

For Stone Is Stubborn

A Collection of Poems

Richard P. Gabriel

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Like a Long Story Piece

age of changes
words in rows plainer here
unsettled at the ends where nettles
grow where thought might time-out reading
standing by a big river
by the biggest river
and watching so many things when what I'd want
really
is to see the most common thing many times
you've walked away from me
but really
you've made me do the work
of it the walking

I made your house worth living in
stocked it
watched you
close the gate
the later keep
in touch
returned to the overrun nature
of it the walking
up like the same poles
your deepwell lingers
for stone is stubborn
and the friendliness of flying is foreign

I hugged a girl in my dreams
touched her the only
place I can

Gauze & Lace

fallen down the well
like an unsteady rabbit
splashed where dust should be
and launched upward rocketlike in spite
before the ice-creaming cold took hold
under cloudless skies

and dust from the lawnmower cutting no
pulverizing
through yellow grass
weeds & snakes
bugs & bugs
old newspapers

a quarter acre here
2 quarters there

cast down like leftovers

the electricity is off
between us
I mean someone officially
turned it off

A Walk

as if the canyon were lit
we wandered like its captive stream
down toward a settlement
once thriving but under the impression
it's a historical site its
low adobe walls forming floorplans
from one side to the other
and up the north canyon wall
by ladders and steps cut into the sandstone
where once lovers like us sat in the sun
watching lovers like us walk down the canyon
and away to where those who left this place
wandered without thinking
their goals were just wishes

Stop! What's That Sound?

imagine a guitar
an electric one

through an amp set up
for tremolo in which the voice
quivers and the guitar

player is bending the notes
in between Western ones

and imagine the throngs
of musicians who have died never

knowing what I just said means
though it's the best music Buffalo Springfield
ever did and the bending of strings

the finger pad on a string holding note
no one intended this is the impression

of music music leaves
once the wishes are over

Now Not

snow falling in pines
like a curtain
like gauze
like a partition ready for anything

woman in a leather coat
like a message
like judgment
like a crux of guesswork faceless and admirable

walking away
like a note of hopefulness
like rejection
like a retreat directly away toward a horizon whited out

her turn leftward
like a new way to look at it
like news
like a lover now ready for you

now not

Paralyzing Grace

the song told me that you were just
a wish you were just
a wish

rocking from painting to painting
the strands only the light sees
of your hair

I touch them we walk
the streets like they're perfect

we stood looking once
only fumes remain

in all the cities we mortgage
shamefulness for the chance to caress

the flamboyance of pudding
overwhelms the far corner endeavoring
a species of clarity in red late
afternoon lightning strikes

and the two revert to our previous
thinking the two of us revert

suppose you were just a wish
and I the wisher fume

the paralyzing grace of holding a live wire
under the electrifying sky tempts me
to linger under this song

January 7, 2003

My Dream

when the time comes
and I must go

will you try to save me
. . . or tell me you love me

which would mean more
ask yourself

there will be one else
and to whom would it mean

Not Your — Place

your apartment
you bought it for her
and it's big enough for two
for three were the need to have arisen

in the bedroom off your bedroom
the lights are restless thrashed by the shadows of branches
out of control tonight and the leavings of a rainstorm
in the winter of cold in her kitchen you both cooked

and made carbonated drinks from juice and a gas canister
behind the couch where her skin was your orienteering map
all one day magnets impossibly hug
the black metal fire-
place

just last week you stood
shirtless and drenching on the balcony
wind raiding the garden's peace
when you glimpsed someone

there! just there behind that leafless bush
headed from where she went
to another — not your — place

Hitch Hiker

as you walked past the dying bush
a sheet of wind lifted several leaves
flipping each a dozen times
in the time it took you to walk
out from behind one house
past the gap between
and behind the second
while on a balcony visible from there
he waited shirtless and rained upon
on the night you thought was cold
on a mission you thought represented progress

think of the leaves as a man getting in a car
that stopped to give him a ride
unexpectedly

Lunaria

behind the hedges
not much protection from the wind passing through it
none from the rain coming mostly down
you don't know who you are
know little more about where you're going
the hedge has few leaves left
you are pausing for no reason
and soon the moon will join you
and the hedge the garden the balcony but not you
will be lit

Bad Order

I went near big industry
found a giveaway street name
with me I carried

dark & warm clothes
lots of layers and maps
looking for a catch-out
do you know

the whole story?
where're they going
when's the power called for?
this is the way it is:

in open boxcars
on the rear platform of a grainer or hopper
between the wheels of piggybacked trailers
in the well behind cargo containers
on the second or third deck of empty auto carriers
in empty gondolas

bad order
stay off 'em
remember the wind
the sun the rail who warned you
of the bull coming by
you have your reasons
you carry them like freight

Some Fear

the beautiful and rich
are easily diagnosed
no need to linger over DSM-IV
not much need for pity
they wander on Gulf beaches at sunset
imagine the decor of their breakfast nooks
attendant to their needs to lie
on the beach and decipher a Southern bird's song
whose fear is specific
but no less irrational

for example the rich and the beautiful
all fear the approach of costumed characters
thinking perhaps
themselves in rags as poor
or toothless as ugly

in the end they realize
their fears are not irrational
by merely probable

Drinks and A Mathematical Thought

cafe afternoon
nothing-special dull late
afternoon light springing on me
outside at my usual table
cloudy enough outside to see inside
an older blonde her thin
legs up on her chair in denim
her hair a liquid sort of gold color
flowing like sandstone
polished as in a Botticelli
there's actually a glint

let's skip the complicated part
and focus on desire
confuse longing with temperature

the curve of expectations is a function
matching the luminosity I envision
later thinking of her hair through the glass
that time of day as she and I slide downslope
and since I go first I'm left behind

Rules of Conversation

golden birds flew up in the porcelain backdrop
of a hard winter day filled with sunshine
and the false warmth of direct sunlight
and a shaky hand held for a second too long
behind a blind of bushes an unintelligible whump
periodically untangles our lofty sentences
and a lower ethic grows rigid then relaxes
as the birds settle into brambles and branches
planned by simple rules and released into the world
to complicate our thinking by making it linear
we plan our stumbles so carefully
that real ones have the effect of lanolin on dry skin

I expected darkness not the honey of a warm wind
listening in as we closed in on a real meaning
near the end on our unsparkling conversation

Banshee—Wrong, Wrong, Wrong

I read the news around the world
connected like a banshee
to everything that's been typed in

it's not monkeys typing in Shakespeare
people do it

it's difficult to understand the need to explore
when the chances of something better are slim

these signals are not new and require no commitment
to philosophical underpinnings the constant being

flickering green lights and a frantic flip
flop from one thing to another

many have seen her as she goes wailing
and clapping her hands
the caoine is an imitation

I realize I've used the wrong word
banshee doesn't imply fast or quick

I learned this by being connected
like a banshee to everything

The Fate of the Dimwit

a window is a page
a page is a long long line
a line ends with a return
and maybe a line
 feed
when scientist venture into metaphor
they get lost like forests in woods
and trees next to trees

(don't get them started on trees)

Lament in Clarity

imagine night
sheet lightning venting across the tops of clouds
mountainsides cooling from warming days showing
a fresh green
after durations
a rumble going slowly deeper
like a footnote she has connected this to her childhood fear
of lightning coming through the window and spearing Jesus
over the mantle
she sits waits by the window
calmly for her death from weakness
alone as her father foretold her fate
would be while her heart fires from fear
of death by electrical burning
while the grass around her house grows on
while everything else seems normal

Artificial Implications Rust

cut the hay let it dry
rake it in windrows with a side delivery
airing the hay to dry it more
then a pickup baler to make bales
we used a rake like this

and before that sulkies that dragged the hay long distances
into crossways windrows that didn't dry out right
after a damp night

I learned the power trip mechanics slow
the connection between the foot pedal, dog clutch,
and teeth too complex to ignore
so I staggered the rows

life was a way to sweat
the tractor would slow down
and pop a little louder

there is simply no function
for a rake like this today
except as an ornament
in the weed patch
behind the barn

farming was sufficiently important
to support many an argument

By One

the barn
never painted and pure grey
hand-hewn framing and rough edge nails
the cellar is half dug and half raised
by the dirt from the digging
on three sides the back open
with hayrakes and mowers
and a couple wagons

this barn
is the center of my past
but has fallen away and everyone
who knows of it has died
it had two bigs doors
one at each end
and you could drive a wagon filled with bales
through it or a truck
sliding doors on rollers
with knot holes letting in the sun
letting out the deep sighs
I'd hoped to capture

Fireside-6

dirt roads hogging my thoughts
but all the dirt roads I know are sand
and sand rode over by trucks and cars is dust
the long deep spots full of rainfall water
fill me with fear for what lies hidden

dirt roads are old roads
and connect unwanted places
veer off of the already withdrawn
head off in the random direction
people living down them don't want
to be found be talked to be seen
they want to pass away in the dark
as if they never were
and that's where they think it ends

Potash and Pearlash

take one gallon of strong lye
add a half pound of shucks
cut up fine
let the shucks
boil in the lye

until they are reduced to shreds
then fish the shreds out
and put half a pound of crackling grease in
or six ounces of lard
and boil until it is sufficiently thick

to make soap
brandy and soap were mixed and applied
to the wounds on horses

soap was listed as an ingredient
to treat horses for urinary retention

my father told me importantly
to use soap to wash my eyes

I said
shucks you know what soap's made of?

Sense of Snow

Here's what I know of snow:

first the strange thing between cold and wet
when wind becomes hard

little pinches turning white from a backgrounded gray

next all is slantwise and whitening
sometimes it turns slow when the wind drops

the ground is softened then falls away
in some cases there is blue where the mind expects white
someone walking by packs their prints

later chimney ash and factory smoke dark flecks the snow
which is graying from sun melt and night freeze

snow again
the same cycle but now the footprints are gone
from sight

someone who cares is disturbed
and night and all the rest falls

January 23, 2003

In The Depths

it is beneath them
to lie under snow
it is beneath snow
that they lie

Alucky

the language exudes a protective toxin
to keep predators off
when pinned the stink's let loose
bricks too soft to insert into Dickey's wall
squirring along their length
eelly unforcepsable
pinning them down?????? no no

fear: meaning

Counter Flow

that river is still
doing its thing but now
two minds are no longer aware

totems—I need to plan more
of them and the places
to put them

my heart stopped
I think but my scream
woke it and now continuation

is mine
the only sorrow
when does burden end

she depended on him
to make the things others buy
he depended on himself to figure out how

they were like an act
that sometimes spun out
like the head of a cut-end wet mop head

twirling one way by its handle
and then the other way
that river is still

switching from ebb to flow
and that's when it freezes
like my heart does sometimes

Yelled Cut

in all those poems where
we stand part perhaps
in an underground garage
on a foreign street
in a park made oddly
of weeds and debris
and the possibility of possibility crosses separately
our minds
did the poet know that the ending he left out
your mind
on someone else and his favorite shot of you
from the back walking away was the one that happened
after the cameras stopped and mr director
the head filled with muses
yelled cut

She felt certain Hymen's prophecy would come to pass

famous names of mythology
ring from poetry we're forced to know
who cares

for their foibles
their exploits

can just a reference make us cry when someone merely turns around?

it's the classics man
they make me raise my stomach juice on high
is nothing better than that is new?

tall trees are pretty trees
old forests have many
saplings wither

geezers gyre
foppery embodies fibs

they and Eurydice
spied on Psyche

Eurydice?
I'm rid of her too

Misplaced Thoughts or Where They Belong

we languish like forgeries
hiding behind the real things
making the choice significant
the joy of torn colored paper
equals the honey scent of sap
from logs cut last year being trimmed to size
on a warm day in March
the amount of work we do after dark
make us the genius equivalents of DaVinci
who smeared paint in the name of realistic art
let's pity things like the consciousness
gone or wondering where thinking is
so much so that maybe there is nothing
like it at all

Leaf Sepia

the paradise I've made is lost
in the sepia of leaves frozen under thin ice
with the dark depth showing behind
below

if someone were down there
the folly of cool would unfurl and languish
like a woman unfolding her legs
and everything else

Computing Truth

the scene is open to interpretation
like whether 1 is yes or 0 is
like when truth hits does all turn true
or is false the final word?

Clicker of Writing

how he appears in writing
is unleavened by himself
he knows the fraud as well as the simple deceit word
three times he stood and twice he fell
before news of the pink stone interfered

yes something funny happened
when he looked for himself
like a channel surfer
he flipped before the plot
was laid bare in the extra second
the world needed

The Technical Community Got Together

is it possible my warm bed
is a cold stopping place
is home a place I'll never see

just go to
just long for
just return to

with long-range cameras
with a casual but hopeful interest
with unsteady hands hold high technology

you witness me passing away
you speculate my fate
you dismiss the notion of home

Accustomed To It

human remains have been found
fallen from the sky after an impossible

beauty beyond recognition

the sole of a boot
 a metal sole
of a right boot

men on hands and knees staring down
at what it could be
 behind them a canister vents yellow gas

the sickened strip and are cleansed
probed with instruments meaning
the wrong thing

we found fear falling down
but most of it burned up
all that's left is a vapor of apprehension
and even that's blowing away

Thoughts Pending an Inquiry

simplicity of a hangdog
mercury begging to be
part of a measurement

finding is the hint of luck
followed by zeroing in
comprehension

we crave it

a clearing in the woods
is unsafe in the aftermath
all it takes now is a falling

she will never warm a bed again
won't wiggle
never fix a favorite meal
under pressure again

she has fallen out of a clearing sky
she has made a great sound

Oops Wrong Meat

they told her she won
and it felt soooo good
don't stop baby
yea baby ... that's it ... just like that

then they said they meant her tits
so sweet so perky

at least she could think about them

Something Like This

the poet flows down sidestreets and alleys
tipping trash cans a bit to see in
opening dumpsters
pushing garbage to the side but looking
at it too

drifting trash in the streets
attract his attention but he won't
look into their eyes
or speak directly to them

words aren't important when he's walking
when he's looking touching smelling

it's like lifting a weight up and hooking it into
its ready position and at night
he lets it loose to slowly fall to earth
pull a cord that spins a large flywheel
that converts the energy

into something like this

At All

what if there were no unknown
like no legs on a stool
like no earth beneath
like no rope to hold on to
like no air to refresh
like no party to flirt at
like no legs to wiggle
like no sex parts to unsettle
like no lightning lighting up the night

what if there were no unknown
is unknown is nothing
it'd be like
what if there were no nothing

at all

On Thoughts

nothing's as sweet as the fine light
the fine sweet fleeting light

I've found the key to marking
the time to walk finally
toward the dropping light
toward night

there seems to be land across the waters
and dark trees silhouetted to my eyes
and the sounds of furious surf
which roar for a time and fill the air with sound and wet
and then fall silent as if the sound will
never come back

At Tomales Bay

among sparse pines
tall with branches starting up high
with a direct sun coursing through the branches
and a reflected sun off the bay below us
her hair was brilliant black tinged
red and it flowed like the water of the Tomales River
into the bay sweetening it so the oysters
farmed there exposed their inner flavor
to the least ready palette

her back remained toward me
her hair changing with each movement
with each luscious breeze
I heard the soft padding of footsteps
and she turned to watch
but she never turned toward me
the thought of it like salt or bitter
or like the bile afterward

February 9, 2003

Properly Scared

—for Michele Wyrebek

we find it honestly
death has a savory halo

the fading-away kind
the take off your prosthetic leg to pass through security kind

tell me her story but end it with her address spelled right
give her the dignity of correctness when it's least needed

dust her seat before she sits the last time around
adjust her halo which has gone off cocked

I watched her once
take 10 minutes getting into a car

now the fleet horse awaits whose job is to whisk
away the weary and halt when our lesson

not hers
is over

February 10, 2003

Signing Off

she goes the long way
because the car makes it shorter
she arrives early to have more time to settle

because there is pain on top of pain
she removes the fake parts of herself
because fakery falls away so easily

she writes it down the bones
because language is like her narcotic
she injects it heavenly into her lines

-for Michele Wyrebek

Bell Hope

the bell's big
its sound is solid but brittle like bottle glass
I've stopped to ring it while the rest walk on
up a hill perhaps or down toward the river

the fog's heavy and they've all sunk into it
like cats into cotton

it's time to stop ringing the bell
the road is overgrown and the way less clear

my heart is slow
my breathing is occasional and shallow
it's cold here but I walk

toward the warmth skittering on ahead
and I feel closeness closing in
and hands reaching back

Coast to Coast

the cold has settled upon them
and snow has piled on top of that
what we worry about is uninformed
language has turned little
by little to ash and fragments

our great gods tell us of precision
but we doubt them because they speak of language
and we cannot tell whether to pray or laugh

the streetlight and palm
look the same and the sun behind the palm at noon
reminds me of the light at midnight
and what is the same is precisely different

the cold hangs on
things grow quiet
ice flows down the river and is lost at sea
the bridges hold up and our walks
across them resonate with the language
of precision applied to shades and shadows

Language Fire

let's learn the lingo
be outasight poets
hang the wet ones loose
coin new logisms of the realm
use idioms like idiots
suffer fool hardiness
wish ourselves a happy vacuuming spin
turn on a dime to dope

playing with language
playing with fire

The Me and You Thing

some areas are still closed
from over-dumping or saturation
the leaves are adjuncts
to rising winter

foster care from the dark side
beneath a sheath of ice leaves inhabit a mosaic

the people walking by
on their way to a wedding
hardly notice such patterns
for making those
of their own

Fitful

their masks

I mean their finery and made up -ness
or a special occasion above quotidian
or a totem a special vow a curiosity disguised as longing

when it's over and the band packs up
the masks are revealed as mere attitude
and something about the day is nothing

uncommon unfailing unintentional

Too Much Snow

the snow's piled high
but the extreme temperature
lightened it

it moves aside light beads of glass
it resists mounding
prefers to level out
seek depths

it spilled into my shoes
and melted away
the heat directed down onto my feet in the car
dried it before I felt cold or wet

I walked up to the snow covered house myself
and left an hour later someone else
the cost of the transformation
was my survival

Before Me

a floral setting in a vase
flowers with beautiful names to go
with their unnameable beauty
but wilting from inevitable death creeping
up their stems haggard drying out
and turning dark yellow brown
simple colors signaling the end of
or support for
life

except in the same vase
in the same setting
is a twig thought to be about
to bloom its buds are there
their brown is tinted by green and red
but its beauty remains
will endure such beauty is made of
something less flowery something
less disposed to show off
something less vital
more enduring

Winter Morning and Confession

the white is comfortably
covering a darker shade
snow piled sugarlike
confectioning trees hopeless but for this

my friend has confessed his secret
to me in words inept but heartfelt

not inept for a man
but for a poet
which he wishes to be as one of his arcs
his planned life a liability
as the list of things he has done
is ticked off one by one from the part
he thought was the future
but really is the now
which is all there is

