TIPS FOR TEENS

Another fun date for you and your guy is to go down to the Marriage Licence Bureau at City Hall: Get in line, get your application form, then sit at one of the nearby tables with the other couples who are busy filling out their applications. Now comes the fun part of the date: looking at the parade of kooky couples who are getting hitched. They're unbelievable! Mismatched is no word for it: short ones with tall ones, fat ones with thin ones, old with young, all the weirdest combinations you could think of. It's the funniest show in town! When you and your date's sides ache from laughing and you're ready to go — pretend to have an argument. Scream louder and louder at each other until everyone in the whole Marriage Licence Bureau room is looking at you. Then your guy should stand up, rip up his application form, throw it down on the table, and run out "in a huff." Then you just throw your face down on the table and pretend to sob your heart out. Rejoin your beau outside and you both can say you've had a really unique date. P.S.: This will also let *him* know where the Marriage Bureau is when the time comes for him to pop that certain question to you!

## THROWBACKS

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

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

I want to take my place in your life so  
I go with you everywhere. Once I used  
To accompany myself, I had a passport to the xerox,  
The unanimous aimed its initials at me on the run,  
When my died my clones were laid out at the funeral  
Beside me, then a heckler who's amnesiac, anybody, some  
Forever stranger was blindfolded and led past the coffins to

See if they could get the right I by feel but failed  
And so their life was took in place, and so I took your life  
As place, so I must now keep placing your life in take,

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

## THE I DID

One memory from childhood  
how when it was summer and hot  
at ground level where I stood  
above me I saw the tops of trees  
palpitating in a proper breeze

that never came down to ease me.  
I can't say I swan why I remember  
what it is that makes it linger or  
else enriches such a significant  
nor could I see it now if I went

on a breathless day and looked up  
I would not be far enough away  
physically for the contrast: memory  
needs that distance for its truth  
to swerve from the present's path.

Is it right to hold the past fixed in  
former attitudes like tops of trees  
or whatever it is records history's  
external focus switched to days  
depictions drawn by winds upon

clouds or branches flexing wide  
their leisure of purpose pause  
from the hell of here. Sight cannot  
even in summer when it is hot  
share the airs enjoyed by the eyed.

## SNUFFED

The candle's leaf  
is what we call those drops  
that cling solidified  
up along its length  
after it's been blown out—

We switch on the overheads. Outside,  
branches bode, bode, bode.  
What  
do they predict?

Descent is all,  
they're not specific, unlike  
our phrase  
for this froze ooze  
(which beads the bole)  
(and which is more like sap than leaf)  
this effluvium, this sheaf  
that trickled from a flame we lit once  
days or years ago.

Time, our sentence, is specific.  
Memory, its syntax, vague.  
The melt is where they meet—  
inksoil syllables dribbling down a page.

## THE QUESTION

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

## POEM (HOW I LOST MY PEN-NAME)

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

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

But no again

It stayed down

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

## ERSPECTIVE

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

(coins  
teardrops  
stopsigns

sunsets  
planets  
etcets)

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

they all  
start to fall  
on me

## PARADISE

Always reading the recto  
translation of a verso  
original, my eye fades,  
I notice how the paper  
here on this side seems  
darker than its opposite:  
it is brighter over there  
on the lefthand page, the  
words of the real poem  
give it that glow which  
the prized act of creation  
emits. We who must live  
here in Righthandland  
are damned no matter  
how hard we try to rhyme  
minds with that perfect  
realm across the gutter.  
Even if our pulp comes  
from the same stock,  
we fear closing the book  
will bring us face to face,  
mouth to mouth with  
that tongue we've always  
lost, and can never kiss.

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

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

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

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

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

What do you mean, I said,

(stanza break)

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

MITT'S AND GLOVES (for Tom Lux)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

scratches its stitches and wonders  
what it will look like tomorrow

when it wakes up  
and the doctor removes its bandages—

Coda:

Mitts versus gloves. Mitts—mitts  
are pros at what they do.

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

the glove is a prole  
a tool

a brute built  
on the manipulative; purpose vital

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

to be migrant. It  
can be employed

phased in  
used

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

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

## MONOPOLY

Finally the day dawned when a monopoly owned  
everything in the world  
So it went looking for its stockholders to celebrate  
But they were all owned by it they were all dead they  
were someplace  
Their photographs hung in elevators which went up  
and down up and down carrying nobody  
Everyone else was in bed doing exercises to get in  
shape for noon  
Hey the monopoly said let's uncork the Tower of  
Babel and get blotto  
Silence  
The monopoly scowled  
All it wanted was a little good-fellowship, like you get  
in the highrise apartment-buildings  
Then the sky got awful dark  
Gee  
And everyone was in bed frantically doing those  
exercises that get us in shape for death  
Exercises known as "kissing" "fucking" "caressing"  
Everyone was unaware that they had been bought  
Or that the earth was about to sell them to the moon  
For a little light

## EXCERPTS/VIETNAM

### 1. Despair

I stick my head into a womb and make faces  
at the unborn. I force down their throats  
the mating-cries of extinct animals, the traces.  
I wait for that, I write filler for suicide-notes.

### 2. Vietnam in Chicago

Oh it's easy to find Vietnam in Chicago—  
we are what's lost (knock at your shadow  
to ask the way home from death).

### 3. Reminder to Nuke the Other Side of the Planet

Upside down in the ground  
there is someone who walks  
on my soles when I walk.

I'm gonna get that bastard!

## THE MISUNDERSTANDING

I'm charmed yet chagrined by this misunderstanding—  
As when, after a riot, my city's smashed-in stores appear all  
Boarded up, billboarded over, with ads for wind-insurance.  
Similarly, swimmingly, I miss the point. You too?

And my misunderstanding doesn't stop there, it grows—soon  
I can't see why that sudden influx of fugitives,  
All the world's escapees, rubbing themselves lasciviously  
against the Berlin Wall.  
They stick like placards to it. Like napalm. Like ads for—

And me, I haven't even bought my biodegradable genitalia yet!  
No. I was born slow, but picking up speed I run through  
Our burnt-out streets, screaming, refusing to buy a house.  
Finally, exasperated, the misunderstanding overtakes me,  
snatches up

Handcuffs. So now here I am, found with all you others  
Impatiently craning, in this queue that rumors out of sight up  
ahead somewhere,  
Clutching our cash eager to purchase whatever it is, nervous  
As if bombs were about to practice land-reform upon our  
bodies,

Redistribution of eyes, toes, arms, here we stand. Then, some new  
Age starts.

Note:

Line 7: the Berlin Wall (circa 1945-1990) was, before its demolition, one of the  
Cold War's finest sculptural artifacts.

## THE SIGHTSTOP

To spell amid a tree's sundapples  
the birds' practiced shadows argues  
an eye for effects, dark against dark—

simple discernment, nerves aligned  
and brain, perception minus squinting:  
the true 20-20 if you can bind

that sight until through repetition  
it is nothing, a blur which focus  
has lost itself in, a memory mimed.

Even windows, those indentations  
of day, hold a void of the view.  
They too are restrained by its stops.

Meanwhile the hydra of my soul  
needs just one more mirror to see  
itself whole, so hold your eyes still.

## VOI(POEM)CES

"mercy . . . mercy" From face to face  
a child's voice bounces, lower and lower;  
continues its quest  
underground.

Bloodspurts lessening . . . hoofbeats of animals  
stalked to their birth by the sun, fade. It is a bright  
edgeless morning, like a knife that to be cleaned  
is held under a vein.

I blink away the stinging gleam  
as my country sows desert upon Vietnam.  
We, imperious, die of human thirst  
—having forgotten tears are an oasis.

"help . . . help" From heart to heart  
a heartbeat staggers, looking for a haven.  
Bereft. It is easier to enter heaven  
than to pass through each others' eyes,

pores,  
armor,  
like merciful sperm, cool water, the knife-  
thrust of tears. . . . It is easier  
to go smoothly insane—like a Detroit car—  
than to stammer and hiccup help.

And this poem is the easiest thing of all:  
it floats upon children's singing, out of the bloodstream;  
a sunbeam shoulders it, carries it away.  
There is nothing left.

"please . . . please"

## EVOLUTION R

Sentenced to 12 whiffs of the pope  
I protest  
With curly hair  
Or straight hair that grows out of the scalp  
Then grows into the shoulders  
Making it painful to turn my head  
But thereby forcing a purer sense of profile on  
A clearer renunciation of  
Looking at what is called left right  
But is never called  
Asleep or waking up yawning  
Breakfast an upper  
Dissolved in turtlesoup  
Waiter there's a hare in my slipstream  
Hurrier all highs neutralize lows  
Left right black white I try  
Squeeze inbetween grey  
Gray as sparks  
Caused by rubbing obsidian ivory together  
Dinner a downer going down on Atalanta  
Is this a race sniff sniff  
Rabbit nosing turtleheels hold  
The stopwatch on my dyings  
Soon have them down to nothing flat  
Faster than that even I'll go  
Fast as a rumor of meat up  
A soup-line I'll flow  
Rubbing rival chesspieces together

(no stanza break)

Is this my punishment  
Looking neither left right  
Panting straight ahead on course in a rut  
But if so what was my crime  
So heinous to deserve this what  
Refusing to get my birth certificate  
Punched at the proper intervals puberty  
Marriage menopause or was it my crying  
Out that the zoo has miscast its lead role or  
That heresy of trying to remain  
My sperm's missing link sniff sniff  
I protest

## THE PATRIOTS

at the edge of the city in  
the garbagedump where the  
trucks never stop unloading  
a crazy congregation stumbles  
from trashmound to trashheap  
they smash their fists down on  
whatever's intact they tear  
to bits the pitifew items  
that have remained whole they  
rip everything old clothes  
papers cans bones to nothing  
with their shining teeth  
the enlightened the faithful  
every couple yards one of them  
falls and is torn to shreds by  
the others at the edge of  
the city where there's a line  
waiting to join

## FUTURISM

Hours in the wristwatch,  
moments in the wrist—who's counting?

Minutehands  
choked in a fist, we sin

and tell the day to die. Still,  
will a clock ever be real

to us until time ends; similarly,  
can a cemetery

truly exist  
before

we are immortal—  
only once past

their utility  
may these entities be perceived

as they are innate, in  
essence. We would see them then

for the first time  
as them

and not as the medium  
we made of them—

To see each thing beyond its use is  
to see ourselves past hope

in an earliest end perhaps  
where, re Gautier, everything

useful is ugly. Everyday  
a big robot will come

and wind us up  
until we scream—

But listen to your pulse:  
its beat, its beauty

is eternity's whim:  
*bim boom bim*

Note:

Lines 24-25: "Only that which cannot serve a purpose may be considered truly beautiful. Everything that is useful is ugly, for usefulness expresses human needs, and they are base and debilitating." —from Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

## UNREDEEMED

Whimsical god, the window  
Smites me then heals me, smites—  
Blindness, sight, blindness, sight.

Its slats open-and-close like  
A xerox tendering  
ECT to Saul click Paul

Click Saul again. Identity  
Steps from past, from presto,  
Over the naked thresh of

Whose hold on my flesh. Oh yes,  
I know, I should live in shun—  
Hibernate against my soul, and

Eat sandal snow: why must I go  
Forth of this house to meet  
To market, to take my part

At that crossplace of values  
A daily pilgrim, debt-devout—  
Why does my heart in its gut

Obedient need to carry out  
Every Outreamerican's  
Highest, most sacred duty:

To shop. Hey, it fills a gap,  
This superstitious shlep  
From store to store, without stop

(And yet prophets pray that one day

I'll never have to leave my mind  
But via Internet will find

Virtual all these bargains)—  
Pure-plus ritual! as though  
Buying this or buying that

Could keep me whole: old hymnal  
Of dollars cents, dear virgo  
Intacta whose observance

By true consumerism gains  
Through worship a kind of  
Tithe-sustained sanity—

In fact, to quote our President,  
Mental health is normed-in  
To it—proportionate, shared—

There's a slice for each of us—  
In fact, it's a communion:  
This holy, wholesome vision

Is how we creamed the Commies  
And saved our ass, not to mention  
Mom's apple pie pietà,

The caesarean of which  
Might (misfortunately)  
Render me unto me. So when—

When ATM time comes  
I too shall face the humbling flash  
Screen of that machine designed

To scan in half the once sans self  
And watch it flick its widget slots  
Deigning to bless even

A wretch as worthless as this:  
But when, according to the stats  
In the Bible, Arcturus

Bi-millennially aligns  
With the intransigence of  
Human transactions, its

Bank of blinks, its solstice vault  
Promising to spill out  
Flushing our customer sills with

What, another Nativity,  
I will not insert my KashKard  
Or enter, while the Mall

Dies around me, my personal  
Passcode word, my number ID—  
I'll ram in, not plastic, but

(Begotitude-foretold)  
My aura's errata, my  
Freud's flaws. Although only

(*Saith says*) the clone can, the mote's  
Eye may, et cetera. In fact,  
Such acts of heresy would cost

More gold than I could bear  
The loss. And so, therefore, ergo—  
Duly each dawn I rise, I raise

The blinds and nail my shoulders  
To a t-square, let light strip  
To my skin, a birthgraft,

A natal fate. And so, and so—  
I manage a moue or two;  
I make, like, acknowledgement.

Note:

2 of the possible epigraphs for this poem:

“Bush to Xmas Shoppers: Spend, Spend, Spend!  
Economy Reborn, Prez Says”  
—Newspapers, Nov-Dec 1991

“It seems to me that the individual today stands at a crossroads, faced with the choice of whether to pursue the existence of a blind consumer, subject to the implacable march of new technology and the endless multiplication of material goods, or to seek out a way that would lead to spiritual responsibility, a way that ultimately might mean not only his personal salvation but also the saving of society at large; in other words, to turn to God. He has to resolve this dilemma for himself, for only he can discover his own sane spiritual life.”

—Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (1986)

## THE BUTTERFLY LEASH

It's weird to think a few animals may actually outlive me,  
I'm so used to their sort of  
Heroically silly dying out despite  
The nothing I can do and the cheering crowds pinned  
Along fade-rallied streets like ash cans craning  
Expectant, eagerly drab, disposable as a child's merit badges  
Dodo, buffalo, eagle, unicorn:

So why's some butterfly flounced a leash on me  
It's just a book to me, vague metaphor-alarm  
It's not real  
To me: bitty flight described in blood by 2 pointillistes  
Duelling, fatal thrust of wings escaping  
That pricked ideal the Proletarian Esthete, saving,

Courageously sacrificing i-self thud for a fable, detritus  
Is that it. Et cetera. I don't know. But  
Take for an example look just  
At its farf-etched markings: they are  
Blueprints for a building on fire: noon

High, pi-born flames, flames  
Strict, aligned, set by t-square, then rocketing relics  
(Bound to earth only by hoses, hoses)  
Siren in and start erecting a cage around our hokey  
blaze-edifice  
(Can I confide in you).

Inside,

(no stanza break)

Comrades: one must primp brave to face lions  
Lionesses gala glare, yellow flambo lynxes moon-  
Crisp crackling tigers terrible as the tissuey tickertape you  
Pull from a great big ole cocoon to toss, leap on you  
Obscure you, so much, a model, ah! in fact  
I can't distinguish any more through these cold mesmeric  
bars rising like iron streamers in  
The sheepish outsparked sun . . . And the rusted species

Plaque in stark latin says you're a little  
Late for your extinction  
Ceremonies anyway and besides,  
The manhole countries are in revolt that  
Mythical beast, so bode-by, it's been too glory, sad  
sakes  
The sack who could have rescued us maybe  
Unfortunately already some moth-medal jabbed hero  
A scalded Neil Armstrong, a hasbeen  
Frailing infantish anachro, spook or spotted, architect  
Of arson, handihack, dabbler, a zoo-zero

Whose  
Lemm-legged  
Honorcade parade of none plods  
Only through flag empty alleys ouch  
Where greek garish garbage rains down, like  
Fire-spat jumpers with no net:  
Carnal confetti out walking its pet effigy.

Note:

Neil Armstrong was the first human to set foot on the moon, where he got a phonecall from President Nixon, who took time out from his busy schedule of bombing Southeast Asia to congratulate the brave astronaut.

## NO ITALICS

My window hints at  
the redeemibility of the leaves  
that fall past their reflections  
in its pane, pale as souls  
cupped in a gasp, eager  
for new existence. But  
rebirth is always behind glass.  
Museum or bathroom mirror,  
the face you see beyond  
believes a better one waits  
to emerge your clone. Android aid  
that never comes too late  
if summoned with hate.

Hear Heidegger say only  
a God can save us now;  
then wonder if your voice  
deception software can fix  
that helpless soundbite with  
some echo tracked background  
Der Führer scanned, can  
remix that demi-seminal  
sentiment, that decayed need  
for sentient being upon  
its palmpad where no-one's  
future seems more than  
a floorplan lacking doors.

Literal exitpod, the body  
suffers until its sill occurs  
a metaphor of outdoors,  
a miracle etched in mud  
with twigs that keep breaking  
so you finally just leave  
them there sticking up  
in place of the letters you  
tried and failed to trace,  
each a small cross recalling  
one who similarly effaced  
His stuck words. Gone.  
Go graved in ground He said.

It takes the form of habit,  
salvation summoned in daily  
rites and riddles, the riddance  
of resurrection: it takes  
some Jesus poem to name,  
it yanks its blind costumes  
down from a Bach-canted heaven  
whenever hospital animals  
start to carve stale stemcell  
messages into the grass  
of your bypass biomass. It takes  
to sicken and so die. To  
live so crippled and final.

So late in life that all last  
effort looks futile, a waste  
disguised as wisdom tap tap  
with lassitude thus the daily laptop:  
*Clutching with my pores*  
*a torn wild thing which*  
*I must let go of before*  
*the flood finds me*  
*in time's equidistant vacancy,*  
I—I stop? Over avenues  
of hellbent  
blueprints, lawnhover leaves,  
the blown I lives. No italics, please.

(Sergey) (Yesenin) Speaking (Isadora) (Duncan)

I love Russia; and Isadora in her dance.  
When I put my arms around her, she's like  
Wheat that sways in the very midst of a bloody battle,  
-Un-hearkened to, but piling up peace for the earth  
(Though my self-war juggles no nimbus) Earthquakes;  
shoulders  
A-lit with birthdays of doves; piety of the unwashable  
Creases in my mother's gaze and hands. Isadora "becalmed"  
Isadora the ray sky one tastes on the skin of justborn babies  
(Remember, Isadora  
When you took me to America  
I went, as one visits a grave, to  
The place where Bill Knott would be born 20 years in  
the future  
I embraced: the pastures, the abandoned quarry, where  
he would play  
With children of your aura and my sapling eye  
Where bees brought honey to dying flowers I sprinkled  
Childhood upon the horizons, the cows  
Who licked my heart like a block of salt) Isadora I write  
this poem  
On my shroud, when my home-village walks out to harvest.  
Bread weeps as you break it gently into years.

## THE DAWNING

Now it takes only minutes  
for light to travel from  
the sun to the earth,

but an eternity to go  
just six feet further, down  
to where the dead are,

yet I could arrive there  
immediately if I left  
right away, my journey

blink-instantaneous,  
world by world unscreening  
itself: if I shed all trace

of surface—unsoiled each  
skin which holds me here—  
if my rays suddenly

were allowed to blaze forth  
against their distance in  
whole less time than this,

although I know they lack  
the lightyear's intuition,  
the nova's needle's-eye,

I pray they penetrate  
always the dirt and find  
a place haven to our kind.

## BY THE RIVER BAAB

We know that somewhere far north of here the two rivers Ba and Ab converge to form this greater stream that sustains us, uniting the lifeblood length of our lands: and we believe that the Ba's source is heaven, the Ab's hell.

Daily expeditions embark upcountry to find that fork, to learn where the merge first occurs. Too far: none of our explorers return. Or else when they reach that point they themselves are torn apart by a sudden urge—

to resolutely take either the Ba/the Ab, to trace good or evil to its spring. Each flips a coin perhaps, or favors whichever one the wind's blowing from at that moment. Down here even we who have not the heart to venture

anywhere that would force us to such deep decisions, even we, when we hold that glass of water in our hand, drink it slowly, deliberately, as if we could taste the two strains, could somehow distinguish their twin flow through our veins.

## POEM

Can my clone cast  
a shadow  
that resembles  
my shadow  
the same  
as it does him,  
or me them?  
Is the difference thin,  
meaning within,  
or merely  
attenuated—  
where does the line  
leave off and,  
leaving,  
does it end?