Flame Tree

they plowed over my mother's grave
—my father's too, they share one—
to create a lane for people to reach a new one
and for the backhoe to dig through the frozen layer of earth
—they piled flowers on which froze within minutes—
looking from one angle my parents are resting comfortably
—despite their physicality which is ashes in urns in a vault underground—
looking from another a makeshift road has been plowed over them
and the cold—unbearable and cloistering—has converged here
the sound of ultracold snow particles on each other blown by a calm breeze
is unsettling to the warmth a heavy coat makes
—for the trees are in flames—
nearby other tombstones watch from times gone by
and share their cold welcomes like barley tea and oatmeal crackers
on winter day when someone decides to be buried under ice
—the road out is iced and the flames of love infect the trees

Happy Days

like now the ice in a flowing river breaks free of one bank
sends the snowy junk downstream that is
piled on the ice and not a few
lessons are learned by passersby on the riverwalk
concerned with the ears/eyes not their heads
—their heads but not the contents—

but they are afraid to speak
the ice breaking free is a message to the dead
who are buried in droves up the hill
recalling the day they bought their plots
which were sunny days warm days

Design Problem

we walked up the hill to the plot the caretaker pointed out
from her parents' which was in a low flat place and humble
this one was majestic and high with a linden tree just starting out nearby
the plot was a gap and the day was warm and luscious with a calm breeze
I was 13 and my mother seemed young standing over the "happy hunting grounds"
I asked about the headstone and she said that would be my problem
a problem I couldn't imagine then 40 years spurs the imagination
now I must design

Mythic Bards

sunlight lurking under a hem of clouds
lights the wheat waving on from edge to edge
of the wide expanse, the dark undersides
of the clouds forming a meaningful contrast

we drive to the drive-in hoping
the late day rain will dry up in the dirt field of the drive-in
we are early, ready to eat our chicken and potatoes
tonight under a cleared sky to the unsteady light
of Night of the Living Dead

Kansas has formed religiously around us,
lined our minds with dreams of wheat husks
and itching chaff in the smalls of our backs

the roads 'round here will one day be paved,
great writers will admire our honest ways
and the movies we watch while at home
our doors remain unlocked, and we trust

the wheat is too innocent to reflect us exactly
and the symmetry of wheat seeds belie the over-
simplicity of nature's solution to the problem
of curiosity and circumstance

parked as the rain begins to pop up puffs of wheat-charged dust
we sip lemonade and chew down to the bones

the bed of my truck awaits its eventual drying out
at the hands of post-shower winds, yes
the bed awaits our hungry lovemaking,
a night of horror, and the rhythmic words of mythic bards

Lives in the Distance

be ready
drop below the truck bed sides
lie on your back in hay chaff and bits
look up at the washed out sky cloudless after pumping its heart out

women are getting ready
we see them as strong because their beauty is powerful
they see themselves as weak because beauty is fragile

the roads are macadam or gravel
and always rocks're kicked up into the undercarriage
the truck whistling through the hot Kansas air
the clicking rocks on old metal

stay down while women watch the truck go by

they want to build a paradise of meaning and beauty
but all they do is sweep and cook
lie down with their knees up
shudder themselves into the ground

be ready

Illness of Beauty

I'm sick of the beauty of nature
made from uncaredful coincidences
colors averaging out to brown or green
predation and eating fucking and dying

the beauty of nature is false for not being regimented
not geometrical enough not hierarchical enough
give me a machine

something that can break down
and by breaking down reveals its parts
and by revealing its parts inform us of nature

if only nature weren't beautiful
I would believe it

more

Keys to Heaven

on my desk to the left of my computer
my mother's keys sit—she lived the last 3 years of her life
panicked about losing them while I was 3000 miles away

she could not tell them apart so she labeled them with tape
7 keys in all for her house, gates, and shed

there are other keys on the ring that unlock
I think nothing this and her purse if she
lost one of them she would wail what am I going to do

the pain of being old was almost more

she talked of killing herself
she prided herself always
on knowing what to do but she didn't when she lost her keys

I would find them
I have them now
she needs them no more
I need

Foreshadowing Under Pine Boughs

the darkness roots provide
dipping from the bank into the water
is akin to the light they provide
rising from the water up to the bank
we forget a pond is filled with liveliness
even with swathed in cold and bathed
in winterlight I've started a small twigfire
burning with leaves and dried pine branches
no bigger than little fingers and dried on the trunk
through a stoppage I've walked down a cold path
to get here my fire sits behind a rock and before
the pond not much bigger than a large tub
sourced by the water table intersecting the hollow

on that day I thought of all my days of love
the end that waits the emptiness before that
I dreamed of women washing my body before a fire
not much warmer than that little one
and their singing anticipation of the night
held warmly in arms beneath quilts and long covers
my fate is like this only forgetful

Stop

were there places to go
firm cold air to breath and the light to see by
did tails wag or eyes water when you came
or left was the firm ground frozen or pickled from ice
how many times did the crows caw and how sweet
was the cream and sugared bark

were there places you've been
worth telling of worth painting
worth burying alongside the painters

find the trees
cut them down
flog the horses
but gently
ride the wagons down the dirt road
find the right place
to stop

Her Singularity

she wants it her way she will say what she will
the facts well the facts they are not mentioned
a fact is what's true and what's true anyway
she hides herself her ecstasy grows less frequent
nothing is what she expected it would be
the wind—things always changing—is constant
and if it isn't its changes are smooth
or the changes of the changes are
we bless the mathematicians and urge them away quickly
like a steep acceleration curve taught but not learned
she's beneath the willow talking lurking
planning alone how to be alone

Forget Passion

her life has snowballed
into the round shape of sorrow
it rolls downhill against her desires

she denies them
she wraps her sorrow in mirror excuses
she weeps with inaction

she loves just one person
she forgets passion
she thinks only of science and its fragrant reductions

her desires have snowballed
into the round shape of downhill
it rolls sorrows against her life

Wish Alone

air filled with motes and fragrances of exotic plants and weeds
filled with a more southern light a more western light
filled with breezes blown through gold grass and hard brush
filled with reflections from the western sea pushing its wet up onto the coastline
filled with men and women dedicated to pushing on though there is no farther place
filled with canopies of dark green and gloomy trees penetrated to the bottom with shafts of light
filled with the optimism a teenaged boy cannot feel

at dusk an eastern sky takes on little shimmer and no hope for tomorrow
a boy sits by a western window on a brick hearth by a small bookcase
the potential of the west is apparent in the dipping of the light behind the woods curtain
the slight fog rising testifies to the rain that uninvited fell all morning
the books he reads are filled with the past and cold invitations

he wishes for the air filled
the southern light
the western light
the warmth combed through gold grass
the voices whispering
the hard canopies pierced frantically

and when he has them
he'll wish again

Hell's Bell's

he is sitting on the hearth
thumbing through books that are America's 1950's idea of literature for boys
facing a window facing west
listening to the Beach Boys
he is strange . . .
strangely drawn to the flickering sunset
the pines and maples and oaks and hickories that define the western border of his vision
form a wall
the eggblue light forms a shell
shell
's hell
sell
there was always a going there to be had

he did
he's here
he's me

Treatable

she is formed
o broken
shattered one day shattered another
her calm bewilders
she fights herself

I can't help it
get better get faster get slower
it's the peace that passes understanding

it's a passdown
after formation
information
for making it better
please pass on it

Asking For

simple as it sounds
something is wrong
nothing adds up
beneath flurries loads of leaves form winter's blanket
ice is partitioning the warm from the warm
ice is stopping
the statistic that matters doesn't apply to one person
you need to find what you think
your place is
locate yourself
triangulate using 2 useful things
relate in pairs and repeat
etc
the point when things tip is the point
of no return

March 6, 2003

On Walking Past an Oak

I'm done with this battle
too much
and too little

Kingman Fishing

the Santa Fe triple engine struggles up the Kingman incline . . .
no it doesn't trains only thrash in their machineness
the flatcars carry stacked truck trailers
the string a mile long is heading for St Louis
its wheels are hot and rails too climbing
up toward Flagstaff

the rocks and bluffs here radiate red
the backlit moon points out the wayward sun
I'm in my room after the last train before dawn
typing in these last few words hoping the end
goes by as slowly as the last few cars
where bums and the adventurous look up
at the heaving nighttime sky

TLR/Rear

memorials sprout
crosses covered in blooms placed by
marks in the road detailing
for investigators where it happened
where important pieces were found
meanwhile as late afternoon light hits the shrouded cross
a comb and brush still holding on
to her long black strands disintegrate
these things placed here by loving dropoffs
fade lighten grow lighter
strongest memory < pale ink
 $\lim_{time \rightarrow \infty} ink \rightarrow 0$

Scattered Remains

they are mostly crosses
vases of plastic flowers maybe
always something personal
where they died not where they are
graves minds inept writings
by the side of the road
pickups drive by kicking up gravel
cars go by and the red and white flowers catch eyes
a curve a tree an embankment a bridge support
attention at rest or snatched away
mental acuity low
why here why now
who is it for

Today, At Noon

the buildings
cinder blocks
2x4 frames filled with bricks and rough concrete
heavy roofs and pueblo-style ladders up to them
dog dog dogs
mud dried mud hardened into permanent ruts
stacks of twisted logs
old refrigerators with their doors peeled away
bear clan corn clan
silversmiths and farmers

an old man walks slowly down the road
surrounded by dogs
walking by stepping entirely onto one leg
waiting
stepping onto the other
he is in those clothes somewhere
all he's seen is nowhere
the mesas are lined up
the rain has washed the plain away
dogs approach cautiously looking away
we approach the edge of the mesa
and look out from the center
of the universe

Silversmith Debating a New Style

at the edge of the mesa
facing the San Francisco Peaks
top-white and jewel-like
with the smell of Hopi stew brewing in lamb broth
and juniper boughs burning spewing smoke above the village
my heart works on the problem:
mesa or plain

Hopi living piled on each other in high-heaped villages
or alone with a section surrounding each hogan Navajo style

long distances expand to make this place
more than the center but the living heart
the full lost life of all
each one the same in its abstractness
different in every detail but the detail of everything forgotten

the path down is a dirt track
connecting old steps and stopping off
points it continues to the water hole
the place where living seeps up
even as high as mesa edge

where smoke drifts off
toward the peaks
toward the alone living places

Together

imagine
—for real life is too clean—

two
people hankering for the flesh the other holds on to

lives
they may throw away from the other as if

holding
were important enough to die without

on
a night filled with the web of branches holding lives two imagine

together

Lost Together

the desert

gravel matrixed in sand or dust
hard birds harsh in brown and white plumage

hard green bark and leaves
pungent smells from seeking water

arroyos and washes carved deep into the desert
like veins returning blood to its hearthome cooled

from its long journey to the ends of the world
everything here is conserved held back

we speak with animation but she never glances
my way or speaks directly to me

I watch her hair moving in the wind
moving me slowly away toward the mesas

behind which the sun hides
behind which the green is cached

Hopi Legend

walking toward the edge of the mesa
the man with names in two languages
hesitates before stepping off
falling down
floating up
as will happen whenever languages sharing the same man
have nothing in common

Piptsantiva[†]

death places:
the tree in which the body is found
along with signs of violence—perhaps murder
perhaps suicide—three trunks formed into a seat

the viewing place which is sometimes the ground
by a tree in which a person has died
dirt and insects infect the affect of the viewer and the dead

the burial place which
perhaps
is a shallow trench covered by river-smoothed stones
making it harder for coyotes and badgers to dig down

who cares
we wonder
who cares which of these places are distinct
as we find that life is the process
of forming a mental picture of our death

[†]—start forming a mental image

Piiku†

was it right to put them together
two urns in the same vault
the vault just big enough?

I placed their story with them
so they will not forget themselves
and so anyone finding those urns will know

I wonder on it every day
I wake with these thoughts
fall asleep with them

right now they are under the snow they hated so much
but soon Spring will engulf the air above them
they are pressed together as they rarely were in life

thinking of them makes me stupid
words do not press themselves together
with passion or lust when I think about them

I am weak with being alone
I find my strength by being alone
just me just me pressed close with only words

†—press close together

Desert Dissertation

captured after attraction
filling a need untransplanted from afar
we've found our way up a wash then a ravine up to the mesa
which flies the flag of past pride
she is helplessly beautiful
I am reduced near her in her
role as debilitator
she is the wash
the ravine
the way up the mesa
which is living
which is dry in the extreme
which is hoping hope
rescues the season
a need transplanted from afar

Laugh Riot

holding her death certificate
I laugh

that it would certify her difficult achievement
alone one night
weak frail afraid

Interrogation of Nature

cars piled up
the ceremony is under way
beneath us the valley is laid out
our hands are in our pockets
displaying our endearment to monotony

there are no more reasons than these
like leaves they blow this way and that
there are no more loves to achieve
like branches backlit they inspire more
than they deserve

Alone on Day *n*

what if you heard that you always needed to act alone
no one would help you
no one could be trusted
that the world was there to be suspicious of

and sporadically it seemed true
at times people were not reliable
even those closest to you
like two trees with red leaves in front of a relapse of green

and at the end
it seems more true than truth could endure
as the paintings your husband painted spin
your head is about to hit and punctuate the end

and the arc has proven itself worthy
if lonely as hell

Wha???

let's figure on the heat blending up
the chaos settling in like a pattern tearing up
like hair unbrushed for many nights
the explosions are lingering on the surface of a pond
and my philosophy is to love and to hate
my philosophy equally as it suits me
I like the life of loneliness
if only there were someone to share it with

Lament in Hope of Living

life's flurry dries up
in a form of heat disembodied and magisterial
the great welling of words is a dialect
being formed from the dying of light

I've wondered about fear and how long it can grip
the fate of one flake through a long winter
from first falling to the inevitable
melting and welling up into the base of a stem

we pray
pray as hard as we can
for the stem to be

Can I Share Your Trip

from here on Colorado the instrument-tipped mountaintops
rise out of haze like two worlds pasted together for a project
and despite the haze the sun is insistent on turning people red
a woman walks past me to the corner where she waits for the light
shifting her weight from one leg to the other—she wears an asymmetric skirt
and a black Victorian hat and she is classy in the way a call girl must be to succeed

the only shade is under olive trees whose Mediterranean green has haze built in
and the pumped watercourse is fake with the addition of pump roar
everything here seems fresh but also in need of repair and the hanging
of the air just above the rooftops signals isolation from real tops
my sorrow is filled with unbelief and hope and the capacity for hunger

Beloved?

With Her Hand

let's say the world is full of fawning
delight in sampling the usuals
the pleasants the languishers
and wherever whenever and
their simple siblings of evertude protrude
the laughing nymphs trickle by

allow me the tragedy of gazing at branches backlit at dusk
trying to find there the path that leads inward
the path buried in the rush of convergences
I've lost her I've lost her I've lost her
listen: my name is lost and I tangle among
the soon invisible branches

On It

Windy Day

the house large luxurious lonely as a single wind
whipping the lake's surface to small mounds
holds the rattling 'round ghost of a rich man poor
in relations and passions a man who died in the grip
of cold water we felt his cold hands on our napes
and heard we thought or imagined his whisper
and blowing chimes we fell asleep under his spell
and woke to dark clouds covering the sky and diminishing
the mountains mounding up around the lake

Time has abandoned us—we fear the room
behind each door. We have nothing to reach for,
but we browse his books for clues we cannot
examine in any fashion. I've prepared the potion
that will zero his memory and as it compiles
for optimum execution, a drink float into my hand
and his voice like a bell chimes in.

On a Lonely Point

Cornering

like planes into a major hub
we're lined up to stop
in an order we cannot know
with times just a formalism

why did we do it
we walk from room to room
we are looking for validation
outside sand is blowing onto our windows
and the view of the path
is being obscure

there are many who love us
our job is to walk and walk
being obscure over and over
like planes landing
at last

The Migraine

Tahoe In Spring

The mountains ring lonely around the bay
and throw their images upon it whenever
its sheet is clear—times when the wind
grows calm and nothing falls from clouds.

He sleeps alone in a bed made for two:
It is part of his lure, it's part of his own trap.
It's the scene of his latest liftoff.

Plow here. The bear is not looking
permanently. The act is slowly running down,
and the liquor is evaporating away.

The fir has a bleached trunk—
it's as old as the mountains and as lonely
as patience. At night, like him, it creaks
as the wind and memories shift
past it and in through his window
and out through the dreams
of what has been and always
will be lost.

Mourning In Winter

Bus Full of Singing

Behind the house the mountain leaps
past homes perched ever more
delicately on stoney shelves
and footings dug deep and poured concrete.
As clever as he was these were more solid,
the mountain higher. He was like the carved bear
he bought from the chainsaw man: fixed
and stationary in his dealings outside.

I hurried down the hill to say goodbye
before he left but the bus drove up
filled every seat and the singing.
Down to the lakeside road then up and over
the farshore mountain, the bus keeping up
with the singing of its driver timing
all the ends to his arrival where the clouds
go when all the raining has stopped.

Cares Raining Down

Certainly

certainly we gathered today
certainly the speeches were special and sentimental
certainly no clouds formed within miles
certainly the crows made a distinct "caw, caw" sound
certainly we can draw conclusions from this and other sketches
certainly the food was unappealing though expertly prepared
certainly we learned of his good points and the songs were lusty and official
certainly the conventional won out
but the wind blow the air about so we know we all breathed in air he once did
seen the sky he once did
smelled these rough smells he once did
live even now as he once did

He Once Did

The Romance Keeps

these nights keep coming
warm as fresh bread and promises early
in a torrid affair and the possibilities
of you are hidden and endless
let's play we stay together forever
and death will seal us with a kiss
there are such lucky as us

your skirt lies in a heap by the bed
warm and wet from the night
outside the air is drying out the dew
a flagrant moon left behind

the fog last night has burned off
and blown in toward the fields

razors await us
that and sharp knives
shovels and hard back
breaking work

Fading In

Overgrown, Wet, Forgotten

three fields stacked from the road frontage
back to the West to the woods

the first where we plant primo grain and corn
and in fallow we let the timothy grass and rye grow wild
and cut that for Winter roughage

between the first and second a stone wall
covered with brush and trees was placed a century ago
or more and in that back field just hay grows
and weeds pop up the slope down back goes down to swampland
and the field is shaped like an L

finally down a road through the woods
lined sporadically with car hulks and wagons
the field that's growing over where we buried
my dog after we put her down

they represent the ages of man
and they are overgrown according to the wet

rain is the habit of thinking too hard
when the atmosphere is too cold

Out of the Game

Ways

the path we take up the mountain
is less important than the one down
because our hearts pace us going up
but nothing holds us back as we hurry down
until we collapse and fail
somewhere unexpected
along the way

Going

Way

One day we decided to hike
to the bottom of the Grand Canyon
and nothing was in us to stop us.
We got to the River and sat down for lunch.
We had carried a lot of water.
We sat for an hour.
We could not stand up because our knees were frozen
and our muscles worn down to nothing.
We needed our hearts to slow us down
but the river was too alluring
and our hearts beat lightly
while our knees and legs
begged silently for mercy
the only way they know how—
by churning until nothing is left
and we cannot make our way out.

Out

Lost Images

driving fast up the 2-lane to Hopi after dark
hugging the centerline, it two-halves the road
like training wheels, I recall your faked
moaning too in-time with the ticks which burst into yelps
as the clock struck twelve and twelve more thrusts till
I was through the bumps tapping the tires remind me
of time and the way it stretches a thought into a memory
and how a secondary thought stitches memory into story

the barrett on the bed table bursting with your broken hair
the pueblo the kiva the Mudhead I'll find him making more

memory
what's it for but to keep me going
minute by minute
looking for you seeking the mesa's top

Dust Road

Hogging The Road

the long expanse of sulphured lakebed
and far to the South a dust devil made from the disturbance
of a tractor plowing; heat covering it all and shattering
the image of blue hogging the sky in my memory; and though
the dust prevails and the hat of longing sits atop my head
there is no such thing as the breaking of thirst,
no relief; I begin to resemble the minerals gathering
in the matrix of important ore like lonely people
when the rich are around and the beautiful or the otherwise
lucky. the road here hugged the low base of a mountain range
and I drove her fast to hear her music like a needle pierced deep
into the three-dimensionality of her but I was too slow
and her music risked the lives of sweetened bees lodged underground
as if an earthquake would bunch up along here someday.

Bouncing and Singing

Lovers

we walked through the fog as if it were a park
people we passed swelled into focus when we passed close by
and when they stayed far off we neither heard nor saw them

without touching you I could never know who you were
because the fog of knowledge is just a close canvas
on which we painted ourselves but what we painted of each other
drifted downwind miles where the world would pick us up
days later entangled differently

what flowers we'd send would depend on the alleys
and what we found in them—where would they lead

they were like fogged over streets going lesswhere
not important changed as the city moves on

playing chicken with you we move our mouths closer
we do this for years until one of us veers off
the mind and truth are like this
the truth and the world are too

I find them holding hands
afraid of the fog

Truth and the World

Miss Hopi Writes

Miss Hopi wears a blue yellow white and black dress
her hair in a pony tail hangs to her lap as she sits for the photo
I wonder if she's pretty—her face is round and she smiles well
her eyes don't focus and she is scared to talk when representing her people
she models Hopi clothing like the manta
a rectangular piece of fabric worn as a wrap-around dress
it is folded around the body
passing under the left arm and fastened at the right shoulder
sewn part way down the right side
held at the waist by a woven belt
her hair is tied into the traditional squash blossom
her beauty comes from the mesa
like rain after the thunder
rushing down the wash
like rain after thunder
whether we hear it or not

But Doesn't Sign Her Name

Stone Yield

Some things like stone
yield everything to sledge hammer blows
crushing deformations
the chisel deftly placed and tapped like teardrops once or twice
the onslaught of spring glacier melt infused with dissolved irritations
the chemistry of man-filled air
washing up on white-sand beaches
the hard flow of a mountain spring
the soft embrace of old man river
and as most often happens
drops spaced long apart
and diminishing.

Like Love Like Life

A Tale of Passion

here
is the fashion that makes up time
of one thing leading to another
to a brushing glance becoming a hand in hand
to an extra night or two in a foreign city
where what goes in and out of the mouth
follows patterns I will not fathom
here
is the place of disrobing
where nothing becomes everything
where the strange becomes too much like home
where the passages of expected silk are simple flannel
take me to the bridge and let's fondle
the idea of flowing water
here
is why we know the sky is slender
why our clothes pile up and suffocate
why we plan our goodbyes more than the hellos
we are little and everything
turns out to be nothing
here

Told Here

I Done Did My Best

fucking like going to heaven
mingling of clothes
keeping the hospital corners as is
steady even breathing
the stains
emergency room—get it
calling for Christ:
Jesus Dunn
is this your best?

well, the pollocking thing was good
is this what you meant:

the groundfish complex
is the most abundant of all fishery resources off Alaska
with a total biomass of more than 26,400,000 metric tons
walleye pollock (*theragra chalcogramma*) is a key
species in the Alaska groundfish complex and a target species
for one of the world's largest fisheries
pollock produce the largest catch of any single species
inhabiting the 200-mile U.S. exclusive economic zone
during 1999–2001 pollock made up 73% of the average groundfish catch
in the eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands region
other dominant species harvested were pacific cod (11%)
yellowfin sole (4%) rock sole (3%) and Atka mackerel (3%)?

Yes, Dunn, this reminds me of fucking

Locally

WorthLess

every night I imagine it
or see it
the beautiful woman walking
melancholy away as if just a wish away

and I count
the years, the months since something

to the woman
she is ordinary or plain
her special parts not special at all

to me
she is beyond
there is no pretty way to say it
but what's ahead is not worth much
and what's behind is worth less

But Isn't Random

we all fell in love
back then
with images of the other
when she was not even aware
not dimly not keenly
of what her force was on us

we exist as the echo of that moment
when we wished to speak what we felt
but couldn't and all the compromises
of whom we deserved like balls in the lotto
sorting themselves out into something that looks
but isn't random

Hard Angels

snowed hard all day
so much that it never broke dusk
two feet fell that day
the road turned brown from pulverized snow
the gray headstones grew some contrast
in the form of hats and epaulets
an angel's hand held out filled with snow to a ball
later we shoveled driveways and cleaned off cars
for payment in hot cocoa and donuts
I wish I had a girl tonight
we'd make hard angels all night
on account of the snow fall all day

John Doe

since dawn today
how many pine boxes have been laid in the ground
in neatly cut and dug holes
filled in by backhoes
and falling rain
by the fence flush with tags
in a part of town that favors tarpaper shingles
gray green or blue—light in each case
—and lines hanging clothes and large underpants
where the only words spoken over the dead
are workers to each other or to their wives
or buddies on cell phones and speak of the rain and heavy work
the size of the women's cotton underpants on the line in the rain
or the number of John Does showing up each week

the metal markers will rust or be kicked over and raked away
the workers will forget the details of the day's labor
by the end of the first round after dusk
and all the chances of warmth
will be over
and the mistakes frozen in their time

Jane Doe

Emily Walks Past

sleep is the passion
hunger forms after sleep
hunger is passion whose celibacy is death
watch the eyes nervous after sleep
I can follow after
I can smell
sleep is my passion
only one left

Lament's Simple

walking back after the burial
the clayed soil clings—
a sort-of gooey memory
its parts not crisp
clings to my shoes—
to me—
halfway down the hill it starts to rain
but it's not till I reach the busy street parallel to the river
that my shoes come clean—
wet—
but clean

-o- -s- -b- Leftover

Three Aimers

fresh fallen rain trailing down a rockfall
clearing off the dust sending down to the flats
where the dry earth drinks it up
a patch of greenery lost in a line
or circle

geometry and mathematics
are coincidences between language and truth
and what little faith we have is rewarded
by scientific discoveries sounding
like fabled mysteries revealed

three women peeing in a triangle formation
pinching themselves to hit the center point
in focus and who would think that women
with nothing pointed could aim so pointedly

similar each done called changes
of us
fill up the hat to

Called Amy Ameer Aimee

Problem

inside the sealed woodstove
a slow crossbreeze burns the logs to embers
and another burns the smoke itself

the heat is less but lasts
longer into the night
like a dream solving
the day's puzzles 2 at a time

two maples
one on each side of a stream
put their heads together and merge
to one large mass of branches and obscuring leaves
put their roots together beneath the stream
and tangle and drink
and become one
almost with a stream through its heart

solving the problem of why
rain falls and the seas sweat

Solved

Lover Behind A Dark Tint

behind tinted glass stopped at a light
her profile is barely there
her head almost all hidden
behind the door post
she is blonde but the dark gray of the tint
makes her look expensive
her wolf shaped profile
just wolf-shaped enough to make her overtly
sexual—she is speaking
few words with long breaks
sun fall behind a shining yellow hill
reflects in the darkly tinted window

she looks forward in her high cab
I look up at her for the minutes the light is red
the live oaks don't move on the hill
neither does the dried grass nor
does the sun seem to move nor
I nor the woman driving me
home and she just stares forward
above me wolf-like blonde
speaking sporadically
as first the wanton sun going down
and then the traffic light turning red
put our love behind

Faces Forward Always

1967

a band in a cavern
as large as a gym or cafeteria
its guitar players need no more reverb
than what the room provides
and through its open doors the hallways splay
outward and echoes from the walls that turn away
mix with the straight sounds that loop
back around so that part of each new note
is a note struck seconds and many seconds
and minutes ago

at a locker down one of those halls
I saw her turn toward me then away
in a sudden rush to get to class
her hair sleek and tangling
her skirt gripping her thighs
the books cradled in her arms
all this took away my air and I gasped
and never said a word

in every mix of stratocasters blending
reverb and heavy slow melodies
plucked string to string
that little wash or whisper
that is my gasp and the only love
that opened up that second
still wafts from hall to hall
diminished to just below
the aftershock of forgetting

1968

Theorem of Area

the door to adultery opened up
once in a city suddenly warm in late fall
and a discussion welled up
about the scale of love
from 0.0 to 1.0
and where on it we each sat
0.6 and 0.71 I recall

the streets I recall
were concrete patched with asphalt
squirrels and drunks roamed the park by the museum
where I touched her tinted hair and by accident
her neck
those touches as hesitant-
looking as the impressionist brushstrokes we read about

we were holding hands
when we met the friend I couldn't recall
though he was my only black friend
and he must have noticed
she was young and I was old
the predictability of 0.6 and 0.71
I recall another friend noticed I loved her
and commented on how straight her profile was
not wolfish as a sexual predator's might be

in a matter of days
perhaps six or slightly more than seven
she left
what was the door to adultery for me
was merely a door for her
squirrels and drunks when they roam a park
cover lots of ground but their paths amount
to nothing

A Mile High

Death With Dignity

a second important service
represents the dying company
if it wishes the member
during the dying phase a woman employee
or a coworker stands for it
to the side

discussions with the ill member and
—on its desire—
its intimate persons
are to facilitate the time
of the parting taking for the concerning

who suffers leading illness
from one infallibly to death
or from an unreasonable handicap
and its living and suffering
would like to set therefore voluntarily an end
can as a member of the association
ask to be helpful it in free death

Asks For Little

One Day Soon

the fashion is to play it cool
sit with others and pretend to be enraptured
worry for some time for the hair issue to be resolved
watch an unlikely team win
my hand was filled ever so soft
into the experience after all
I turned out the boyish
skin taking away the last
mental barrier to this weekend
got up on my knees with my
three days—three days and nights—
kneading my knees further
smiled that smile at me
a smile came to my lips
the rest of the weekend they teased

Time Will Tell of the Past

Slavery to Insistence

with little more than motion
she conveys it—emotion
she finds expensive to display
but inexpensive to procure
she dangles the goods and snatches
them back when the price is right
she is for sale in every metaphorical way
but none that are real

I say this is serious
I say it seriously
she will be there
beneath the cold

Banishment Underway

Sparse Spare Spite

in sparse country the lives that live longest
choose the fewest

times and places and things
between two important points
lie vicious vistas and charming locales

but in the end there is little
to choose and so the act goes on
unrewarded

I've drawn a line between the two most
precious places in a man's life

and do you think it was a line connecting them
or marking their separation

and from this we know
who lives in the sparse country

Lines Chosen to Look Like a Cross

Ugly Days

next door they lay out in the back yard
she has her top off lying face down
and he has his arm on the small of her back
while he sleeps while he sleeps
the mosquitoes flicker above his back
landing to ingest a little and then fly off
back to the small pools and stagnant waters

later her bottom is off too
she lies face down still
and his arm has moved down too

maybe he doesn't feel the mosquitoes
maybe he likes the little stings they give him
or the loss of blood though minute has a profound
affect on his happiness

but I'm just a boy and the magic of what's down there
—or mystery—may be solved or understood
her son, my friend, described it to me
and it made sense only as the mystery of the crucifixion does

all black—it's all black
as if he passed out just as he saw
sex and beauty mixed with mosquitoes
and swamps and recollections
and ugly days

Next Door

April 26, 2003

Let Go

in the saddest story on TV
the simple man walks away from the grave of his lover
buried on his farm in Alabama

I wonder who let him bury her there
when all the rest of us are forced
to let go

April 27, 2003

Mud-ku

mud beneath my feet today
one day above my head

Mud-Ku 2

down the dirt road
mud aligns with my vision
wearing boots with heavy lugs
soon my boots are clogged with red rich mud

on the bottoms of my feet
adding to my weight
already heavy from heavy thoughts and bad alignments

no matter how well they pack down the sod
mud erupts once the rain hits
now this dirt is mud over the top of my head
adding to my weight
already heavy from the foolish route
full of crookedness
I took to get here

Kansas Corner

on a corner
a used car dealer sweeps the gravel off his sidewalk
along a road that once was the main road
through town and 'cross country
he sells
only a few cars a season and makes do with oil changes
and wiper blades
his wife the homecoming queen
once reigned in this town and the next two
and he the old QB once reigned
throughout this part of Kansas
he watched and she watched them
all leave to foolishly try their luck abroad
where crops don't count and the sea breeze is not piped in
they'll be back he said
they'll be back she said
we are royalty around here they said
he pushes his scepter out out out
pushing the gravel down the short entry slope
to the main road and he waits
and she waits while their heart beat slower
as time winds round and round
and the never-stops wind braces
for the next long day and dry night

Western Part

She Held This Check Close

the last of her
fell from my hands today
as I endorsed the check she wrote

one year ago
Richard. P. Gabriel
Administrator of the Estate

of Helen P. Gabriel
and they fingerprinted me
took my ID

capturing my guilt
of being the son
of a dead mother

Because She Could Depend on No One

So

now the air is calm
flights have shut down for the night at O'Hare
while below or above or right next to me
the muse of many poems sleeps or reads or fucks
across the parking garage the standby lights
are still lit anticipating something special unexpected
like the rising up of a jet bound for home
or coming back are you home
are you in Chicago what I've found out is
it's too late for me too late for me it's
too late too late too too too late too
late look it's dark and all you have time for
before they come is to write it down
people around will give you credit
credit you don't deserve the life left in your
words are set to diminish
set to be worth nothing
like the fucking you didn't get
when you wanted it
so

Buy It Then Leave

watched you all day
the same darkly lined eyes
your mouth in sensuous shapes
forming for you
foreign words explaining things I can't care
for any more I saw you look
look and not look
away as if maybe from behind the hard
to choose words you saw
something
old and wondering how many years
no months
maybe weeks
days or hours
I have to write about what
obsession is
life without planes where you
and other you's like you
can't exist
soon I won't

Real Good

the scene was routine
like regret hugging the floor and disappearing under the door
she smiled and see ya
heading home over Utah
the land looked like sea
waves or dunes
through unsettled clouds and we came up on a town
with roads leaving and winding up to open
pit mines where things like love
don't happen when the trucks
are hauling

Bye

Not a Word On Leaving

her secret is in
the doctor we all take it
is out like a coyote hugging the far row of old
stores in the once alive town foreign
beside the unmaintained road
replaced by the interstate
cut through the shallow hills
of west Kansas

like the coyote looking for a last meal
I picture the day in front of rare paintings
where I touched her hair and the back of her neck
the rest is history
as I soon will be and she
already is

Clouds Over

when the Old Man of the Mountain
collapsed in the dark and fog of night and distance
my parents had been dead for a year
and things since have taken the turn of dying
instead

of the things they loved in the world
and made of granite the least
has fallen into a heap gathered and sold
on a technology blunder like rotten rock
depended on to do what it cannot help

the connection is slight
as if a wind had made it around the world to warn
of small things
but imagine the emotions held together
by products of the rational mind
and picture the pile at the bottom
of the heart when the fog clears
after the sun breaks through an upper
cloud cover

Exposed Work

the willow launched onto the bank
of a swift-running river
its branches never touch the water
this is a metaphor of self-loathing

One Joy

rain forming the umbrella
of our wide porch experience
her hair reflects the dark corners
of the forest's shadows
and her heat intense as a downpour
reflects everything ungodly in me
the rain pours down on me
then lifts off like steam like fog
like an excuse

Followed Immediately by Another

Like a Wolf

down the hill
she flagged her hair
raising the fear of a close bump
with the application of ivy
adding a border to the meaning
she worked her mouth around

we stopped under a tree while the rain erased
the rest of sound and my face was an inch
from hers

why give it a name
touch her canine nose and fall into
her shadow dark eyes

Or A Steep Angle

Death Dear

after waking from holding her deeply
she mentions she is full of death
come back to life now crawling
scorpion-like down her spine
to her sex posing like an angel
wings-down joining the rain
rolling down the hill
for water rolls
doesn't flow
doesn't get anywhere without turning over
I wake once more when she
pulls the blankets up over me
all the way over
and I am in her
like death dear me

Foreigner

be serious when you look at her
don't worry about her illnesses
imagine she holds the world inside her
let her walk with you even though she hungers
for your abilities only
the warmth of a dark car
masks the dangerous places it can take you

Shag to Back

I told her
my job was to live the life of exemplar
good or bad
loved or hated
to pursue something like the white flats
of ice that bump their way down from the low
White Mountains past the place everything I tried
failed in a river that can't make up its mind
to an ocean opposed to change
and charged with keeping us high and dry

joy rests her back against the hickory tree
her bony back against its shag bark
this is what it can be

Sonnet Fallen off a Squirrel Feeder

the fate of the poem is to sit
unread on the shelf for decades
then pop like a hummingbird levitating
to see who's invading
only to find within the confines
of the metaphor that it is merely
the bored now wrecked from an assault
from within

language I mean
and the curiously undecipherable
stream of windows
hell bent on making the world
into the poet's unreason in a grand leap
of discontinuous change

Knowledge at the Root of the Fear Tree

that house is thawing out
the air having spent the Winter indoors
now begins to age
whatever leaks infect the roof
are cracking open

a year ago I delivered her
where she knew it would happen
but not how
the drive was quiet
no arguments
the warm air cooling with each mile north
she watched each mile remembering
perhaps
each conversation she had with him
so they could laugh over them again
when she arrived
which would be a little over a month
from then

I hang here alone over the keyboard
where all my life is focused
on the end
where everyone has abandoned me
where I alone face myself alone
with the words I half learned
and half improvise
in honor of random change and age

Secret of Poetry and Repair

things fixed are mixtures
of old original parts and new replacements
what we learn today is a replacement
repair of what we falsely knew
a decorative pair of cherry branches grafted
onto local stock as we age
the replacements fall away
the glue between them and the originals
yellowing and cracking
becoming the dust that fills the air
when we expect the most sensuous skies

but I blurt
the fiction of poetry
lacks the little stumble
that separates the great from the rest
all it takes is to learn to stumble
on cue