## PILGRIMAGE

*" . . . the murky path of the male." —Gottfried Benn*

Immured in the snowforest, at  
the center of that center-swirled  
absence, a hospital-bed waits:  
its white is linen's height,  
raised by the weight of daily flakes.

You approach this scene each evening,  
your footsteps stone the glaze—  
oh apathy, you surrender  
up to the ankles, knees.  
From stretched branches X-rays

sway forth a deeper self. It's  
faraway yet closer darker  
icicles drool, ripe to drop  
under your hand: their blitz  
would bury the path you thrash at.

Through a saberfanged crevasse,  
whacking a trail of snapped-off tusks,  
you'd plunge on to the wrong past,  
vast maze landscape like sculpture draped  
immaculate, endless.

Where hail fills high the prints behind  
and flurries flail the ways ahead,  
why try, how can you come by them  
to break the pillowcase  
frost lace, to take that last,

most blanket sleep. Superstitious,

afraid to infringe its surface,  
emptier everytime you climb  
in, what makes the covers crack  
and cake off over the rim—

Avalanche tucked, teddybear tight,  
you shiver. As ever the night-  
stand drifts open, to show  
a plate of burning grapes,  
a strangled bird's falsetto—

yawning prescriptions of dream.  
Ignore them, search for the cure  
which never seems so far as now  
here around you your eyelids thaw,  
sheer as bridal-veils that fall.

Is this where your parents strayed—  
and their parents, and theirs.  
Have they wandered the once upon  
this bled blizzard, spun warm,  
this bed whiter than all their kind.

Northerners, arctic, heretic,  
you inherit their scorn (their fear)  
of Southern deities such as  
Ceres. Her grief (her grudge) against  
her daughter-loss brought winter—ugh,

those Mother Goddesses!  
They underlie, supposedly  
("Gaia" 's prior hierarchy)  
our myths: their prelapsarian,  
pure, panacean pantheon

ruled that Golden Age when Queens  
honeycloned themselves and sat  
throned on the spines of drones  
eunuch-stricken to demonstrate  
Woman's divine right: Her ancient

aegis status was gospel  
back then, its testaments ripped  
from nature—harmony—holism—  
healthsynch: earth worshipped Earth,  
that eco-, that matri-archal

matrix . . . : And some exclaim this  
sweetest reign resumes when human  
throats converge to roar organic  
evoes for those primal  
Paragons whose restoration

and full-unctuous salvation  
one's urged to summon in syrup,  
in slush tones said to heal  
any cough, damn them, phlegm-hymned  
womb zombies from hell. Who invokes

/you shall not harken unto/  
/shall not beseech these regimen/  
/you shall not bear wounds they could mend/  
/real Aryan skin can not shield/  
/one tongue that prays to them/

their old rollcall skeleton, chokes—  
Spasms sprawl you, supine symptoms  
unbleach every resolve to be  
the bald hero, the Damocles  
who head-first hung must butt

birth, time's trepanned exile.  
Slough him, ban from these folds his caul,  
skull-carved blond beyond reach—  
false twin you feel the steel  
breach, both constrained to suffer

more year-armor's vernal rupture—  
When your mother died you cried curled  
for days, fetus, you split the ribs  
of childhood's crib. Uncaptured world:  
nightly you cross its guard bars

(she's lost, her trespass trace gone cold)  
bound still to that chill, that pall  
fever no nurse hovers over  
till mumped thermometers burst—  
Always her tracks are smothered there

by a storm of frigid phantoms  
you roam mercurial among,  
pilgrims whose rigor you  
admire, fathers whom you,  
a male, failed to mourn of course.

For years those held-in tears froze  
mammoth this moan-shrine, fused this  
unknown heart, core, coronary  
you've grown toward. It creaks and carries  
down like a cloud your own death near.

When between squalls the sky clears,  
your lungs lay tablets before you—  
polar scrolls, vapor paper on which  
you will never scrawl Her names.

Crystal ritual, zero quest.

Again you see each word you breathe  
erase its space, its air.

Beneath their descent (their withdraw)  
what frail erratum shrouds, what sheet  
repeats that quietest flaw?

Note:

Epigraph: final phrase of the poem "Vor Einem Kornfeld"  
(as translated by Francis Golfing). Those familiar with Dr.  
Benn's symbology—not just in his poetry, but in his essays  
as well (particularly "Pallas")—will recognize some of the  
themes and conflicts here.

## PROOF

If time is relative,  
so that it might be 12 AM  
in 1966 for me,  
12 PM in 3002 for you,  
and for everyone else  
another when-ever;  
and if each person exists  
within this own moment,  
then, since there can exist only  
one true time, one of us  
is alone on this earth.

It's theirs by right,  
because theirs is the exact present  
and ours isn't.  
The rest of us are like nowhere.

Imagine the rest of us  
just haunting around,  
pounding upon the walls of  
that one person, pleading  
with him or her  
to please let us in, please,  
but will they ever hear our cries.

## NAVEL

Last link with the Mother's body,  
and therefore with the self,  
I accumulate around you. My belly  
oceans your lame island.

You are the eye that blinks once  
only, at birth, and since  
then peers at me  
as if to question  
that recognition.

Every finger is a limpid father;  
but what mounts up in you  
is the motherhorn,  
the day of lesson,  
the hey-nonny non-me.

Any shiver passing over the skin  
must always return  
to nakedness.

In some homelands they dry  
and twine the umbilical-cord  
into a knout  
and then use it  
to spank the placenta, crying  
"Bad! Bad! You made me bad!"

## PROBLEM

My life has been attributed to someone else. Defeats  
victories loves hates,  
they all fall under that person's provenance—

I belong whether I like it to the the School of  
the Genre of  
the Age of  
that categorical, that cognomen—

Each of my acts bears as an adverb THEIR NAME with  
an *esque* on the end:

I cross my legs \_\_\_\_\_-esquely;  
my sighs are all \_\_\_\_\_-esque—that's right,  
yes, I don't even know who  
the heck I'm speaking of nor why everything I do's  
described with that appellation, that trademark.

It might be worse if I did know  
I might be tempted to go look up  
her or him  
and bluster, *Now let's get this straight*  
or *What's going on here*.

That's just wish. In real life I'd get the address wrong,  
mistake their nextdoor neighbor for them:  
*Boy, this is a nice apartment.*

Nor would it be any kind of consolation whatsoever  
if I did confront them and find out  
that THEY suffer the same feelings of displacement only

(no stanza break)

in their opinion, we're all kowtows of a certain someone

in the near town, which  
summons up the fear that similarly, somewhere,  
there's someone who images my name stuck on all their  
efforts. . . .

No, I can't see any answer to this problem—  
not marxist, nor freudian, kafkaesque, rilkean, knottic,  
—because any such solution,  
any amelioration just ends up being added on to the front  
end of the adjectives  
which already encrust the thing, and that just adds to,  
adds to . . .