Warm Wind Caught Up In Winter

out the back door
dusting of snow on the already melt-packed snow
across the yard to the woods path
I followed her steps smeared from her haste
and wind and by a coincidence
or by deliberation in her hurry she missed
all the leaves she could have crushed
through the blueberry patch
each bush an explosion of gray branches
or a puff of blue magic slightly frozen
through the swamp hardened over
her steps slip-streaked but slowed
over the stone wall lichen to a gray
each rock capped by the new snow
across the stretch of pines to the old road
along which we picked mushrooms
safely choosing only the least tasty
then the road ended at another heading across
her path but her path crossed over
and over another wall higher than the first
into an open field where it boldened
then faded each step perhaps lighter
as from a creature with less weight
or a person with more soul

at the point of disappearance
a warm wind swirled

A Fable True With Redemption

Revision?

when we die
do we find that God is just a writer
wanting to see how it comes out
does He revise your life and start over
how much does He fill in to make you seem interesting
to people you don't care for are you less
sure than before what really happened

walking by the edge of the woods tonight
I noticed the wind stirring the trees
more than usual

so that they seemed to come to rest differently
their leaves different shades
their shades less or more under a cloud shrouded moon
the crunch of twigs under my feet
increases as I walk then falls
away the warmth of Summer diminishes
into Fall or early Winter

Revision is Underway

Departure Lounge

I watched them go in
one at a time
into the dark part of a stand of trees
at the edge of a field of timothy and brome
the border between grass field to tree stand
scabbed by brush and tall grass
but through openings and cracks
the stand was dark the ground covered in thick
needles and moss they went in one
at a time without looking back
splitting the brush as if without effort
the dark enveloped them
one at a time

after a long slow walk across the field
as the sun moved from my back to low and straight
into my eyes through a porthole in the forest
I stand and without reaching out I can almost feel
the brush begin to part

Very Late Afternoon

Deep Randomness

all at once
desire and its not
pieces caught in tinder branches
delight and the heat of it
cars caved in in the era
of spring reverbs uncovered
in the clearing away
desire for the clearing closing up
midday the hot white sun soaks
our vision with clarity
then the light yellows and hearts emerge to seize
each other through hands and fingertips
finally the sky oranges all at once
and the cars remember in their brave grills and bench seats
the depth of the song
the rough voices of desire
the rust of strings about to break

Zero Damping

Ions: Art

the hall diminished
(as the law called perspective took hold
even though some man—I fear—
dreamed it up while imagining mathematics
or art when those and science were the same
things) but on either

side offices filled with specialized problem
solvers sat solving
problems by typing isolated from “Rooftops
in the snow, Paris” and bread trucks

scattering like roosting pigeons crossed
by a shadow to deliver uncut loaves
to the rich in the hills cupping LA

specialization repels
the standing tree struck falls
then burns

Science Alone

Light Ads

light
straight down straight up
LA is pasteurized by it
through its heart of fiction
a toilet of a river runs
under a hat of car exhaust
right now a large man is rolling
off a pale woman releasing her sweatened grip
on a soaked sheet who later might
re-arrange a fridge door of magnetic
poetry to form a sonnet depicting the essence and romance
of that pretty tower in downtown
featured in the intro to Boomtown
you know that show where the sulking redhead
teaming with the fresh possibility of sexual oozing
like a swamp
tames the drunk ADA
and the light is as bright as Miami
where it takes special pleasure in slowly killing
its worshippers

Worship at Her

sugar's not

dissolving
in the glass (perched
on your tummy)
filled with cool water
after your usual female orgasm
of cramp cramp cramp
cramp—you squeezed your hand between
your thighs and now we're on to thinking of
moving the irises out back once more
and talk turns to sweetwater
the puzzle of plants transplanted every year
how it sweetens the beard
the showy parts between the sepals and the style
the standards of the flower

(I won't write this part
how she sighs
laughs asks when I'll get it

up again)

Dont' Dream

caught up in a jam

they start to pull the cars apart
smearing blood they turn
the glass to dust the cars will

separate and a woman sits on a pillow thrown
from a van she holds
a towel to her head
it—everything—has turned
or is turning
red then rusty red

Crowded House loops
on my CD but it's the light
the sky's more than half the sphere I imagine
palms pierce like spears
the underside the smell of a tidal plain
explains the thin blanket fogging
the robinblue skydome

the cars wrench apart
the wrench resembling a bark
and a snap
I never dreamed

it's over

Recursive

pissing outside on a cool night
clouds massing past lit from below
sodium orange yellow like a fleeing
dog my legs are spread in case the wind
shifts two planes are passing overhead
heading for nearby airports and I
know someone is reading in them
maybe a little piece about pissing
outside on a cool

night

Lozenge Arranged

rarely I watch the sun lighten
the sun rise
rarely listen to birds begin their twitter
the tail end of nocturnal animals
heading for shadows
those days are saved for travel
or early meetings or rituals
breakfast with a stranger to talk over strangeness
preparation for a 9am speech
checking bags for a trip
or checking the oil before driving off
one time in Kingman I stopped before leaving
to clean the insects from my window
I reached behind my seat for my stash of cookies
imagined the woman I never met
turning to wave bye her hair rich and complex
in the red light bridging a large gap
parts of her still warm from embrace and touch
her mind focused on warming yesterday's coffee
before a day paying bills
my mind focused on the 800 miles
left before the next one

Stashed Below the Tongue

Swan Song

just before I go
I'll find a dirt road lined with eucalyptus
with a wire fence behind them holding back
the gold grass and aromatics succulent green
red bark dust rising in an effect resembling life
with the sun declining behind a back row of oaks
I'll be fresh from a bed where someone would have
tried all they could to acclimate me to the warmth of
herself and the nest not knowing all in store was this walk
down the road and a long deep and unrefreshing sleep alone
at last completely alone

No Last Journey

Waking

no sparrow fears death

flying takes so much faith
in being light there is no

room for anything but appetite
and an unreasoned score sung

faithfully not fitfully
at dawn

To Lessons

Mudhead

walking down the street scratching
watching the florid women walk past
my pants are streaked with grease
blotched with white paint
my sweatshirt carries the patterns of native cave art
sleeves unravelled shoulder seams unstitched
collar pulled loose from the arms and panels
my once thick hair pulled back in a Hopi
barrette showing a pueblo scene corn rain motif
a mudhead my shoes soled with vibram are nearly worn
to flat my job is to enact by negative example
what should not be done

In Pursuit (Manhattan)

Fascination With the Other

the windows I look out of
don't face you we both sit
& write our lives

away making up
a serious message
from the play

of noise and sense
are they different from the birds at dawn
shuffling from branch to wire

yelling it out
holding fire across small valleys
their secret's not out

if you can lure one close by
I mean really close perhaps
at a picnic table where your scraps

are more important than death you can hear
them singing and chattering all the time
nonstop like a chatterbox comedian

it makes you wonder
how can all that material be stored
up in those tiny heads

and if that's true
what of you
who or what is your enemy?

Explanation Protocol

God's Confession

music—I've put it on
set to repeat the headphones
close the world off
it goes on & on
the music my memories
the silence the room I'm in is
the silence the music makes
of everything else
like a pump the circling sounds
the cycling memories stay alive
by simple repetition force
out words like these
keep me from hearing the phone
ringing a line to God
finally ready to confess

Stuck On Repeat

music itself has a tendency to release the mind of all rational thought processes

keep the sweat that forms on your
head trapped in its sweatband
the sweat of thinking doesn't interest me
even the sweat of work and working out
as pure as sweat such as this can be
still reeks of a point the point of existing
or of existing better instead
strip off your clothes and sweatband
clean this moisture off completely
without shame perfume yourself
with yourself neutrally presented
stand sit lie down exert yourself
sexually without using a muscle
without looking no listening tasting
is out let me
taste that sweat the absence of rational thought
is the essence of living as Lorca has continually
tried to teach

No Sweat

Dwelling All Day

thirty years ago we lived in farmland
in Illinois—30 years 2 wives 2 children
and a long career ago. on a day like today
the cicadas would come and buzz
the wind would smell of corn and soy plants
we would not hover over computers or listen
to digital music the windows at night would be open
and we'd listen to the storm come up the slightest
valley toward us. distant thunder and strobes
unconnected then closer and closer together
and the air growing grassy if a funnel cloud
had formed somewhere. we had no ambitions
and didn't think much about anything
we'd take days off to read a book or ride
50 miles to a park and back. our friends
would come over and we'd grill steaks
and make tough salads. a big night was watering
the tomatoes by hand. night passed calmly
we slept the night though
the sun woke us up
we cooked simple breakfasts
the commute took 5 minutes.

now here
after tasting an ambitious success
on the Coast I dreamed of when adolescent
the only thing left is failure
and dwelling on it all day
all night

Dwelling All Night

Bare Bones Story

the bridge they threw the body from spans
a dry river bed that in Spring
overruns and courses with the spume
of snowmelt churning over the rocks
erasing evidence of extreme lethargy
inactivity when Summer's loathsome vertical light
and flattening heat entice the rocks to harden
to boneshattering proportions they threw the body
from the back of a yellow pickup one with his foot
on the toolbox and the other with his foot
on the sidewall they threw the body through the gap
where two girders Y'ed onto a pier 30' up from the tallest
rock what were they thinking when is the next deluge

Ripped From the Headlines

Bike To Philo

the road to Philo is upwind there
downwind back when the corn cracks
in the midday stillness the percussion
brings on cicadas volunteering their racket
in waves like lust passing through the bedroom
on a sweatnight with my luck a storm will come
up before I get back to town even with its forewinds
pushing me 25 30 mph past the corn that hours
ago couldn't move without its parchment racket
Philo up on a low hill

its strange Victorian
the cottonwoods we hid under when the rain
was heavy as a pond and the hail afterwards
peeled the paint off every car still on the streets
my luck with storms never improved every trip
to Philo it seemed provided evidence on evidence
that I didn't belong or that the sense of nature
was never come back as then she is still what her mother
feared she would remain her mother now safe
in the cemetery on Philo's hill twin like Emily
she stays indoors and waits for the storms
each Summer afternoon signaling the hour
I would slam her screen porch door
and hightail it back to Champaign and something
about centuries

Unspeakable Muse

Commonalia

unaccustomed to tight fitting clothes
he shut his eyes while walking toward sunrise
at sunset when the heat in the bayside city
reverberated across the stone and concrete
street caverns and tendrils of ocean cold
tickled the evening's mood

the sight of them
made him nostalgic and he just hated to be
sentimental about panty lines

The Poetry of Animals

Approximation

lovers hand in hand stiff
as stone and cold from the long night walk
the particulars of the venue sashay
with them to the bedroom their clothes pile up
as if on a hot date of their own
their love styles wrinkle their skin
on the cup shaped side of things
after the cinders going up the chimney
signal flares at the lighting of fire
the deep throated clink of ceramic cups
on a granite countertop speaks of their station
while the sweat and yellow stained sheets
speak of the nearing of another crossroads

As Things Lower

Sentiment on Scale

the scale is small
of little towns scattered in a just-broken-
up huddle and the distance from where he lands
to the hill that claimed his little family
is long in the geometry of that place
but short in the span of the foggy mind
comprehending little more than the spaces
between the markers but balking at the greenery
closing in making a mockery of the altering skies
when the distances remain constant or increases
with the passing of memory

Distance in the Abstract

Note Monotonotonotonotonotonotony

an unpeaked wave comes up over a stand of rocks
rises up in a fit of attention then falls over forward
and runs up the sandy slope
one half running back the other drunk
by sand the ocean seems to shrink
from the shame of presumption and the half-success
of its thrust to make an impression on the edge

the floating tops of seaweed rock in the sun
wiping and wiping the water's unfaithful mirror
a low wave flows over the rocks
lifts but never peaks and creeps up the slope stopping halfway
slides back and joins the pooled water forming the stupendous
bulk of the oceans and seas pulsing like an idiot's clock
or inconstancy incumbent a wave comes

repeats its brethrens' passage and another wave waits
while the low point lingers each wave makes
its appearance out of nowhere as if unexpectedly
but the statistics of the situation commands
that each wave falls within approximate bounds
but impossible can happen at any moment
perhaps the next wave that comes will wash up to our blanket
soak us soak the dunes above us soak the sawgrass pond
soak the road soak all the way to Milwaukee and ping
off a shooting drop of seawater with gazorch to make it
into orbit and the sloughing off of our lives on earth will begin

but the sole occupation I have lying next to you is the sun
expanding its effect of light on my constricting headache
that varies its flux oceanlike and I fear one day
the pain will extend past my consciousness and I'll crush
my own skull in the clenching of my teeth and at that point I suspect
you will move your ass two more feet away

Not Monotony

Three Violences

three dimensions define
physical the part that's affected
when you're thrown through the air
and land breaking half
your bones

informational the part that's affected
when you're thrown through computer animation
and land inflating into
the zeppelin on the Led Zeppelin album

conceptual that part that's affected
when you're thrown into Plato's cave
and land as a shadow on his wall breaking
like a wave on my brain

somewhere there's a scene where the shoes
of a child lie but the wind never blows

And A Puzzle

Listening

sitting in a hot house
day by day Florida the fountain of age
motes and wasps baying dogs each night
the car won't start and she has no one but her son
thousands of miles away she won't call
the food's gone neighbors are right across the street
in the next yard right behind she won't talk
to them to anyone

today the first light breaks onto a small hill
nothing marks it special
traffic passes below it's a small place
this is in the North in the West the son
reflects on the concepts
listening calling

Calling

[Click]

there are struggles
like the one to lift one's heavy body off the bed
and make it to the toilet 3 times a night
facing the fact that fittings are eroding
seeing who will sleep in the same bed
with you and realizing your luck [turn—in case Jo reads this]
fixing once more the unhappy pipes
reinstalling the operating system [high tech tip of the hat]
watching your average bike speed decrease each year
noticing your rival pull away [metaphor]
reading your early writing and seeing you didn't really get better
watching your diploma yellow and not care [intentional ambiguity]
wondering each night around now whether you'll wake tomorrow
feeling the counter counting down is near 0

and there are other things [click]

[Clunk]

Near SFMOMA

water forced through channels
in the concrete not like rivering

through a wall I said
pulsing the overflow
defy fashion with body heavens
the subtlety of the penis
enlargement mega-site let's imagine
the look on her face

I recall the corporate patio 30 floors up
looking at it from another building
looking down but it's
not there

anymore?

Passive Blame

I woke to a prompt
damn thing crashed again
no response

an app
that crashes the OS is bad
as a yellow stain she can't recall
bad system call? like asking your heart
to think or maybe it's something I installed
corrupting system data? I tried it on
other systems and the crashes are less frequent
but they happen my machine crashes only overnight
cron daemon? nothing special but I turned
them off anywho

I did a clean build
checked the cvs history and nothing I changed
should cause this I diffed the files with previous versions
and I don't know what I did
checked the system logs and even ran the disk diagnostics
in case it's corruption

we shipped it a month ago
and we hear reports of strange crashes
prompts appearing mornings
lost work from reboots servers dropping
connections hours lost recovering from journals
yes it's safe but annoying

they look funny
at me since they're sure it's my bug
sometimes I get a stack dump or odd exception
or it runs for days a week without anything
it passes all the tests I've inserted print statements
extra tests consistency checks we've walked the code
in groups I've even had others recode the suspects

nothing nothing nothing
can explain it I don't sleep well I trace the code
in my head I pace watching the blue lights in the city
waiting for a sign from my machine running fine all night
I've carved a fetish from turquoise and poised in on my cpu
a badger polished it as best I can whenever I doze off
I wake to a prompt whose bug is this?

Heartfelt Aggression

Industrial Strength Tips

the lights fulfilling the open space
of the conference center, the landing
where we exited, the rambunctious speeding
of taxis and autos when the light turns,
the reverberations of sirens coming to our one
spot from one spot by 10 routes, the city-illuminated
fog blowing in yellow highlighting the sky behind blue,
the white lights tracing the curved top in the neo-deco
hotel 3 blocks away, the scent of brackish water and salt water
from the Bay and marshlands we can't see, the exotic
vocalizing of visitors from far away, the circle she scribes
as we adjust ourselves to each other and the ocean
wind, and falling is, leaving is, longing is,
pirouetting is the mechanism of disintermediation

& Tools

Fragments

the hall frozen
into a passage for ladie's choice
night presents few choices
though there is the seduction
of hypertext linking the sex scenes
into either a man's or a woman's serious
adventure

as else is fixed
or worse in the sense of repaired
when we crave the maddeningly irreproducible
the hall beckons with bright sunrise at one end
and the other

fragments of its consequences
cup us in the scoop of fiction's hands
the verge of exploding is what we are on
metaphors collected initially in footnotes
have been swept to the end enabling
superior lies

for all the talk of words
the peeling tires trace their perfect
enunciations into a proposition neither
true nor false & if you begin well
chances are

the end will almost take

Else Is Fixed

Gothic Metal

passing by the field being plowed
in the thirsty afternoon by the coast
near Castroville preparing for artichokes
the dust rises at sundown in coils
encircling the artistic need
for answers to the stupid
questions love confuses with
death

Lesson

Lacuna

what's the purpose of melody
how can distortion be truth
grimace signaling an invitation
propriety makes you a Mrs
in the classic scene of a car driving down valley
clarity signals the distortion of truth
melody is an invitation to purpose
Mrs grimace makes a classic scene

where others require clarity of thought
refusal through the grimace
propriety invitations to considered teas
I require the animal vision
of a language I can't know

No Such

Technapology

about our machines
art is laid like a woman
next to a man and everyone
knows the machines will win
every time and on and on
without failure

 until
some bit of electricity
eats through a diode
or the last of the oil drips away
& wears off the polished race
which will heat up and burn away
like the circuits on the other side
of the diode

 like the woman
when the man has finished
art will lie there until the machines
are taken to the dump
she will squat until all traces are gone
then she will wait for her next satisfaction

Drip & Wear Off

In Constant Direction

poets rarely pose the question
directly preferring some noisy
approximation like the linear scientists
from Newton on down who drew
lines boxing us in like robots
in a survival lab rooting each other out
in Darwinian insanity

speaking of which
nothing adapts
something else is created
maybe better
or not
and things die
populations—get used to thinking this way

well, some subjugated poet
is busy typing this in thinking
HE IS GETTING BETTER
when in fact I will look later
at his effluvia and select and revise

the only practice he's getting is typing
and let's count his fingers for him
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
O frabjous joke