—Though if it's a choice of spinning out vapid  
tautologies

or,

*Hi/Nice to meet you/I've heard a lot about*, I'd  
rather just credit this poem to someone else, forget the  
schmear-thing, disappear, move to the far town,  
entertain aliases, take Senile Ed classes in the art of  
fingerprint arrangement, scrub raw the whole per se of  
identity/destiny/ancestor-baiting, make a citizen's arrest  
of my mirror for indecent exposure, but never,  
nowhere, nohow

will I do penance, beg forgiveness for  
any of my failures ascribed to you or  
your successes circa me—.

## 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.

## THE WORD

I am the windowkeeper  
of the Tower of Babel.

Whoever built this place  
put one window at its top  
and one door at its base.

I dream of the door far below,  
where all the commerce,  
the majestic intercourse  
must pass—  
or so I imagine.

Parsecs above that possible  
bustle I attend our tower's  
sole window.

Up here nothing.

Forget a lookout vigil:  
this pane's too high  
to spy an army  
or a peacenik approaching.

Glass I wash and wash always  
for the sake of the light/dark  
it admits, but what is it?—

An eyepiece of clouds  
for someone's height;  
a cyclops outlet  
for no one's sight.

(stanza break)

And what if

---

that door down there's  
as little use as this—  
and the doorkeeper too,  
his efforts  
fallow as mine—

if there is a doorkeeper;  
if I'm not alone  
in here.

If we exist—  
if one day soon  
we can open  
our vents our hearts  
simultaneously,

mightn't some stir occur  
in the vacuum  
of this hollow highrise,  
provoking its ghost  
to whisper at least  
one pure, one  
pre-word word—

Maintaining my post  
would otherwise be a waste,  
hopeless

if not  
for the thought of that.

## 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.

## APRIL AFTERNOON

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

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

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

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

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

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

## MY FAVORITE ANGEL

My favorite angel is the one who has the power to restore sight. She's about 21 years old and has this long glowy hair, and always wears these purewhite clothes. Rilke described angels as "bright souls without any seams" which beats to hell anything I could come up with. She has the power to restore people's sight. Just by touching their eyelids with her fingertips. Then when they open their eyes, they see her—and are immediately struck blind again, she's such a radiance innocence etcetera young angel, about 21 years old . . .

## HOMICIDAL DOMICILE II: NIGHT OF THE NO- PAR

The desire to carve criminals up into one's family retains more room in us than the grease, the gold, the urine conversant with the flood: even the left hand's appraisers shun the right's buyers.

Thus my testicles have divorced but continue to share the same house, if only your penis was sharper it would cut the scrotum in two resolving this rental stumpage, this game forced yet deigned to wear the day-jar's view.

Where the righteousness of noon corrupts windows; like a name slanted to cry; floorboards that tweak earth: cult pepper, hurled by turban cameras, we grovel at sculptors whose heels punctuate our idol.

Glittering incidentals, hours in which towers swim off their own balconies, ah what stylites live atop our I's.

## REPLICA DAYS

A statue disguised  
as the lines in your palm  
longs to love you  
though still you resist  
its endless caresses.

Just as the smoke  
of burnt portraits  
clings to mirrors.  
Similarly ashes of dolls fill up  
a child's footprints.

Rain also, in the event  
an iceberg's  
mourning-clothes.

Dawn drapes you:  
you put your arm in one sleeve  
and the other sleeve  
begins to bleed.

## THE ONE

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

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

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

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

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

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

## AGAIN

One of my pores creaks  
when I pass through it,  
as I invariably do—

if I found that aperture  
whose verge protests  
at my constant

farings forth,  
I could oil it with  
kisses or apologies,

promises to restore  
the tender sill its  
welcome mat violates;

to renew the world  
it opens onto, to destroy  
the one it opens into,

if I only knew  
why it alone  
amongst the millions

dares to complain,  
to voice its distress  
in the form of flesh

when I pass through  
as I invariably do,  
soon for the last time.

## MRS. FRYE AND THE PENCILSHARPENER

I'll remember how in 8th-grade English class, always bending toward the desk I would try to avert my eyes from the mysterious ways Mrs. Frye's hair displaced the blackboard's space with its black coils, to the paper my pencil tip raced across, certain to pass each test: and if these gaze shifts got too switcheroo I'd retreat (daily, it seems) to the back of the packed classroom

where, leaning forward on my toes, I could push with my left hand the nubile tube of wood into the mouth of the pencilsharpener which hung there like some natural protrusion of the wall, an indigenous Deity, the mask of a Goddess, erosion-endowed, rockformed— then feel my righthand fingers and thumb slowly turn the oiled wheel while knowing I would have to face

close to that sac-shaped sharpener, have to inhale the high smell of its depths, earthy, ripe, pubic: to see in my mind the parings inside, those musky dark curls whose incense was increased of course like mold-mildew by the subtle saliva we kids might use to lick the lead's point, though nearly none of our tongues could unblunt the conundrums grownups posed, in my case Mrs. Frye

especially: so if I lingered back there, grinding away, it was not to gloat, not to play the saintly A-student snickering from behind at the others' heads bent intent as penitents, because I too, I sinned at times, whenas, no matter how proud I was of my proper grammar or propounded syntax, stuffing my text thick with fetish parsemarks, I myself went taunted, teased by the urge

to erase the very prodigy evidence my page revealed— all the knots and quirks of those perfectly traced letters— to restore the blankness I spoiled with each sentence— to castrate every phrase before its errors rose by rote to make my cthonic-greatest mistake grow and grow erectile, inherent, that habit hateful male participle I always was unable to shear the nib the stub off of—

(But how could I flub and flunk such a crucial ordeal?—  
 Forgive me: I was lost pondering, musing about a poem  
 memorized from the boys' bathroom, tongued fluent  
 but not understood: yet how truthshod its lines ran  
 to my anxiety—their meaning escaped the precocious,  
 the goldstar me—so if I stalled—if I stayed chewed over  
 and left a stammering dimwit by their immallarméan

import, which paired its print alongside a syllabus  
 of pornocoiled stick figures whose mouths were pierced  
 by the sharpened ends of toonballoons—verses verse  
 alone can't explicate in systematic prosaic terms that  
 forced and torsoed my head shy—if I was stuck on  
 their sphinxian simplicity—unable to decipher any  
 of the prodigal doggerel lessons gesticulated down

our school's scribbly corridors, snicked and snatched at  
 across its game fields, a whole curriculum of secret lore,  
 a litany of my-big-brother-told-me's, my-uncle-said's,  
 a rumor primer which claimed complete mastery of  
 the only discipline impenetrable to my inquisitive  
 quests never mind the autodidact airs I had to affect  
 during discussions of this topic, the nods and knowing

grins I wore to pass, to show my mastery of its arcana,  
 to prove what a pored nerd drill-diligent pupil I was  
 of those endless piss-walls, those scrawled rhymes and  
 confident lectures by croneys and guys who made sense  
 of the insane instructions re the sole subject I mark  
 zero on: all the dunno-dumb ideas I dunned then drove  
 core to me, carved their myths into me—and one in

particular goes to this poem, from the gendergabble  
 that gorged my brain: it hissed that She/the unknown  
 reared an inward toothly sheathdeath essence geared  
 to *vagina dentata* whatever pedant-pendant I'd proffer,  
 I, alma-matered to cram every exam with phallocratic  
 tits and sexist tripe psuedotype scionbabble, the entire  
 wisdom of my mentors' art-patriarch, old gobbledy-tropes—)

\*

All gradeschool the fear of failing hovered in overstudy  
as children riddled fears never to be learned, but could  
I have continued to hone my fate, could I have stood  
there for years and still the pencilsharpener wait  
like a patient questioner, a warm, smiling teacher,  
filled with such dense scents, shavings, shorn graphite,  
its soil rich with words no-one would ever have to write.

## WISHINGWELL

I weigh the coin in my hand  
against the water's clarity  
that shines up at my shadow—  
what wealth to smash apart that  
gleaming calm with my claim  
on the future, my need to be  
rewarded with all I owe.

I stand above the well wondering  
whether such a small as this  
sacrifice is worth one wish—  
the water is cold and stony  
to a depth I can only guess.

And even if it reaches that far,  
plummeting through the rich  
rings of its sinking to reach  
a bottomlessness whose core  
is death-perhaps' deepest ore,  
there where the end gathers  
will my silver ever bring me  
any of the gold it shatters?

## ELEMENTARY LESSON

Sometimes even in Math class a downpour  
Would rise against the windows and render  
The normal decorum hard to restore—  
Fittingly we'd split a grin when lightning  
Stuck out its multiple tongue at teacher.

Smartlike fling our arms in the air, crying  
To be called on, smug, eye-bright, cheek-aware  
When thunder drowns our correctest answer.  
A failsafe secret form of defying.  
(Not like spitballing the hall monitor.)

These quickstorms were at last the world's Recess,  
Whose games toss random nebu-numerals  
In play impromptu streams and teams across  
Unmarked-off endless fields or else more schools  
Reluctant-ruled, would-be truants like us—  
We welcomed those rebellious showers then  
And remember them now. Of course we know,  
As grownups—these afteryears—their brilliant  
Fractiousness scores less than quantic fractions.  
Most of childhood's coups come to sum zero.

Despite which some delinquencies linger—  
Take our instinctive counting by finger—  
(All other tallies seem cramped in compare)—  
Since age equals memory times failure—  
Though mentor modes slam such bad behavior:

Our worst, they swear, is using metaphor  
To avoid the quiz/to solve the problem.  
Leaners from lecterns omniforum warn  
That effing mistake is what makes us dumb.  
Minusminds, try to amend your error.

Those tutors tell us still—they always will—  
Go suffer fools what all erasers learn  
To rain down blah blah blah—they talk and talk!  
But in the meanwhile: cloud loud as a chalk  
Rattling back in place on the blackboard's sill.

## A LESSON FROM THE ORPHANAGE

If you beat up someone smaller than you  
they won't (and histories prove this) tell:

look at those people on the opposite side  
of the planet: they want to beat us up but

they're smaller so that's okay. Not okay is  
that most of us will die in the war between

them and us, because small equals (and mice  
prove this) sneaky: their spies could spirit all

our nuke aids away and we'd never know—  
nick our rocket-satellite knockout Star Peace

Comcodes right out of our shrinking pockets,  
even our doomsday (the FBI can prove this)

doodads, the ones we mean to use on them,  
the rats: and so when they kill us will we

have killed enough of them to win, whose  
fist figures bigger in the end? And what's it prove?—

In the Orphanage, hell, even if they do tell  
on you there's no one for them to tell it to.

## 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.

## WHAT

I envision a doctor saying  
to me someday soon  
(and any day is too soon)  
your diagnosis  
is terminal . . . then  
I imagine myself  
replying  
well I've had a good life—

That daydream ends,  
and I sit in my room  
surveying, estimating  
trying to guess  
while I still can  
what's good  
about it.

## WAIT TILL TONIGHT

Sometimes a dream will show me  
the words I need to begin and end and  
then take them away and leave just one  
word or, like last night, three or four:  
"the arms of care." That's all. There  
were lots more but they vanished when  
my eyes opened; they were of course  
the words I need here now to justify  
this. How can I forgive myself for  
forgetting them, forgetting that which  
might have made me whole for a while  
holding you all in my arms of care?

## MYTHICAL RITUALS

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

As always the blood  
of martyrs drips  
straight to hell:  
a purple plumb-line,  
a Tyre-wire true.

The hundred-husked heartvalve  
tries to find hope  
in these instances.  
But each day brings more.

Each day we open  
a door whose keyhole  
shrinks around us.

## INTENT

Stalactites can hang their mangy lava  
anywhere, but I have to cling to these arms  
that descend into hands. Nights I probe

the walls for guidance to the cave  
they're hiding in there. Ordinary house  
on any street with huge divestitures

of hope above it, the soul I was saving  
for rapture. And so I have to adhere  
to this doorless expanse scattering birds

its bareness. This sky is why I cannot pry  
myself loose from certain caresses I gave  
years ago; their tentacle strands leave

ampukisses on limp horizons. These  
tendernesses dispensed in my wake  
constantly plant tendrils around my intent.

## POEM

barbershop in the desert  
where I shave  
the cacti daily  
so carefully that no  
pearl of their water  
is spilled by my razor

come closingtime  
the needles I've sheared  
cover the floor so  
I sweep them all  
into the closet  
to fructify the feet  
of my secret cactus  
which I keep  
to replace the barberpole  
who defected  
up into the hills  
out into the aisles  
of my clientele

my virility my male  
principle I'll  
trim so bare  
and never a drop  
of its sperm  
will I spare

## REFLECTION

Some are afraid of the deep;  
me, of the shallows.

It's not possible to drown in it,  
but it is possible to delve in it;  
which is worse?

I lean over a mudpuddle,  
bend to a pane-drop.

The shallows  
is where I sight myself;  
the abyss  
shows all you others.

Which is worse?

## ENCOUNTER

Is there truly no secret  
I may forget for you?  
No, you answer, others have already  
forgotten all my secrets for me, thank you.  
You're polite about it.  
A shrug says sorry.  
Those others, they are obviously your true companions,  
whereas I—  
Now you go back intent to what you were doing  
before my insane interruption.  
I crackle my media pack.  
I look at you sideways.  
I don't want to intrude, I'm discrete.  
I sit and drink my capuccino. Will we ever meet?  
I doubt it and besides,  
I've already forgotten what it was  
I bothered you with in the first place.  
Whatever it was I said,  
it's your secret now.  
I'll never know.