He's Worse Than Bugs

a tax bill—

who would know that the passing of one generation to the next
would be marked by the tax bill
last year in their name and this
in mine my address
arriving due 4 weeks—

this is the letter I'll read
the fact I'll take note of
the message destined to change destiny
the portion of me that remains constant
the essence of bureaucracy worth celebrating
the efficiency of the mundane
the line the edge that clarifies a fundamental construction

this is more important than the day
I buried them both and my daughter

didn't cry

For Wally

I'm aligned with the idea
of making new which requires
an amalgamation of rich incohesion
and poor judgment the intelligent are now

excused take analysis
which is merely tossing
into buckets and they came up
with the buckets by tossing
them into others

others call this
the reason that makes us happy
or unhappy

I've read list poems that go on
one item too many
I'm sick of warm bread fruit and cats
I know she lost her man suddenly
but make us scared

let's get those dangling down things
moving again

A Damned Insurance Man—And An Old-Lady Poet

The Town I Deserve

what waits
in the air beyond the next hill
will breathing get harder
will pulling out the next few words
pulverize my sense of indirection

fundamentally the thought of being alone
of having no father no mother
no brothers no sisters no wives
no readers no fans no guy wires

only the mistakes I am able to amble upon
the little tears I expose at the least bit
of sentimentality

what do these things say
how cold is the space beyond the sky
how cold is the place beneath the earth

no one comes to watch
to strip down

my town is dripping from eaves
onto sidewalks into gutters and down storm
drains to an oil-heavy river whose
course I never noticed nor knew
nor hoped would be fundamental

And Its Drainage Problems

Train Coming Up

up a slope barely against level
a heavy freight labors outside my hotel room
outside a small city outside the scope
of large places and influences

outside the normalcy of literature
we make little circles like bees
whose scribble dance informs through habit
but we inform through inhabitation
the little room we make that no one wants
to live in where the little descriptions
and stories can't appeal and ache
like a kidney stone

that train is still pulling
it spends more energy shaking
everything around it than making
progress—yes like that let's write

Grade Slight But Impossible

Storm Approaching

she hung back in the shadows
curtains blocking as many lights as they could
behind the lights and behind buildings and streets
a disturbing river flowing slowly

standing by the window I watched her with desire
she I'm sure wanted me to kneel by her and stroke her hair
I weighed the possibilities of what she wanted
what she would do if I guessed wrong
how much would I lose
the risks

soon my eyes watered
from the sudden change in temperature
of an approaching storm
and drops began to form on the window panes
and then drop to the carpet we bought downtown

when the rain slowed later that night
and the room was emptied
and the river was flowing slowly once more
my head began to ache
instead impossibly of my heart

Closer Than I Thought

Rear Push Engines

the bar's green ceiling was made 100
years ago & painted last year
the genders of some patrons are not obvious
the beers are universal from Atlanta Munich Prague Boston
Bob Dylan singing "All Along the Watchtower"
Jethro Tull doing "Aqua Lung"
'60s' dresses emphasize sexual views

the complex close harmonies Brian Wilson
devised indicate his genius
and the syrupy melodies over '50s' chord structures
acted like honey to my ears
I drove and became the solitary man
of "In My Room"

in the Blue Ridge Mountains the singing
and cooking are simple involving wide variations
in pitch and butter the writing here is idiomatic
syrupy and they beg for emotion
when there is so much left to do
with the reason

For Going Uphill

Scrambling

sentence-frames
given enough of them
tighten each word's noose around a meaning

when the trapdoor flops down
meaning slips neck-free
gets the hell out of Dodge

Horse Sense

All In A Day

all day the cows pull apart
grass and reconstitute it as themselves
while around them in surrounding fields
students learning the ways of cows
mow hay bale it load the large bales
on wagons and move them to the barns

the day warms until the air turns to heat
the wind settle in vales and valleys
while the river robbed of rivulets
slows and delivers its warmed water
to larger rivers ever farther downstream

the cows regard the field they're browsing
the barn and silo nearby in the field
the students sweating on the open tractors
the sun launching its means of heat their way

all with the content of a full belly
worked working and worked over

no not good enough

all with the love no needs spawns

yeesh

all like a day at the beach

uh uh

all like the dumbs cows they are

truth is like this

Cows Dream About

Club Obvious

the old woman regards the poems
appreciating only the ones that make her cry
the young one regards them
closing the book when she regains her moisture
I followed the one who walked out and down
toward the brown river along a path
made famous by the passage of women
fireflies without coaching blink in sync

if words fit like boxes inside boxes
the meaning of "smoke" will switch on and off
between fly free and die depending only on
where the stanza break

happens to fall

Essence of Memory

Wishes Like Ground Effects

I've asked for one thing on the last beach
after the sun rises painting the waves before me blue

for the golden woman to walk down the beach
toward me her hips rolling like ocean waves
her hair like halos looping behind her

I've asked for one more thing on the last beach
after the sun hits zenith and the sun bakes the sand sin-white beach

for the auburn woman to wrap her arms around my chest
her legs around my waist her waves of understanding
around the slightest pebble on the infinite beach

I've asked for one last on this unreal beach
as the sun drops away painting all the deep orange of filling up

for the dark woman to pull her mouth away from my ear
to let loose her arms from around my neck to pull
herself up and form a bundle of beliefs and walk away

never looking back never shifting her pace
never disturbing the sand beyond packing it down

That This Would Really Happen

Others in the Night

the light down
for some hunting begins
others lie where they stand
when the light drops
below a waking level
I walk from barn to barn
where hogs grunt in their sleep
and piglets suckle in the last
of the light they lie on concrete
dream the dream of large but short animals
who know they need endure
no sudden awakenings
as men sometimes do when the night
fills with rage so strong and persistent
they wake and touch first themselves
and then their others

Mystery of Sleeping Deeply

Fragments of Foils

when the snow had fallen enough
that it began to cover the ground
and the spaces in the streetlight's shadow had filled in
enough to form a tentative silence
one fragment of void fell away
and a new one in an unexpected place
turned an enriched blue
mimicking the happiest day

Soliloquy

Abstract Anacoluthon

the river has spread beyond its banks
trees their bases covered by water flowing slowly
unexpectedly don't thrive soon falling into a drowsy
course of rotting

meanwhile birds nesting in these trees thrive
and dispense their fledglings before the leaves begin
to yellow and the river subsides from the uneven flooding

and while this small situation plays out
somewhere an unknown man is portraying the heroic
in a tense confrontation which for the life of the innocent
will play a role as important as a brave surrender
when defeat is not yet assured

On Learning of Vercingetorix

Make Her My Queen

waitresses with faces hard as barn planks
chiseled in the manner of the Old Man of the Mountain
(now rubble at the base of Cannon)
their bodies encased in gray dresses or pants outfits
under aprons apparently
used for children and men's pleasure years before
now house the resolve habits form
in people who work at diners

I order grits with anything buttery
or greasy from the griddle
and coffee brewed fresh but tasteless
orange juice reconstituted from something only like
orange juice

that night when I reach down
I'll think of one of them
make her my queen
I'll shut off the in-room air conditioner
open the window so the sounds of crickets creak in quickly
and then the coal train pulled and pushed up the little slope
will expend as much rocking the motel as heaving the coal uphill
first past where I dream of her
then past the diner where she attends to men like me
she who was surprised to learn that coal trains roll pass
on the other side of 40 every hour
all day though I watched it frazzle the surface of my coffee

Every Day for 2 Weeks

Word Work

two houses faced their worst fears
this past year not a window cracked open
nor the door no water flowed into the pipes
nor were foods cooked a car sat idle
in the wrong garage somewhere a hole cut into sod
healed over

I am crawling alongside fear
who is hiding from the laborers
whose job is to shelter the faltering
and fallen

I stay away thinking work is more important
when the words would follow me anywhere
and lay down their very essences in answer
to my whims what they say would be similar
no identical to my lies

keep in touch
is a metaphor I've dropped
like a food item neither tasty
nor at a useful eating temperature

Scaffold In Place

Satan

he can do it all

ride through town fast and quickly tickle
each girl to see who laughs seductively

spend a decade in a city and bring the feather
close closer too close to the nape of the neck

he needs followers
but not too many for
his management skills are limited

he prefers the lawsuit
to motivation and morale

he sees the ceo and thief
the same but prefers the ceo
because of delusion

in sexual harassment
he prefers the harassed

he needs a challenge
so those predisposed to evil are left to God
and childish ideas

like purgatory
he shouts from op-ed pages
"this great middle America
has basic common-sense values"

he reaps all day
at night he is the bookmark
in cottony bibles

he is the advertiser
who mudslings
at evil

for great proud virtue
is the stuff of shit

he can do it all

the guardians of good are
inside not outside
the cage

He Can Do It All

Satan

he's an artist
the evil get breaks

eradication or say
another chance
at God's dude ranch

he likes the smug good
finds ways to lay claim
and God likes the fun

they meet for beers
discuss how to carve things up
keep us on our toes

black & white pose no challenge
represent little thought so they're
disposed of quick

grays make their days
someone with a dilemma
delicious

making great black art
out of something white

that's his sort of challenge
and God's his biggest fan

Black Art

Inquisition

God looks on
as his gatekeeper questions
Satan

Jesus
playing in a sandbox
with a chariot set listens too

like any small town
the sound of a pipe emptying water
into a pool dominates the square

Satan begins
the roads filled with holes
have been returned

to wandering fields
paths have been restored
and the worshipful have been laid to rest

the principles of temptation
have been defined and honed
and no one tested whose outcome

was in doubt and they have been cleared
to endure no further than the gate
they choose but now

let me tell you of a man
walking the edge of a two-rut road
I met my first day

I asked "do you know
it is my job
to tempt you?"

he bent to pick
the ticks embedded in his skin
and I could see the sun bother him

"God has taught me
it's my job
to tempt you"

I did my work
according to God's
plan as all have been taught

Satan Ends

Carson Fantasies

we fantasize the sea
once more falling open
then pushing up shut
the clouds are dissipating
or turning blue and
the wind is calming or
it is warming

tonight is my night to suppose
everyone is leaving me behind
while I file away the edges of my writing
remorse simple things
perplex my sentences
force them into simple cages
when I desire the lovingly
obscure adrenalin-soaked
coughs and quacks
of wifeless prose

the ocean for me
is adept at rhythms
and nothing more
not even the metaphors
that drive sirens silly

I pack up my Anne Carson
and head for a confluence

The Last To Know

the bitter smells of a dying river
sugar maples filled to overflowing

the beech tree by the corner—
drop a diagonal for 100'

the years I walked here not sure where
whether it would be filled

the boring long same rows
the heavy climb up a long slight hill

now things I find are mine
something like a god or their nightmare

I try not to think of dying
the sudden stop

not being part of it
the insult the harsh criticism

the gap is mine to fill
without a stopgap the river would flow endlessly

the freeze-frame not
the film that continues on

The Guitar Man is Always Ready Over There in the Corner

the nightbird sings his pretty song
mosquitoes find their ways to mammalian blood
she has closed the screen and unplugged the TV and
its antenna to protect her from the storm
she thinks she sees
in the flickering TV light of the house across
the street

she's had her candy and cookies
checked the doors one more time
through the unsweet pain of her knees collapsing
outwards

she has her pan by the bed in case
? ?
a towel some extra kleenex in case

the toilet is starting to leak
—that's ok—
because tonight she will bleed to death
starting while sitting on the toilet

all because I would not check up on her
too afraid that this was the way she would die

play it for me

Poetry Equipment

sitting before my writing equipment
bought to display these words in perfect beauty
on a white technologically perfect
with deep blacks in the electronic inks

I've magnified the font to 300%

so I can really see the curves of the letters
antialiased on the screen and as I type they
appear quick and perfectly lined up and I feel
like Strong Bad there words are The Cheat
sitting below out of sight and popping up
they are sitting in a plastic vegetable crisper
and as I hear them they sound out mmff mmmfff
mf some say poetry means and a poem is a perfect
little package with a turn somewhere and emotion
popping out they speak of Franz Wright
that stinking bastard who's drunk himself into some
kind of corner and he makes his living bad-mouthing
himself his father was too sickeningly perfect at the end
and so we can't sound like him so we veer instead
like a car driver picking the pedestrian over the headon
toward Stafford but what's the difference
The Cheat's got nothing to say
and the equipment is too expensive to run any more
tonight

Probable Yellow

lying here the tall hedge blocks
the sky at a random angle
the new growth is probably yellow
meaning it is many colors throughout the day
but most of them are yellow
but now as the sun ripens for down
it's orange over mixed green
pallid blue behind & behind me
the sun going/gone down
this is a decor to recall later
when writing but not this
not this warmup
a decor of mental props
a saloon front without a saloon
a stance like lovemaking
the surprise beneath the dark circlets
the decor means
colors change when ends are reached
signal significance
move inside like God moved inside God
to make room for human meaning
but this is when the caretakers line up
and clink together their hoes and rakes

She Left After We

she left her sweater on the floor
after we screwed right there
after we were done she grabbed between her legs
she left me there and went into the bathroom
she left quite a lot of water in her wake after cleaning herself up
after we were done with that and the cleaning up and she put on her clothes
she left leaving behind her sweater which I knew was hers
after we parted because it had her smell on it it was something
she left along with the sweater (actually on it) but she never acknowledged being there
after we had lunch the next day and for days and weeks afterwards
she left it a mystery just lying there and I'm sure it's my trophy
after we talked about it she said she would never speak of it or to me again
she left for good but that sweater is still there on the floor

people wonder why it's there still on the floor

Enough For Me

the horse ran off
after we made love under cottonwoods
by Turkey Creek after got up on hers
after cleaning herself up after
she untied my horse while I was turning
my legs right-side out and my horse started
to run toward the horizon over sulfurous
sand casting illusions upward

she rode off after him
maybe to return
but I'm here with water flowing past
and game here and there
and the memory of her solacious sexual
grip and one more thing
thankfully
my gun

Aphorism Without Amusement

the reward for heavy snow
weighing down thin branches

the delicate balancing of brute
bulk

the lightness of existence
bending

the breaking point
broken upon

As Useful as an Essay

Songtongue, footbird, milkgoat,
goatbird, tonguemilk, songfoot,
footgoat, songmilk, birdtongue,

tonguefoot, birdsong, goatmilk,
milksong, birdfoot, tonguegoat,
goatsong, milkbird, foottongue,

tonguebird, footmilk, songgoat,
goattongue, footsong, birdmilk,
milkfoot, birdgoat, tonguesong.

Poem Survives Breakup of Author

it's not proper to keep
too many poems around
to hoard them and work
them hard like mules—
they can't produce
further

if you think by languishing
they would bloom—

you just pick at them

they almost certainly had time
to understand their fate

Poor Substitute

poems today are written
by the lowest bidder
training provided by mean
practice

stairs stacked upward
seem perfect but the shaky minds
of men can't build perfection
of any form

the hand shaking
is the handwriting
of God

or things like Him

Minute 1

I've seen her close
under the small trees making their green
her sides in shaded silhouette
like the hourglass God uses
to count out
our sins which cascade
out of our mothers' wombs
just as we do

I've dipped my fingers
in the sap of bitter trees
and pulled up stinging grasses
with just my lips

the water flowing slowly
out of the soggy soil
carries the love of God to us
carries every taste from His lips
to ours

Quick Clutch

under the jacaranda the water bubbles up
from a frigid fountain

many small seeds try to take hold
but light winds blur their attempts

along the back wall ivy
smothers the life out of all that's valuable as long

as it becomes green some time
during the coldest year a year

with the least light a pear's
sweet fruit warms even as its juice

cools in its matrix
ferments into an obsessive surrender

Choose Your Pickle

if all the snowflakes
fell into lines and patterns
painted a message like the snow
on old tvs except
cogent or coherent
showed us a message with great
meaning and refinement
a message that fell like a curtain
on the forest floor
something that appeared at random
and was random for many minutes
until a flashlight caught the pattern

how would it fall to the ground
as a fragile melody or hard
reason

Stares

heat pulls the sweat from you
then the sweat stops and your
energy is pulled too soon you wither
and dreams start if only

you could learn from them
write them down with embellishment
toward the real it would be worth
the bother of this type of death but

the sun sets and soon the desert is
cold the sounds of water flowing
fills the night air sullen black all the way
up to the sparkles where maybe a poet

stares back while you stare up

Talk About a Whimper

the end of our wait
for the estate of my mother
to close has occurred and the document
sent that the lawyer claims
passes all her estate to me is called
a "Waiver of Full Administration Affidavit"
and now I've become once more her son
and not a fiduciary

Dumb Jock

we burned leaves on the edges of the road
where the sandy strips were oily from cars
dripping and so autumn held for us
the warming smells of hearths
and the air added old-world chokes
on the color of sunlight revealing the reds
and oranges and yellows of the change of seasons
it was the time of year I'd burn
for the girl I loved who wasn't able to respond
to my silences and longing though she wore twice
a week the green sweater and suede skirt
that twisted like leafsmoke in a curling wind
my dumbfounded mind while her mouse blonde hair
spilled onto another he-man shoulder
and I moved the books from my right arm
to my left

5 Maybe 9

the window wasn't fogged over
but nothing was visible through it
or the back yard—if there was one—
and woods behind that—or the field
or the garage or the barn or alley—
nothing was there but the black
and rain I think since I could hear in on the roof
corrugated tin would be a poetic way to describe
it based on the sound of the heavy rain
sound like nails poured and sliding down
onto the wet ground or it could have been
a slate roof with hail though the metal reverberation
made it sound less so

then the flash

5 maybe 9 distinct jagged jolts
blue lights like strobes

yard with debris
swing twisting in stages
junk car no doors
pools of popping water
disturbing wind

and the woman
w/flooded skirt tangling
hair whipped

as if the storm were just a stray thought
occurring around her on her
way in to lie down with me in a bed
in this stranger's left-behind home
on a night unimaginable but glimpsed
5 maybe 9 times

Shown

photos of the dead
they never see them
so their sideways stares
and purpling wounds are not
a matter of pride for them
their corkscrew arms
and bent upon legs
have little to do with their hugs
and slow hand-in-hand walks by the river
that one grimaces in the likeness
of a dog crushed beneath a flatbed
says nothing of his smile
this reminds me
the dead have better things to do with their time than war
it's called nothing

Killer Kisses

we paused to kiss
by the creek where it becomes
a river by a well where it becomes
our nourishment we paused
to evaluate the relative temperatures
of our lips and soon
were lost in systemizing thoughts

that night Mars loomed larger
than anyone had the right to see
they say it's red with the luster of hatred
but the sweet lights of the city
cast it to pink and the war of love
is engaged

Year Ago

now a year later
they both are gone

not long ago they both were in the living
room laughing at their shows
some still are on and being made anew

not long ago we were touring the garden
pointing out what was growing well or blooming
and what needed a change

not too long ago she was cooking me breakfast
heavy on butter and eggs even though she could
hardly walk and it wasn't

too long ago that she was alone
and it was dark her worst fear
the lightning was on its way it seems

long ago when she must have known
what faced her in the darkness strobed by lightning
was the one thing no one could help her now it was so long

ago her father taught her this was the way
she must prepare every moment of her life
for this

Reso-Phonic

the bottle is like a jug round at the shoulders
then narrowing to the base from the shoulders up
it flares out then in and finally up and slightly out
with a finger ring off the neck to hold the jug to your lips
with its body on your hitched up shoulder

screw caps from the beginning
from a time when wine was considered upscale or highbrow
and caps meant cheap

I bought wine like this for the boys
when I looked older and they seemed to need it
to buck up their courage for the years to come
when playing star would become more menial

it clogged their heads but cleared the way
to slogging out of bed to work and back again
the only good to come from the work of Carlo
was to provide a lonely master a slide made from the neck
of such a bottle to let loose the noise of a National
Reso-Phonic Guitar on Venice Beach

the bottle keeps it up
grapes keep growing and expertise is misplaced
the bottle makers know their trade

Yikes (My First Political Poem)

the first thing intolerance tolerates
not is tolerance

there was a reason tvs were black & white only
for so many years: it's easier that way

you need all the white there is to be white
just a little black makes you black

reasoning and logic are easier to use
when only true and false are permitted

some call these 0 and 1
then second-grade arithmetic is enough

to see color requires neurons that do more
black & white is just a difference

intolerance is ok when it locks onto
altruism but when it turns to the self

Le Berceau

Gustave Caillebotte seer in blue
shadows of blue the front parts of small waves
—all blue—
the effet de neige in the view of rooftops
must be blue for that is in effect
the effect of blue
at least no one said something like

“seen up close they are
incomprehensible and hideous
seen from a distance they are
hideous and incomprehensible”

all this shades to a vague troubled gray
that excites the enthusiasm
of the followers

at a distance one hails a masterpiece
in this stream of life this trembling
of great shadow and light but come closer

it all vanishes
there remains only an indecipherable
chaos of palette scrapings
innumerable black tongue lickings

what a bugle call for those who listen carefully
how it resounds far in the future

Well It's a Funny Impression

Vue Prise à Travers un Balcon

a narrow scene
in the apartment of the bourgeoisie
of business
a man partly cut off by the right
reads a paper
he is prepared to put it down for any reason
the woman stands well-posed by the balcony

looking out across the street
she is prepared to turn away for any reason
it seems but three facts prevent the scene
from breaking beyond its boredom

the only colors are blue gold
black and white

five capital letters from a sign across
the way read NT__RBU

as if painted by accident by
the sidehairs of Caillebotte's brush
a man stares back at her

and this explains the 2 colors I missed at first
the green leaves of a potted lily and the earthy orange
of its pot

Craft To His Fingertips

Raboteurs de Parquets

they work hard but remain thin
thin arms narrow chests
seen above and from the front as they kneel and scrape
what we see of their faces is strange and unpleasant

wine on the hearth shirts and coats in a heap
shavings growing curled what is remarkable
is the light through the elegant window behind
the way where they have scraped is dull
where they haven't reflects the light into our eyes

the scrapers backlit talk quietly
the painter thinks of the perspective
and of the beautiful nudes he could have painted

the good taste of this is doubtful

Such An Approach Was Necessary to Lend Some Interest to the Subject

August 1, 2003

Soleil Couchant, Sur La Seine, Effet d'Hiver

sun as tourist
departing the Seine
water surface unstill reflecting wearily
men in boats a conspiracy of sticks
city fogged and smoked
a raft of smoke flagging
in the wind's direction
swarming color astonishing foam
what is in store seems the effect
of winter seen through the healed eye
seizing

Date Added to Signature Later

August 2, 2003

Moe

I met Moe
and Larry while they were slap-
sticking around Pleasure Island
after I'd cut my hair like Moe's
he signed an address book my mother brought along

did he notice the tribute
I paid by scissors

Optics as Secrets

lefthanders appeared
suddenly in 1420
along with realism as if art
were done all with mirrors
left as right and so on
up for down was it tracing

drawing upside down
we focus on the visual
not the cognitive
the dark room

was it the walls outside
or other ones
that turned the dark to art

O

above a helicopter ascends
curves around and away
from 500' to 3000'
then the buzzards circle
but I'm riding a bicycle
fast downhill past the sugary smelling weeds
and their darkness is blurred in my bad eye
but the helicopter descends
curves around toward me and down
from 3000' to 500'
then the buzzards circle
the sugary smell masks
for me the smell that attracts them
a pair of vultures with sexually red heads
above the helicopter ascends
curves up and around
from 500' to 3000'
I am bicycling away from this
the darkness in my bad eye
the sound of the helicopter
the sugary smell of weeds
wind from the sea in my face
all the grass around yellow and brown
all the trees green with leathery leaves
my feet spin locked to my pedals
the vultures rise and circle
circle and descend
the sugary smell of weeds blows by as I pedal to the sea
where something as straightforward as beauty
has been evacuated

0

Too Pretend

I hold in one hand
the scent of a sweet weed
bursting with scent and ooze

and in

the other the meanings of half
the words you will ever say

and then

the wind blows—
the scent bursts
away from the one hand

and when

the time comes
pale ink will dance
on our graves

Whose Isn't?

ok so she steps up onto the long center stage
in a torn clinging white dress
the music is not loud but the reflections of neon
ATM signs in the mirrors are
she sprawls she crawls she splays her way
through first song down to a thong
her highheeled feet thump and crack on the hardwood floor
a sound the blaring clubs cover
bills folded over low rails lure her to the men
or the few women scattered
and she crosses spreads curls and folds her legs
into perfect viewing positions

song two

beneath her thong has no meaning
and the invention of shaved nudity is its own ars
she open and shows
her eyes cheery from veiled longing
look deeply and blankly from face to face
she bends and hangs upside down
the sound of her plastic shoes reveal the artist at work
her name is Destiny
whose isn't?

Get Off

oh superb
let's be superb
while we're at it let's
keep our power on keep it growing
through the window stained by grease and smoke
the restaurant sign across the street buzzes on and off
the bridge takes then releases the weight of freight trains
moving east then later west
we're superb
the pick of the litter
not litter like the liquid lux cans rusting out by the railbed
but litter like the cute we-uns men choose from

hog's laid down his 20 and we've buzzed him in
let's see whose little skirt
is the turn on

Written On Her

she was covered in tattoos
except her face hands and feet
but beneath her tight pants tendrils of green ink
dropped down her arms were covered in red green and blue
where her shirt rode up in back there were tiger's eyes
the ink spread upwards from her breasts
her hair'd been colored red
she carried two beers to the outside table
where she sat with a honey blonde with hair long enough to sit on
and they shared fashion magazines

between where she sat and I did
other women were sitting eating from yellow and blue plates
brightly colored food
deep dark green leaves and spears
tomato red sauce and salsa
yellow corn and cheese on brown bread
toasted and oiled

around us buildings sheathed in tinted glass
reflected from everywhere the sun approaching
the fog gathered on the far side of the hills
and I watched her slowly turn each page
while she studied the women posed upon it in camisoles
and purple bras with the green granite behind her
behind them sipping their beers
and all around us what men make
including ink
including patterns
including her

Nowhere Name

did we appear from nowhere
my father's name when he died was made up
my father's name when he was born is nowhere else
google altavista
no one can find another with his name
I have no relatives
no one knows where his father is buried
his name does not appear in the book of all names
in the country his father came from
imagine this if you can
imagine being literally nobody
did I write this

All Strangely Sincronizza You

to Rome 300 persons have entered
at the same time in a store of books and discs
asking to give them nonexistent biography
of CLAUDIUS ZAMBONI

the store of Rome taken of onslaught

the authors of the transmission jokes to part
could draw new stimuli from the strangest joke
of the last times that it has been put in scene
today afternoon

unaware of victims the store clerks
and numerous customers of the store of discs and musical books

approximately three hundred persons
they have materialized themselves at the same time
to the 19,15 the advanced plan asking to give them
for disowned volumes and works of nonexistent authors
the unexpected customers did not know themselves
but they were all strangely sincronizza you on the same timetable

and they crowded themselves around to the counter
with the same demanded inusuali
the scene is duration ten exact minutes
subsequently to which the crowd is burst in an uproarious applause
of 15 second ones, before dileguarsi in batter d'occhio

If More Boing

With the palm which as for the bird to which the end of heart comparatively the palm,
exceeding last thought,
rises to the decoration of bronze color,

can attach the gold feather
is not meaning the human,
and feeling the human does not have the song of the foreign country, you sing.

As for reason
making us unhappy then you have known without being whether happiness.
The bird sings. That feather shines.

The palm stands rubs between the sky.
The wind moves slowly with establishment
The feathers/springs of fire fangled bird balance downward.

Use Words

we can watch
webcams are everywhere
lives cannot hide
each snap misses 5 seconds
fingers apparently frozen in place
have had time to visit several places
what was alive for one snap
may be otherwise for another
webcams are cheap and therefore anywhere
this gives them color and texture
as rewards for poor design and cheap manufacture
we as people can hope
only that this is not
generally true

Home Longing

the house
the place the grass growing tall after rain
the birds in their surprise
buildings nests everywhere
the predators boldly moving
about as they please
the mice and voles hiding
the woodpeckers making all holed
pines have the pleasure of sighing
without effort and all year
no one has stood against it

what she wanted
was never hers to command

August 14, 2003

Was She

her official pictures
are most of what's left I can use to remember her by
she shied from the camera
thinking it would catch her age
without her consent
her secret
—8 years of it—
was she

Gilligan's Island + Stairway

art settles into attractors
we fall in line for the reading mind
is little more than a pack animal
art is full of context
even Wallace tears up
pages out of focus illuminate
I privately own the space my reading mind
infects but you are torn like leaves from trees

so
a pine needle
falls

I long for christmas like to
blink off & on

for something rotten
to evaporate

Emily=
—gerbil orgasms—

So Emily So

Emily what
did you do in bed those nights
when we thought you were dreaming
up ballad-song ditties
what yellowed schoolgirl nighties
passed those nights with you

where were your hands
your fingers dashing through the under
(brush?) you daring darling
smiling like a stinkbug
(which no one has ever seen)
and so what
Emily so what

Dash Hit

speak Emily
of what you found
irrelevant to write of
though the quirk things
you dashed off were spellbinding
when after a walk (I'm sure)
from the garden to the bedroom
you spotted some flies
once more
(you temptress of fate
seeing beauty in blacks wings
and invisible hair)
we believe black photos of you (and white)
meaning your grandmother

—
like habits of baking tarts
for kids when in
fact you suffered the lust
like anyone else and where
were your fingers when
the dashes hit

High

Tibetan girl
abstract words
eyes hips mind
& lust available
she is dark
like god short like
prayer carpets
she wears signs of modern life
she is postmodern in the nature
of herself watches and blue pants
she says nothing
never nothing
it is as the mountains
have demanded

Pictured

it's the picture of her she
never showed her thin self smiling
like a shy girl her eyes clear but not
straight her smile thin but knowing

I find her alluring & ready
for life started late
and ended alone

everything she feared
I wipe away
what she wished
I write into her life now

Show She

packing up
throwing things out
giving things away
keeping things

I wasn't ready for all the new things
she bought some
she made some
shoes never worn certainly not outside
smocks just made and heart full of color
towels 20 years old but never wetted never having dried
a single person

letters to her with their pictures stored among paid bills
in shoe boxes in the closet or in a bureau

the narrow direction her mind moved in
the short list of foods and places
the path through the night's tv shows

details she kept like what time they stopped at the first rest
area in South Carolina going north
mile markers of all stops
gas and rest

I picture her buying things
just to have them
to show herself she has a life force
to show she can

Dirt Treat

homes—they are plopped down everywhere
in nooks no one would think of
with lawns (sometimes) the size of cornfields
the people who live there (I think)
mow them every week in summer
on John Deeres
green like the grass they want to have
trimmed

homes—why are they where they are
lights on in rooms out back
blue lights meaning tvs
their entertainment served up standard

I drive past them after sunset
not by much but after
and this is the hour they shine with the loneliness
we've inherited from our fate
the fate of everything to be
placed randomly
and treated like the dirt
we most certainly are

My Call

when she died she took the house with her
each day she lay dead she took more and more of it
until now a year later it is still all hers
pulled after her into an abyss
that opens wider each day
I once thought when she left I'd
redo the place in my own style
but now I see it's her's and my options
are to move on or bulldoze

this is all so clear now while I bag
her things for the dump
and still smell the perfume she
wore all those weeks lying dead
waiting for my call

Lighten The Load

today we took her sweater
off the favorite rocker
she used every night for 40 years
its hardwood handrest caught her eye
as she fell the night she died her head
by her favorite rocker

today we took her favorite sweater
where we take all things of hers
no one but us would want

may my tread be one day as light
as hers is today

Routine & Dull

the usual places in the usual order
the visits are routine and dull
repetition is the evil of punishment
they've been gone so short a time that the beech
has not increased at all and the sod has healed
but a little

how surprised they'd be to witness
how I linger over their things
over them

August 25, 2003

Positivism

my point of view
is the hole just dug

later the hole is covered
and things become clear
and the truth becomes accurate

Brackets

left?
some clothes and pictures
complicated notes about simple facts
some shifts she made and a painting
I should have recorded more
written things down as she said them
my memory porous and tired
I need to write what I know for my children
right!

Secondary

too often the stamp paralyzes
the action of direct confrontation
and deformation

we find the actions of intolerants
intolerable

who we trust
is not a trusted decision

something is growing
at the same rate as my fear

August 28, 2003

Strong Shame

shame prevents me from making a shapely line
no amount of composition can atone for my stupid behavior
I wish sometimes to fall dead like a bird in a storm
confidence is not worth the blood pumping that keeps it alive
every day like this is a broken bone knitting
hurt replaces pain in a timorous chain
each line in a wrong poem is like a bad declarative sentence
probably

Reversal

I suppose I lived though the merits of a truth
like that are suspected always
among the reasons to question is the possibility
of everlasting life which might be in play
had I seen the end would it be made of pieces
I could have recalled

blood
was blood part of it
was the event singular or stretched over hours
or days

outside
lightning and thunder I imagine
for the end is tragic and dramatic
like a birth
hmm
in reverse

August 30, 2003

Foregone

underneath the satin
we find silk brushed as curiously
as water sought and water repelled
the touch of satin
frames our mood as the extravagance of beauty
rests like flies on rotting meat
and the dead

Like a Loose Tooth

I remember it like yesterday.
The sky was cool and the air blue.
I had been waiting in the living room
looking out the window for my teacher
to arrive in his 1963 Dodge Dart
to take me learn better how to film football
games for the coaches. He arrived
with someone in the car, a woman,
a blonde woman from school, a teacher,
French and Latin. He had the camera
and tripod in the back seat, and the bag of film
and accessories were there too so I had
to sit next to her by the door.

She wore gray-green—a tight skirt
and a tight sweater. She was just a little
too small for her clothes but shaped perfectly
I thought like a woman: firm breasts slightly pointed,
rounded hips and thighs. She wore light makeup
and a heavier perfume than I had ever smelled
before. Her hair was short, not even down
to her shoulders. The car was warm
from the sun and my whole left side was pushed
against her right. I had never felt a woman before.
I had never smelled a woman before. I had never
felt a woman breathing. I had never heard her
voice so distinct in my ears. We were so jammed
in front that I had to put my arm on the seat
behind her neck and my hand had never been so close
to a woman before. When we bumped over
the misshapen roads to the town two towns
over she leaned into me then back, so I could
feel how soft she was.

When we got to the other team's home field
he sent me up in the cherry-picker where I filmed
the game alone. As the day worn on it grew colder.
As expected we lost. And the teacher had arranged
for a different ride home.

I remember it just as if it happened
10 minutes ago.

Wikiku

—explaining Wikis to poets:
like writing a poem
clear enough for Ellen Bryant Voigt—

No One Grows

the great draft lonely children searching
the house is evolving toward a static style
while the leaves are starting their trace toward
the ground and then toward the sea

a kitchen table no one can sit at
the living room where no one lives
the odor no one abides
no one grows
used to

what is the point
our reason is like the flapping bird
or swimming fish
significant only in the midst of air
or under a deep water

September 3, 2003

But There

every few weeks at night when I sit down to reflect
my eyes stop focussing and the words come out jumbled
—lack of correction—
I feel diffused as if in a congested woods at the peak
of summer or in a blowing snowstorm on a rooftop parking lot

I hope for birds to lead me out
or an old friend up ahead wearing dark clothes
against the blowing snow to lead me in
to a warm room through an unlocked door

but there are woods
but there is snow in the air

While&Still

today I bought things
and reflected on the extent of Levittown
whether my town
—Redwood City—
is a section of Levittown

because that

(would make me as poor as white folks) come
poets today have demonstrated

to put an end
to punctuation as a form
of talent

I dream I am bass fishing off
the Walt Whitman Bridge
having eaten Roy Rogers
and a TCBY filled up on SunOcO

today I am chair
of science and speak only in declaratives
starting with
while and still

while Levittown expands
still Neil Young crosses

Comic Phyzz

dredging from Miami to Tampa
under shelves of mosquitos
the Beloved invades my safety
with hesitation in her valves
the aim is a fire
larger than the plain we set our cave upon
there is this truth about the death camps
the weather changes from moment to moment
meaning from summer to winter
and age means time means the death camp
precipitates from the shrinking
of space and expansion of time

Fraud Works All

I'm not who you think even
when you take that into account
your eyes' dim looking-at-me
hovers like piano wire above
a sounding board I'm given to
walking close to buildings
and scrutinizing sidewalks long
before I step onto them
profound thinker
deeply pessimistic fraud
let's turn away from all our works
and fondle the letters they are all
made from

Lurker Hug

too much of the low light
is wasted on illuminating
the little things
the things you know
that lurk that skitter behind bushes
or slowly slide to the other side of a boulder while hugging it stealthily

low light is for getting warm
seeing just enough to get close
and then letting that light act as eyelids
shutting out the stare while
retaining the glimpse

September 8, 2003

Sangamon Singer

afresh in the corn fed fields
singing the praise of sycamores and oaks
the roads once flat and straight dip and wind
through the shallow Sangamon Valley
toward a brick mansion hidden among sculpture

the women gather by the fountain debating duende
and dudes while their skin cells slough and replenish
and their conversations grow tight in an all-known
circle and intimacy becomes something for yourself

Meditation on Entrances

hollow the dips holding morning mist
pastelling the rising sun and rabbits
hidden in the long shadows of transition
my thoughts like them hold still till
the zigzag run is unavoidable

and hollow the meaning carved
out for relief and sentiment
the singer perched on a tall style
your style an everchanging color
from week to week

me I'm trapped in the persona
a mere voice trained and revised
the long trees bent dead over and black
before the brick gate posts getting ready
the way bricks do to spend the day red

Yes, Let's Go Together to the Sun Singer

I see the road—don't push me
let me walk slower
a pace I can feel under my feet

let me look from side to side
let me stop at times and see the butterflies
lighting and stopping

I see where the road is going
I see you wish to speed ahead

I've seen pictures of the Sun Singer
perched on his style
facing dawn his backside to sunset
don't push me when I want to slow down
I want to see more deeply
more slowly—I feel it all slowing