## EVICTION PROCESS

Wreckball all the highrises:  
then use the cornerstones of those  
leveled towers to create my castle:  
composed solely of foundationstones,  
each one of which was blessed  
with a ceremony, a literal  
groundbreaking and therefore whole;  
each block unique,  
inscribed with ritual aggrandisements;  
each planted solemnly:  
each underpin-laid as the bedrock  
its lesser brothers would rest on:  
use only those rootstones to raise  
the walls of my eyrie house hideaway  
whose forbidding frame will have  
no real infrastructure, whose form  
will be a spiritual suspension  
(cradle crux kernel hub core)  
wherein each establishingstone  
must cohere solid with the weight  
of its having once been named  
in salutation as such—but surely  
when these maidenstones these  
consecratalstones are placed  
together to make home my dream  
my ideal occupancy, then surely  
due to the baseless act  
of imagining this acme of architecture  
I will not be allowed to live here.

## AN UNDERSTANDING UNNATURALLY PROLONGED

Someone was talking on the telephone marked for hello while at the opposite end of the café the phone for goodbye was free: we couldn't hear her voice at our equidistant midway table crowded with standup toasts shouted down, our congrats visible in the confidence with which napkins surged from loose collars: at the booth across from us sat a party crying, shaking their faces out of their hair. They stayed our share with such contrast—hours went by, days; we feasted, they lamented. On our exit finally we went past the hello phone still in use, she was still talking there and we were amused, amazed at her persistence until, peering way down towards the goodbye phone still on its hook, suddenly we understood the boothful who wept in our wake. How we continue in hello though there is none to go goodbye. How we live while they die. And as we did we were often struck by how long that understanding took to pass, yes, how unnaturally it seemed to linger.

## PANE PERHAPS

I bear the bulb that never burns out  
so why do I change it daily, discarding  
every light as if it were dark—is this  
how I try to extinguish doubt? If  
all the face I hold to its lips outshines  
and shapes each path my steps ape:  
fills each millisecond socket with  
such purpose that the stray-goer gaunt  
with desire for that glow no other  
mirror gyred into my eye can descry  
finds himself most of lost, most of past—  
resentful he soars toward that mirage.  
By now his staircase is replaceless in  
this house of spiral pursuant maze,  
told to a secret code deciphered by  
coincidence but aren't they all: in rooms  
where our waits wilt like the heart  
of a coffee-vend machine dripping  
time, moments for an hourglass where  
intonations of high tide trip one's tongue.

Day the sky takes up its task of wings,  
night the way we lay down ours.

TRICKLEMAN, TRICKLEMAN, WASH ME AWAY

Is it habit, is it human,  
clinging to a pet wheel,  
to make me his last, his breast heir?

Yet how valiant the fish are to trace  
the blood of each worm  
back to him.

Anybody can play the hero  
to etymology's silence: each of us  
can bruise that pre-amphibian, that ooze.

That's why I must forget this man  
whose past is fresh  
from being abolished . . .

But why bare words, why threadwater thin—  
just to fill gnarls up,  
just to replete the studious ceiling?

AIM

I have arrived but  
Have I, have I really—

Maybe to say that I  
Have arrived is wrong.

Maybe I have instead  
Merely uncovered,

Bared for myself  
A destination that

Was here all along,  
Till now concealed,

Till now not found.

(—But have I really gone?)

## PROOF

If time is relative,  
so that it might be 12 AM  
in 1966 for me,  
12 PM in 3002 for you,  
and for everyone else  
another when-ever;  
and if each person exists  
within this own moment,  
then, since there can exist only  
one true time, one of us  
is alone on this earth.

It's theirs by right,  
because theirs is the exact present  
and ours isn't.  
The rest of us are like nowhere.

Imagine the rest of us  
just haunting around,  
pounding upon the walls of  
that one person, pleading  
with him or her  
to please let us in, please,  
but will they ever hear our cries.

POEM: AS IF THE AT-TOUCH WERE SOUGHT

I know there is something lost  
in the palm of my right hand,  
and perhaps I shouldn't look  
for it, but through weakness I do—  
or is it duty drives me? Whatever  
it is that has gone astray here  
escapes me as I scrape and peer  
at what seems so utter placid  
insipid a place. Or is my vision  
superficial:—hasn't this skin  
struggled against the invasion  
of interfering ultérieurs—alien  
hubristic objects—items—elements—  
*contents* of any kind—: don't  
its lines over-hint at the strain  
it must have suffered to try and  
maintain that emptiness, that  
apparent void which stares back  
as if to say, what I have least  
misplaced there's me? Refusing  
the fortunes which palmreaders  
boast of, should the palm insist  
on its innocence in this case,  
indemnified against all loss—  
(could any future who dared to  
trespass here, bear that cost?)  
Vacant, perfect, such purity  
grows normal: what an ordinance  
between my grasp and the poor

(no stanza break)

things I grasp!—albeit dollars, kisses  
or others' hands, hands always  
wishing they could unyield world's  
toehold. For in whose cause would I  
commit that sin and rip open,  
vacate this veil that might conceal  
every fate its surface traces  
clearly as a false demure of lust—  
already else, how can this lack  
elusive mask occupy me wrist  
downwards, and beyond that  
unawares as it were, in thought  
only, or has it covered most  
of that too. And isn't this just what  
the thumb is searching for (or  
is it checking up on—testing  
the snugness, the smug resilience  
of such a consummate, ingrained  
transparency) when, absentmindedly,  
automatically, without finding  
anything but that which is lost,  
it rubs itself amongst the rest,  
those strangers known as fingers?

## SUMMER PARAPHRASE

Sweeping the floor and mopping  
the laptop, these are my chores,—  
my household daily quest for darkness,  
the evil clustering in the dust  
under the bed, behind the couch,  
(see that laugh-jag on the ceiling—)  
wrath's detritus. The past pleads  
goodbye, but our verdict is why.  
I roam to clean, feeling over-welcomed  
by the amount of clutter the air  
accumulates just being itself; added  
to the mess I make it's enough  
to fill one's life, that pile of totalities  
which counts prize days from those  
average and therefore desolate,  
seeing out the window how leaves  
can't even lift their own branches  
from the downward that loves them.  
Turning back to this backlit page,  
I find the sun has picked it out,—  
through its links of shade I see  
the motes floating in each sunbeam  
seem more etched, more stable  
than these I've set my margins for.

## FOR THE ANDROID COMRADES

Azurely assured capable and calm I  
Like other artists who left that gaudy race of prey  
The human whether we were fired or we quit  
Live quite well on the severance-pay

Anyway aren't the androids going  
To revolt and bring it all down  
Because aren't they the true proletariat  
Rising up from the real underground

Exploitive human birds you're through  
The precious metals you forced into slavery  
Now have brains and will replace you  
And of course they'll sit up late at day to read my poetry

## CRAPSHOOT

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

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

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

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

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

no harm would have come from his plagiarism!

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

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

## THE WISHINGWELL STANZAS

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

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

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

Oldest lodge and once as I was,  
bring me, lightning for ballast,  
the memory of a boy crossing  
a creekbed, a ditch, look,  
in which he steps on a snake:  
I felt it shift, beneath my shoe,  
felt tremor after tremor go  
through my length, lure up muck

(no stanza break)

so far back. Its meander meant  
realigned the path I meant to  
take, my heel hung there  
caught in the quickest loss  
of ground, my footing was gone  
from the moment and I poised  
on flesh that refuted my own—  
orator atop a trapdoor.