I see you pushing
going faster little by little
what I know is you'll know one day
that no matter how hard you want us
to arrive together that the Sun Singer
is beyond me—that another last sunrise will come
then go while you circle the Singer

there is a side trail I know
I think it's just ahead and someone I know
is resting near there just off the trail
just off the road—resting in the shade
resting with the weight of tomorrow lifted

Pay Love

the door opens reluctantly
letting me in one more time
one last time I think
to watch them bare all
the humiliation all mine as my response
is the curiosity of those without memories
in an industrial shed painted blue
lined at the gutter with blue neon
at the intersection of this way and that
in the cornfields turning harvest gold
in the soyfields turning harvest brown
where the third crop has been trimmed close
and they'll love you for a dollar
for just one second more

Waits

the photographer waits
a predator eager to pounce
when the sun creases the horizon
or a bird's about to land
the device she uses is patient
for patience is the strongest virtue of machines
in this the photographer wishes to capture
the heart of the machine as she waits
while the machine waits to capture
the heart of the scene
and the scene waits to capture
the heart of the photographer
who waits
to set this cascade going

everyone eventually quits

I mean the athlete on top eventually withers
the one with all the answers falls mute or asks
flowers having pushed up and burst brown and fall
leaves pulled from the dirt in the ground
drop and blow to become once more nitrogen
the slim groom leaning against the garden arch
hands in his pockets and woman in white leaning
on him her hand on his chest eye each other
across the glassshattered room and crunch
hatred walking out this little place cozy in its small reach
spins out of control into the dark pinprick science
prepares us for one theory at a time
hear me now and believe me later: goodbye

Jinx & Torri

was I really there watching two
women lick each others' lips
and split on each others' slits
and every sort of man's insult for the female body
enters into the syllabus for this poem
this epigram dedicated to the blue neon
storage shed where jinx struts her tatoood rear
and bleached anus which she opens
along with her parted parts as black men
watch me watching her and torri lick it up
half fake half real on a quilt on a blanket on a bed
next to me watching like the man I am

her mother's mother collects rags
and oddcolored thread the sunset an hour past dinner
hogs the landscape filling with corn and spreading
with soybeans her quilt will one day represent
the farm squares

they drive here in ford 150s and rams
their desire is quenched by pabst and the lotion show
something even the mothers of their children
will never reveal no not ever never not even
to them

Bitter Blind

let the wonderful explode
a martini in one hand a cigar in the other
outside the snow starts at the tops of my windows
and vanishes at the bottoms
though across the way the roof seems to be gaining
a lighter top as if something like snow
were happening but the city has been folded
by a foreigner into the shape of a clasp
during the making of a novel and now
the hope is that seawater will rise up and soak
away the snow using its finely honed bitterness

this is the dream of a manloving man
whose first choice is couture
whose third is a tight poem
and whose second is up your ass

Abstractions All

the two sexes don't make sense
not to each other anyway
the outs the ins
affection before love
or the other way

while the mist dwelling in the slight depressions
floats away to become the stifling heat of the day
woolly caterpillars hump from one side of the road
to the sunnier one

my job is avoidance

Hog Heaven

even when the sun hasn't taken
much of a toll on the fields
the air is compressed by the smell of cut corn
and from a distant hog farm the warm fetid smell
of hogs laying about

the blue vistas are what the poets write about
but imagine if you will
the contagion of melancholy hogging the roads
when rainclouds drop low to the fields
and even the brown freshly plowed earth
looks gray and barren

this is the beauty of the heart

Odense Has Been Corrected to Oddness

the beauty of the foreign country lies
in its grasp of the other or the strange habit
here in Denmark—Odense for precision—it's the blonde
in all her narrow diversity

where one has lighter blonde streaks through a darker blonde
background another has darker blonde streaks and everything
else the other way round

and the hips
heavy and substantial to withstand the prone bulk of the viking man
she will not speak of this nor acknowledge it in her couture choices

they stare with frozen blue or grey eyes like cats from the world
of snowflakes

the towns inspired Disney while poets blindfold themselves

there are dirt roads here covered with gravel & rocks
and christmas tree farms with short noble firs
crows with white shoulders

even death here—as Shakespeare likely told us—
is foreign and other
I mean
crows with white shoulders

Disney to Dismay

My Place in the Scheme of Nowhere

nightfall on the fast-train
on the overcrossing between islands
the farms settling in as nightfall
then fall overtakes us all
the light from my computer screen
illuminates the window obscuring
the gravel road beside us traveling
fast (me backwards) toward the airport

the sky like the day is overcast
my affairs all far away and me the stranger
moving from place to place on trivial business
my presence like an extra sodium light
between two others on a heavyhearted
Danish road leading to the leaden sea

Below Time

below us the city takes on the color
of blue steel and water has been woven
through it like a couple intending toward each other
there are trains that take less time
than the raft of intentions welling up beside
the wharf

the view is always spectacular
because nothing aside from the boats
and cars moves

there is great virtue in the static

Narrowing

let's figure the ways to lie
noting that falsehood is considerably
larger than truth
this means truth is narrow
surrounded by beds of falsehoods and lies
the paths this way and that way
off this little strip are like warm pillows
or sugar candies wrapped in easy-tear papers

I like the red roofs and the stone-like walls
and we walk down the streets
holding on without passion
without discussion
we think about how narrow the streets can seem
when two people walk too close together
and the rain from the roofs cross over
cross paths cross from on side to the other

Mi/nd

the voice trembles
she sings/sounds of love
de/ep emotions on snapshot
she paces and roams the stage
as if in he/at
it is all real so
when she resets the mic
bends to read the next line
turns her eyes to signal the guitar to stop
if a heart can break
what of the mind

Foreign Places

newspaper laid out on the coffee table
the tv on but down low so the sound of wind
pervades the room

a woman walks from the coffee table to the bar
for a small shot of vodka to go with her plate of saltines
through the window the room emits a warm light

a few pieces of information escape
telling of fragments such as the forgotten book
the unfinished drink at the end of the bookshelf

but from where I stand on the street below
2 stories down and up half a block
the moral is the wind that whips from behind me

to the harbor haven at the end of the street
where people once in love still live
and boats bump against the docks

X-Ray Couch

the docks angle out at angles
providing safe berths for many
small boats none occupied by midnight
but the lights from shore make some boats
look inhabited one looks like two
on a couch makng furtive love
looking like an X-ray with a dark shadow
that shouldn't be there
and can't be ignored

Baby Streets

tonight our job is to walk
back from the museum through the sidestreets
of a college town in Denmark
to our hotel where the night will be consumed

overcast the sky pervades the above-building views
where the winds scrape the clouds past faster
with each cross-street we pass and though

it's just past 8 only the corners hide then reveal
the people walking home or toward lovers
who pace with glasses near empty in their hands
looking down at the streets where these others
will appear

we sometimes hold hands
we move closer then farther
we watch the pavement closely to guard against the unevenness
we talk about when we tell each other
to make the next call any kind of call you want

Wind Up

there are no hills or rises
to deliver the wind somewhere else
this place has never been hospitable

their reward is icy beauty
hard red rocks
cold water waving up on shores all around

in my mirror the creases and white hair
remind me of the ones who have turned
the corner just ahead of me

this street has been turning away from the sun
or the sun has been and way ahead and the choices
left and right are shaded now—by a cloud by chance

and my legs don't feel like stopping anytime soon
eager to get to the crossroads
eager to finally get to where I can sit down and put them up

Travel and Occasion

well well the long day ends
the coins collected are placed in a jar
the newspapers the filled the evenings
are bundled and piled by the side gate
there is cleaning to do but the couch beckons
the small lazinesses that mean little
day by day but everything when the time
comes

the time comes but once or twice
when the anchor drops in a fit of importance
we gather around a man who wishes to
no must
speak and birds fall silent
and the wind slows to a stop
the coincidence of written words
capturing the the moment
needs no verb

the world is big
but we move through it quickly
and can be another place with little thought
our ancestors weep

The Forward March of Science

science marches toward art
spreading flanks around frightened painters and writers
who wish only to paint an alley
or write a stanza on fountains in Spain
but the ones who fear declarative sentences
hope to end once and for all
simplicity and clarity
replacing them with notation
and complexity thinking perhaps
that shallow thinking needs to be buried

science moves in slowly
carrying large boxes
instruments measuring devices
tubes and bottles
tubing and wires
radio links and miles of cords

ahead of the march campfires burn
stories of old bravery are told
near dawn they will take sticks whose ends are burning embers
and melt the extension cords laid down back
to science's headquarters
and long papers will be written
and presented at refereed conferences
all next winter

Beauty Angst Software

free software project travel
beauty and the beak Philippine women turn to
olfactory organ angst is the reverse

on your computer whilst downloading anti-virus software
goatee or not to goatee health/beauty
help me I have till tonight teenage angst

an online comic strip featuring angst love and
directory software metasearch software searches gambling
metasearch phone searches beauty search beauty

it is not beauty within the beast but it is
angst angst swear curse swear crazy crazy
angst swear curse slates slide rules and software

apparently useless software sponsored by ...
can you see the unworldly angst and agony
the pure incandescent beauty of naomi

Succulent Moon

vendors vistas vital
statistics under shimmering vultures
wings shiny under a succulent moon
the hole is being crowned
the pain is being capped before a burst of cash
fleeting photo of passing planes kick up
violent & otherwise still dust & ash
working behind Hasidics I serve the shame
in their tassels and the heart held hostage
under their hats
soon I learn one is a child angry for his years
in an old black suit suited for night viewing
all that's missing is the girl kissed till her ass twitches
all that's missing is the woman and her sheep
for hole needs its shepherd
to guide us uptown tonight

Heavy Walk

downpour outside the theater
where guitars are stealing the night's quiet
but rain is hard too stretching from one side of town to the tracks
my isn't for the young
why do the guitars repeat & repeat
couldn't a machine do this better?
the downspouts carry the heavy rain down to the sewers
how can I get into the soldout show my choice
hard guitars or heavy rain
soaked or saturated
longing or lasting
up the street a shadow slips behind a dumpster
whose infrastructure is this anyways
round the corner the sounds drift in echoes
as the sound seeks all the ways to me
soon the tracks are behind
the rain still rains

Jot Me Drop

mannequins set up showing how
the fuel rods are loaded

country songs are published
as poetry without any kiss your car day
sausage pizza day mule day
electricity day look back on your life day
honey and harvest

when you write poetry
jot down ideas or things that a phone ringing
made me drop

loudly the return of seasons
limits my defiance

Claire feels she is inserting fuel rods
into a core like the way poets use poetry
to regenerate the defiance and parodying
of the enterprising spirit

Perched

the place waits
under a tree
in the shade
by a slowmoving stream
exiting a small basin
that must be being filled from a secret source
the place that is dark and timeless
that is underground and hopeless
that is landlocked and lockjawed
the stream that near the end of winter flows strong
fed from a thousand little streamlets
made from places of melting
places not covered in shade
my resting spot
where no one will speak so I hear
where memories flee
where the strange gather
by a rock left for eons
under a tree ready to fall
landlocked and timeless
time passing as a stream downslope
underground in places
with patches of hot sun
by pineneedles packed down by snow
in the shade
under a tree
the place waits

Convergent Bogus Yogi Bear

cone makes an epigram in the dusk of wheat
magnetizes yesterday while the furrow of a magician allures
a curb of notch as taunt of fumes

discard aleuromancy—except that it must be wheat or barley—
an Italian chemist alchemist hermetic and magician were really
divination by means of poppy fumes on live everyone

the biomass convergent bogus yogi bear magician POP
rippled in the heat of the steaming fumes
flew while glazed donuts of banana wheat fell fall-like

there is a world of almond milk and wheat grass ready
Blaine is this sort of like LA magician dude
set up beneath him goading him with the fumes of bacon

white on top with a slice of wheat on bottom
Reuters reports: The daredevil US magician
apparently drew blood after sweet = you can't smell the fumes

he was a magician as well as a healer, and he was
green on top - from exposure to the smoky fumes of Hades
wheat ridge oh : earth-love

Bait or Now

duende is a Spanish word meaning bait or NOW!!
she stood there red-faced and glassy-eyed glaring
a putrid odor exhaled up from the bottom

there is a new odor in the air and it's burning Blake
on a horse on this planet a wild red head named Kampsen
and an Argie named Paco form the duende team

Spanish women in elevators with duende
pantherous eyes beautiful red women beautiful
gypsy river women beautiful fire-escape women foul odor women beautiful

conceived as blooming flowers their astounding red plush
yes with violin and compass the duende wounds
gas escapes—maybe Sylvia Plath thought the odor would attract

a vender of kabobs where the luscious odor was particularly
and mostly blue on blue with flecks of red
making it necessary to direct the search to a proper leaf of duende

Death Structure Ocean

Kanaloa the god of ocean travel and death
be sure of very little of his structure and ceremony
contact the Great Death and the abandonment of sacred sites

ocean of words her "death" unlike Amy's or Alice's
is neither unexpected or expected
too often the sentence structure and vocabulary are stressful

the twenty-fifth anniversary of Chekov's death
is encoded also in the structure of space
by the opposing elements of sky and ocean

disclose something to bear out Jackson's theory
that the great structure was really a surface
abruptly sloped toward what had clearly been the bed of an ocean

Warmth Seen

wives sitting down for the evening
check the hearth for signs of flames
check the tv guide for shows to watch
the couch is her warm place
and the windows eventually flicker with blue

this simple scene doesn't negate the possibility
of murder the way the simple words seem to promise

Picture This

I wish the fields never resist
plowing and planting
that the trees still left
lend their shadows to the beauty of sunset
I wish the songbirds gather before flying off
so that the dropping leaves have the beauty
of deep song

but tomorrow all I can do
is buy a picture of it from a photographer
who sees better than I can
and who sells things cheap

Midwest Air

the sun like a smear of mud
behind the sky over the runways running
crossways and corn in the behind scene
the smell of fall in late afternoon at the airport
heading home head's up and hopeful
that the setting sun portends my rest
tonight resting after a long day of talking
of writing of dispelling irony squared

the photographer talking shots
and the patience of waiting hours and hours
or shooting hundreds to get the good one

the good one is here out this window
a covered sun over fields getting quick re-plows
combines working hard the traffic heading south
or west to the shock of the end
of another day and the dogfight of loneliness
against the guesses of tomorrow
hinged together like Lazurus versus Lazurus

Hit by Hail

the combine set to cut low sweeps through the soybeans
hit by hail this summer
this is what they thought
branching helps soybeans compensate
for lower plant stands
low final stand densities
branched soybeans set pods lower
to the ground creating a greater potential
for harvest losses
the farm fields set firmly in grey and brown
teach us of plainness
the coloring leaves in stands of trees
are washed out under grey skies
the sun awaits its disappearance
dust is escaping to the east

Using It In A Sentence

Heeshee! Look at that man growing out of your forehead!

Garsh, she's crabby.

It hurt like the Dickens.

For the love of Mike, will you just tell me?

Butts! I struck out again! I may as well quit baseball!
Never mind! I'll just join the Yankees!

Look at those girls!
I think they drive an orange van...

Look how that man is walking!
He must own McDonalds!

Carlie says Peter and Creighton are gay.
Creighton bites his finger and giggles at Peter.
Peter yells, "Step in doo, monkey!"

Oh no! Garrett is running in his gay way
(Note to people who have never seen Garrett run:
you can't understand the full meaning of this word)
after us yelling, "Wait! Wait Carlie and Misty!"
and then as we duck into Victoria's Secret in hopes
of losing him, he runs in and picks up the skimpiest
lingerie and shouts "Hey Misty!"
on the top of his lungs
Yeah, he's definately phizzin' again.

Blast! I knew I should have married Laurie!
Now he's married to my little sister
and I'm stuck with the old guy!

Okey Fresh!
Misty says: "Give me a quote for the newspaper."
Sarol says: "Sorry, I have a no-newspaper policy."
Oopsie, I guess I didn't use it in a sentence...

God is the Final Eigenvector

wow Lisa Pea you sure do smell nice bunnies
exclamated as Jason Parker asphyxiated
her eigenvector into bestiality
poetry 4 sex

smattering parsley smear parsnip smell
parson smelt poet hangable poetic hangar poetry
hangman pogo appraise brought eigenvalue
brouhaha eigenvector brow eight

the entire Internet can see
what your underarms smell like all day
God is the final eigenvector
& some of the worst poetry

Hunger About You

Manhattan
sitting by my writing window
with Thievery Corporation on the Bose Wave
singing heaven's gonna burn your eyes
and I watch the apartments across the street
through those burnt eyes

a woman is making bread
kneading it out on a board
her breasts are covered with white flour
as she kneads unaware of my thievery
across the dark street loud with New Yorican noise
and steam rising faster than any bread dough
near the change-over from tonight to tomorrow morning

the music
counters the street
steam rises
one building has no windows
and they say everyone in the city talks through it

the woman shaking the flour from her hair
shakes her breasts just as the garbage truck
passes by and the song seems to end

With Winter Here

with winter here shoveling with garden tools scraping
I heard Valvoline and True Value are sponsoring
a petite girl who had almost no breasts

pow photo western theme room: staffing practice
and selection tools at work
breasts falsies interracial gay men?

the top 10 ranked by readers are
Land Rover (women/breasts etc)
tune-up equipment power tools
afew respondents listed valvoline

valutakurser valvaka valvaka+sverigedemokraterna
valvoline racing valvulas
vampirella porno vampires vampires breasts boobs tits
ocx oracle VB4 tools vb400 dll

top 10 reasons why my breasts keep slipping
I have a perpetual motion machine
valvoline max life quilt making machine
decision making tools for teens

when you go to the Valvoline Expres for the massage svartgotik
should I bring my fuckin' tools?
he fantasizes about what his neighbors breasts feel like

alien penthouse
alignment tools
alimony antimony & testimony
alkaloid taste of rejection
Anna Banana Anna WD-40 Valvoline Karenina
Anni starts smoking

Scuttle Reason

winter soon on its way
like Orpheus to the rescue
we trade in myths and the myths make us
time has spoken and we write it down
these marks like a dance
like self-love a scuttle to one side
but balanced by another
the science of music is sickening
and the paste fills us with filaments

the surface of the world is well smeared
and leaves bursting loose are hardly a reason to leave
the winds of discontent harbor ill will equally to all
except for me all are exempt

October 16, 2003

Ba-Bing

your enthusiasm for lovemaking
is flattering but mine would be
fatter if you were flatter

October 17, 2003

Cloud Liner

tonight the clouds looked combed and yellow
before sunset and I thought
God counts how many clouds like this
we look at and after I was done shopping
the clouds were smoothed out pink
and I thought how many chances
do I deserve?