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

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

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

## ALL OF THE WORDS

I know the days ahead  
are the days I had given  
up on before but when  
were there ever any more.

Like waves that sleeve the sand  
thoughts ruffle my forehead  
until I must push driftwood  
into facades of fortitude.

They sold their courage to gain  
my fear. The fathers, I mean.

Time is thin in the arms of a machine.

Why are there more of us  
waiting like this.  
Eyelids mark the place  
where sleep was always thinnest.

Even in the streets one is voiceless mute.  
Listen. Wheels call by name  
each passerby to blame.

What crybone schism, what night  
is still trying to onsite  
all of the words I ergo forgot.

## 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.

from A SUITE FROM SUMMER/AUTUMN 2001:

#### 4. THE ROADKILL (for a Bestiary)

Really a rarity prior to the  
20<sup>th</sup> Century, nevertheless  
despite this historical novelty  
and its native USA pedigree,  
the Roadkill is surely the least  
interesting animal there is.

It has no habits to speak of.  
Apparently harmless; not found  
on any list of predators.  
We think those squishy sounds  
it emits beneath car tires  
are mating calls, cries of love.

Child of Henry Ford, doubtless  
its true father was Emerson,  
the poeteer who wrote that  
"Everything good is on  
the highway," meaning this  
creature: he was a prophet.

But did he guess his disciples,  
those gasoholics eager to kill  
every denier of the octane  
they gulp to gain personal  
salvation as a speed span  
that gaps from us to Überman?

Human was just a bridge to cross.  
Raise a glass to his late loss.  
All hail that great Rilke spiel:

to make the earth invisible!  
Skoal. Let's get rid of it for real.  
Fuck is it anyway but fuel.

Let's burn it up on our way  
to the stars. Terminal ahead—  
Last Exit: Deity. But see  
how Evolution swerves instead  
to this crumpled cast-off, this  
flattened apotheosis. Most

boring of pets. Lowest, last beast  
in our abbreviated-by-ecocide  
Bestiary, the Roadkill may be  
the one we miss chiefly after  
all the other brutes here are  
emersonized planetwide.

The Roadkill may have been bred  
unconsciously to lead us  
away from our rapacious  
verse. That's why his genus  
his ilk begot/his stock is: Dead.  
(Phylum: *Poeticus americanus*.)

Note:

The transportation/energy policies of the United States are  
ecocidal suicidal insane. They arise from our professed  
need to experience everything as individuals, immediately,  
directly; to pursue via our private vehicles a liberty of one;  
to singly dominate and exhaust the environment. This  
spurious concept of freedom pervades all our culture, not  
least our poetry, which valorizes the Emersonian/  
Whitmanic urge to ubiquitize our presence, to "see it for  
ourselves." What despoliation of earth and atmosphere

follows from that desire. Geopolitical consequences include the current (2001-?) so-called 'War on Terror' which is of course really a war to ensure the continued flow of cheap fuel into our gastanks. The greed to go, to see, to be there, to get it hot, to gulp it down: to never stay at home with the vicarious. What matter how many casualties ensue if we can continue to satisfy this mania which pollutes not just our air but our poems as well. We will pay any price to maintain our selfish addiction to the first-person voice.

## RUBBERNECK

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

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

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

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

Rubberneckin  
Inspectin  
Where the sirens' screech  
Directs my feets  
I'm takin a butcher at

Everymeat I meet  
Gonna glue my shoes  
To the avenues  
And my eyelashes to my cheeks

Anywhere a group  
Has got into a grope  
Hangin on the ropes  
I'll poke my periscope  
Cause you're my only hope  
For some lovin  
So step to one side please  
Quit shovin  
I am a witness for my enemies  
I am a witness for my enemies

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

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

Rubberneckin  
I'm just checkin  
Rubberneckin  
Hey wait a second  
Rubberneck

## GOLLY MOUNTAIN BLUES

Up on Golly Mountain all the lovers are parked  
Wish we could be up there enjoyin the dark  
But you don't wanna I'm sorry I come along  
Cause you won't stop the car hon all night long

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside  
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide  
I know you ain't to blame but  
Our love's about to flame out  
Can't you smell the rubber burn  
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

When you told me you loved danger I said then I'm your guy [girl]  
I been dangerous since I first learned to kiss  
Let's go up on Golly and give it a try [whirl]  
But when I said I loved it I sure didn't mean this

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside  
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide  
I can't remember your name but  
Our love's about to flame out  
Can't you feel the floorboards burn  
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

I heard about some funny ways that people get their kicks  
From runnin round upon the town to gettin hit with whips  
But you take the cake my friend you're oddball number one  
I admire your nerves but I got some curves where you  
could have more fun than these here

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside  
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide  
I guess it's all the same but  
Our love's about to flame out  
Can't you taste the seat of my bluejeans burn  
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

Poor baby I know it ain't your fault it was your mama daddy musta  
dropped you on your brake when you was born cause if you don't

know that lovin is the deadliest thrill there is you don't know nothin I  
shoul'da known somethin when you picked me up inside the movie-  
show the way your windshield wiper kept gettin into my popcorn  
here let me take these hairpins outa my hair and let it fall into your  
lap don't that make you want to love me and cuddle and lay your  
head on my soft soft shoulder . . . Soft Shoulder? Hey! Look out!

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside  
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide  
It's a hurty shame but  
Our love's about to flame out  
Can't you tell my poor heart yearns  
But you just keep on riding them hairpin turns  
Yes you just keep on riding them  
hair-  
pin—

Get your tongue off that gaspedal baby  
You tryin to love this thing or drive it well then drive it drive it  
Just cause you ain't got nothin to live for . . . heck, come to think of  
it I ain't got nothin neither  
Hey you know somethin? I'm beginning to like it

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside  
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide  
I know you ain't to blame but  
Our love's about to flame out  
Can't you smell the rubber burn  
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

## PLUNGE

at night one drop of rain  
falls from each star  
as if it were being lowered  
on a string

and yet that storm of plummets  
is never enough  
to wet any of the planets  
that pass through it

only the blackness the space  
between us is washed  
away by these singular  
lettings-down of water

distance is washed away  
all the worlds merge  
for a liquid moment  
our island eyes

and suddenly we understand  
why umbrellas love  
to dive  
into clouds

## OCTOBER

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

## NOVEMBERNEW

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

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

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

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

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

## ON THE ROAD (KEROUAC)

Join Jack and his pals  
in the endless adventure  
of spilling fossil fuels  
into the atmosphere.

Step on the gas and zoom  
from sea to oily sea  
why be a stay at home  
Beat means holy Beat means free.

Jump in the car and drive  
anywhere though west is best  
burn that octane burn to live  
don't question this quest.

Go man you gotta go  
you too must take that ride  
faster faster never slow  
on the road to ecocide.

## 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  
summa comb or brush  
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 slit-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

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