Walkers

every night for a week
many years ago in the northern part of New England
my father and I walked back and forth
on old route 16 which was by then abandoned
as the air grew colder by the minute
the stars growing more numerous
we spoke of failure and how I should deal with it
dogs would come out and bark each time we walked past
then we'd turn down another street
and walk up and down it speaking of
children and careers about the difficulty
of hard work then we'd turn onto the sand roads
that wove through the woods forming
an almost abandoned development
what comes when you sell to the poor
up north on vacation and we spoke
of how many times a man could fall
before he could never get up again

he's found out
learned it by feel at least
I'm not far behind

In Cold Distance

I knew her long after love was an issue
when the number of ripe tomatoes arriving before the frost
was more important or the number of canning
jars on hand

she lived nearly 60 years on that farm
carved from swampland
requiring constant care and weeding
but left without looking back when the day came

she cried herself to sleep for a year
wondering whether she could have saved my father
and maybe her father too

the time had come as autumn does
in all its cliches and killing frosts
she died before the Old Man fell
he died before the Red Sox won

the lights that flash at night up the road
are signals cycling or heat rising
but they like me waver incessantly

Black Hat/White Snow

tonight my face is half hidden
in a shadow that moves like a winded tree
branch back and forth across my face carefully
hiding precisely half but which half
it the mystery I impose on you

I've let loose my control of words
and many of these are not meant as you might mean
them I imagine sitting at the writing school
looking out the window as the flakes fall past
snowing from a cloudless sky in the darkness of winter
long after a class on clarity has wound down its confusing debate

and after the boat sank in the midst of a lake
they never knew how well I could control the words on the page
and what that would mean for them when I got around
to fabricating for the umpteenth time
the details of existence told with no commercial abstractions

long after the writing school in the woods
where I left behind me the footsteps
of death

In The Unchanging Fall

My father was typical, I think,
of many Red Sox fans in New England.
As long as I can remember he would listen
to the games on the radio—
often in the workshop while working
on a radio or transistorized invention or in the dark
in the kitchen when he came in for the night.

He never made any noise,
not even when he made me Ovaltine for the night
nor did he comment much on the games or the players,
but he would walk in and tell me
they had lost or won in a quiet voice.

When he slept after the games that meant
they wouldn't go on he'd sometimes make noises
as if he were afraid to speak or as if tears
were being held back but it was just the way
he slept sometimes in the Fall.

They never won the Series
while he was alive and I'm pretty
sure they won't in my lifetime either.

October 22, 2003

Memory & Landscape

when you lose your memories
you lose your landscape

you might as well fuggettaboutit

Wind Filled Forced

snow is the pieces of hell
that flutter down when God cracks
it open to pour in accumulated bile

covered deeply in blankets and a sleeping bag
I've left the window open and I'm woken
by the snow that is piling on my hair
and the random flakes hitting the lids
of my eyes

the wind appropriately blows
the filled night air sideways

I'm forced to react day after day
to signals with no meaning for me

once I've written it all down
I'll get the chance on the first of the last days
to read it aloud to those who would rather shout
but are this time forced to accumulate silence

MES 61

I never expected to find it
the silly piece of jewelry I found
exquisite when I was 11
which I made my mother buy for me
for graduation from elementary school
as if the accomplishment was worth a price
so high no one else in my class bought one

I recall wearing it one day to high school
and I recall my face draining to a look of no emotion whatever
as if meaning were meaningless
the long corridor between math and english
was filled with children standing at their lockers
exchanging books designed for thinking
for books designed for loving

here it is
a piece of cheap silver engraved with MES
and a chain attached another with 61
each can clasp a shirt or sweater

I was once proud

At 10 and 110

the sun was orange as an orange
from fires far away to the east
and the few tall buildings in the middle of the large flat city
disappeared like the discarded actresses they were
the smoke creating every kind of optical sight
cast the Bendix sign right in front of me
on the Transamerica building miles away
creating the newest metaphor destined for greatness
among the debris caused when railroad tracks
disappear under a parking structure

Short Sweet True

this just in!
it's official!
the votes are counted!
stop the presses!
no one disputes it!
I, yes I, I mean I
am the loser

The Longing and Short of It

the end has been fended off
and the flow fallen into disuse
and that use is destined for distension
and diffusion while the wood sauté
in the brine of early along the banks
of a mud-filled unfulfilled river
taking the long way round
foolishness and foundations
once laid now laid
bare by the road all of whose exits
exists as dead ends

the poet said

Cryptic Creations

she stopped by the window
and wondered about the shoes
gazing at her red and heated
and behind her the taxis rolled on
flooding the yellow sun with vigor
and explosions

among the faces crowding the sidewalk
the one who meant much means nothing
and $1+1$ is definitionally unexceptional
once more— 3 being out of the question
and red shoes being simply adored
bath more in the yellow sun

Ark!!!

Shem raised the rope
and forced his bulky frame through
chapped his knees when they allowed
a braying ass through the holy gates
but it's holy shit fire downtown

his oiled black hair glistened in the sun
as the ass was led around the path
toward the pinnacle of the secret
of the hiding place of the Holy Ark

Noah bitched and moaned about the count
so Yaphet used the pinnacle of a technical
split legged capture bomb (holy fuck)
this kicked all kinds of ass

Ham completely destroyed his bitch ass

The Heart is a Bloom

I might have still been with that dumb girl
but eventually I got the clue and if music
needs a dark yang to the effervescent sunshine
my dear father had taught his foolish
little dumb girl a trick that had robbed him of it
but I was not long left to pine in solitude.
though they did not know a United States Senator from South Dakota
the former Indian agent at Pine Ridge
and Keith tells of a deaf and dumb girl who
was among the wounded

the convent is lovely
situated in a splendid colossal pine wood
we had the blessing of seeing a little dumb
girl speak but how her mother prayed for her!

she is not a dumb girl
she just likes different things than
you do where it's nothing
but frigid air and thick pine trees

her parents are not at home
and I'm looking around at pretty things
I want I burn I pine I perish!
dumb dumb dumb girl
yes Lupé I downloaded most of the songs

Zo Long

no hair dryers or other such devices are permitted
smoking is not permitted inside the lighthouse
hair cutting is permitted if both rooms
are rented by the pet owner

to be a good pet the lighthouse family waved good-bye
to Old Jack as loved children permitted the sweet smell
of their hair the soft diet and medication to prevent his hair
from falling

Turn Up The Muse

the muse stubbed her toe
but I walked on ahead of her
not noticing her not nearness
for hundreds of words

vision is fading away and I cannot fathom
how recently those far older than me have moved
on and on toward the open arms of their muses
amused at how far their victims walked after the faked
stubbed toes and other recalcitrantisms

o my my turn
is about to turn up

Day of Rejoicing and Death Lamentations

some have said it and it
seems to be true that the pain
of the death of a mother
peaks on the day of your birth

in my family we disdain those days
making death more easily swallowed

tonight I drove up a short winding road
after dark through woods in Virginia
and what I've seen is so much more
than she ever did—by her choice
by her limitations by her prejudices

the only states West of the Eastern Seaboard
are the ones where I lived
and the ones you needed to go through to get there

the ones you needed to go through to get here

Science Of Design

on the path from my cottage
to the workshop the smells of oak leaves
in early November in Virginia
stopped me for a moment
and the importance of design
as science fell from my mind
and assumed the importance of an extra
acorn to a fat squirrel

Dark Country of Her Hair

on her way with her parents
home to a country
with protruding accents
the young woman with American jeans
and serpent black hair
chooses the path from the shuttle
to the gate for the cloth-coated group
the way a new idea leads an old mind
to a wrong conclusion

Upon a Hill Near a Bridging

it's the oldest story in the world
it's the most ordinary moment
it's the first moment that I can know that they cannot
it's the start of a series of memories apart from theirs

the surface of their headstone will one day
be pitted with storm damage
and the stains of weather I've experienced
and the tears I'll leave behind there

finally memories will be no one's business
it would be tempting to label this "my own"
the eagerness of time to move on
places us in the embarrassing frame of mind
to stay behind

even when this places the burden of tears upon us
and on the stone
and on the leaves of grass

retire to the written word
and the memories of fans
and all will be well
mother
father
trust me this time

Final & Final Once More

the odor of gas and oil
spreading through the underground garage
and the way she stood there looking at me
as if she wanted to walk away
became an occasion punctuated by a car door closing
and its echoes through a concrete structure
but she stood where she was as if to stay
and the echoes found their ways out of the garage
only after many attempts to circle back

could I have stayed
or circled back
gas and oil
or the wind blowing their essences away across the plain

nothing seemed wrong
not even the chance meetings
the furtively held hands
the cold wind in junk park

nothing was wrong as far as I could see
and she's off to church

Winks Last

sometimes the girl who winks last
is the one who will depart first

take the party girls
who take men apart at the bar
with smart comments and repartee

the cold bar dark from shutters
and smelling of smoke and beer
perfume and cologne shades of aftershave and hooker scent
open out to a southwest afternoon burning
from no shade no windows
just the long distances and long stretches
rainless and pitiless

let's hear it for the girls
destined to wait for the calls
but determined to refuse their requests
balancing power like a tray of burgers and fries
shakes and cokes down at the DQ 2 hours before
sunset and the start of a long languid night of rerun TV

Someone Who Looks Like Catherine Zeta-Jones

she's perfect
standing by the bar
sunset sunlight sharply shading her face in seductive contrasts
she never smiles
her beauty doesn't need it
I try all I can to make her love me
writing creating thinking
but she is programmed for beauty
nothing less is even visible
she stands alone
looking out the window at the desert darkening
not realizing she's watching but not noticing the small and afraid
dash from bush to bush
seeking one last bite
a small sip from a sudden storm caught between the lips of a once dried out leaf
I think she might turn enough to see me
but the onrushing night draws her attention
the beauty outside
the corners of her lips curling up enough to signal her pleasure
and reveal her sadness
my beer warms

Pulsing Intentions

the light the daylight fades
we all know that
and nighttime now in towns and cities devours a chunk
of the darkness we grown to fear

where they lie now is constant in its darkness
such as a night unlike anything they could have known before

their faith in the pulsing rhythm of light and dark
sustains them now
until the rest of us join them

Sappy Cross-Country Drive

the lines repeated
as I drove northwest
from Sioux City toward Sioux Falls
on the section of highway by a loop of river
that used to be part of the Missouri
while she slept in the heat of late afternoon
past many towns with an Elm Street
she looked like someone I could love
the lines repeated and she was everything
I could think of and everything
I could think of was she

Only Equation

the day approaches
when the light that's passed
minus the light left
equals the life

Don't Look Back

I could have taken her away
we could have gotten into a car and driven
through the heat craving South
away from the broken down houses she kept up through prayer and tears
not looked back
not got dressed up special
could have taken the curves at the fastest possible pace
cheated death 2 or 3 times an hour
forgotten the anchor holding us back
we could have run away from the past
past the darkening South
past the heat craving deserts
all the way to the Coast
and soaked up the warm wet Pacific air
instead of the mouldy rooms she chose

I could have taken her away
and how different it could have been would have depended
only on what clothes she brought and way she brushed her hair

We Can Run Away

from the back of a truck
we toss away the relics
we place the freshest on tables for dump pickers

the dust kicked up choked us
the sharp edges cut our hands and tore
our clothes rained on dust stained our hands
and arms

the wind picked up but nothing blew away
that hadn't already blewn away

The Bridge No One Crosses

the bridge will always be
there for us
no anger
no humiliation
no retribution
always resisting the waters
with minimal gestures

the other side—
if only we knew it were like this—

let's not cross to it

Budapest First

she next
to the grayed man
grayed hair grayed stubble
deep veins of absence
forks her goulash up from the plate

. . . dark and complex
her lips enfolding and all-important
her eyes hooded as if in absinthe
darklined through an artistry derived from languid history
she glances
—furtively apprehensively I can see—
casually as if distant soft sounds are caressing over the other side of a field
as if birds are agitating over newly discovered seeds
as if the insignificance of a leaf rattling downward disturbs
her fashion of perfection in the dark corner of the burg restaurant
how she wins by deception of everyone
—everyone—
within earshot of her lover

The Hard Question Budapest Poses

air cold
strengthening wind
the silver beech stands strong
leaves have left
the darkening sky promises an ever colder night
the grass though
above their resting place locked away together
like Lazurus with Lazurus or Rachel with her children
remains green against all hope
like Bobby Rupp driving past and past and past
the elm lane tremendous on nights when the full moon rises at its inviting end
my simple words buried with them. . .
what I did I know is more
much more
than they would ever have believed
is this what I was put here for?

Me

what is beneath her skirt
me
walking behind her with my public passion flatlined
watching or is it dreaming
what is in that apartment above me across from the Collegium Budapest
me
walking beneath the window imagining the newspaper followed by bed by the
window where she will remove the skirt showing me her marvellousness
which she revealed only by her motion down the street
what is beneath my heart
me
wondering whether the end is at the next corner
watching me approach the wondrous
window where she will remove
me

Getaway In Her

the woman with 2 French Bull
dogs opened the door and out
in front of the restaurant she used
them to ask me home with her to her
apartment in the dark part of Pest
where she promised to make me
a plum pie and pour me
a glass of dark red wine before putting the dogs
in the sewing room before we crept
beneath a down blanket with the light
from the Royal Palace ago-ing past
the gauze curtains all orange and red
across the Danube but her eyes
were as desperate as mine and sad
as her dogs' snuffling around my feet
by the light-meal restaurant at 10pm
in a city where everyone comes
as they are

Black Sea Dreamin'

the food lies heavy and greased
on white Eastern European porcelain
in a city not far from my homeland

with a fast car the dangers
of rising after an all-nighter
passengers drunken with ill-at-ease sleep
in a European diesel designed to make for dawn
like the light membrane racing
'round and world making for infinite open road
are not as much a danger as a promise

but the people who might know what we could find
don't care forever

Away From Budapest Pre-Dawn

like moments in women
the end is a sprint
superb diminishment
shameful withdrawal

away from this Eastern city
toward the drab remainder
& the victoryless endings

Telling of Loneliness While Crossing An Old River

in Budapest the flow
is downriver
downslope
downtown
there are dark women there
who like to wear
things
unprofessionally
and straddle sex evoking machines
after dark's down in Pest in November
the apartments wake up
the woman who warmed her bed for me
said the road can wait

parapets
principles pointlessness
loneliness
stairs down to the bar then down to the Chain Bridge
the dark streets waking up

come as you are
leave different

Be?

the garden has turned itself over
to the ravages of winter
whose hands tear at undergarments
and pull free coverings
let's let the wind take the rest
take a rest
fall like water down a river
downtown
down the path they told me never to try

you can live your life as if
you were under siege
keep to familiar places and synonyms for yourself

but then
what would the point of Budapest

Skyrapt

I remember the sky just past sunset
in November after the trees had become
webs and with the ashen and leaden clouds
behind them there seemed no possible
further elaboration

lying in the field I watched the
end of the day and beginning of night
my mind filled with the idea of the onrushing dark
being a welcome end

though the effect of the branches
was never clear

were they less of a contrast
they would have made a perfect simulacrum
of a spider web but you know what type
of person would think of that

they left a large stone in the center of the field
and I often sat there half-
asleep and filled with the tiredness
of someone much older

and once my mother first and then my father
called for me while I lay behind it

hiding
I called it
but truth though
had escaped behind the trees
and like the light it scampered west
where I now look hard for it

On The

a teenager locked himself
out of the house

tried to shimmy
down the chimney it didn't work

Battalion Chief Craig Mosley said . . .

about a foot wide but . . .
the flue . . . only 8 inches across

lost his pants
but only his dignity was hurt

Trip Up

Peer Review Reviled

underneath reasoning a river
of unlikely thought draws down
the comments of peers
who circle closer
to eliminate doubt
dissent dislodge differences
make it more like
it ever was
make it like it always will be

peers peer
into the future
and see themselves

Same As A Circle

the car open
ready waiting for the weight
of my foot the road light a long sign
ready waiting for the weight
of the car the pasture taken by wind
ready waiting for the weight
of the road passing by
the car passing by
me passing by
and you
are

you part of this scene
this song
this refrain repeating
remember it repeats
we've defined it that way
because everything a man makes
is the same as a circle

Functions Performed

the getaway is a forceful example
in relation to its architectural function:
the window

by its frontal windshield etc
the automobile forms a quadriptych

this form of greeting is applied
across the gender
to each other
and affecting each other's functions

the automobile serves as a getaway
private confinement

the getaway vacation is one example of modularity

(the stability of the ideas that form these underpinnings
are briefly required to function as invention)

a planetary gear power split device that functions as a form
was one of three pulled from the Hobie Kat kayak

a getaway weekend for four

rigorous training
usually shown in the form of pursuit of a purse-snatcher
or getaway car can be performed by most men
in Hollywood feature films

land use and the urban form of cities
fundamentally shaped the need for choices:
they invent names and functions for planning

all cars are getaway cars

Facts for Decades

the house is sitting there right now
and Richard Gabriel has no knowledge
of its clocks ticking from batteries
strong enough to tick a clock for 18 months
some slight air movement is taking place right now
all that's left are books Richard doesn't know
what to do with

at the site it's raining
the wind is heavy and from the northwest
the tide in the Merrimack below is at maximum flood
at 1.5 knots upstream
the picture of my father as an infant sat in that house
for 3 decades
now its on a table in my bedroom
the look on his face is totally ashen

facts like these are

Gaze Up-

on the roof soft tar begins
to flow from the slightest low
spot to the highest
pigeons flap by like passing thoughts
and like them
they sometimes crash into fast-moving cars
on the thruway upstate
when I talk about this I imagine
a city like New York
where down is up-
town and all the streets together
=s the red queen's happiest maze
but back to the rooftop
link it to a parapet and then
look close at the man legs-a-dangling over
the edge edging closer yet
to the edge of the edge
where no cops will give a flying rescue
rather stop by Comeau's
for a beer and a smoke
smoke tips like night sky stars
and we on the plain plainly afraid
gaze up-
ward

Tossed Off

sitting here all I
can do is suppose
& follow threads
no bird singing foreign songs nearby
or even over the nearest
hill

sitting here all I
can do is propose
& follow threads
no cute-taste girls climbing
out of cars &
pissing by the road nearby

suppose propose
all those technicalities
since passion's pushing sixty
grave very grave sir

CEO

men are planning businesses
to capture the country's wealth
and turn it into their own

their plan requires a special leader
who is really just a bully hoping for a BMW
and a life of golf

they think such a man
is the key to success
not the ideas or dear me the products

customers never wonder
who he is because he is busy
talking on the phone

he is comparing the size of his penis
to the 8 wonders of the world
and jockeying like a jockey for the best tee time

I have seen this man
he has stolen from me
everything is in his car—including his clubs

Love Can Take You So Far

not a good idea
the idea of having a drink in a bar we used to frequent
the idea of looking and looking
of holding a glass that another has just held
drinking with no intention of quenching a thirst
not a good idea
no not at all
the idea of going back to one's apartment
running through a lingering rain
looking down to avoid the mist gathering around the eyes
spending the last thing
not a good idea
the idea of pretending it's all right
when you know the dawn is scheduled to arrive
bright with sun against the fleeing backside of a lingering storm

Kindness of Tides

two or three days
hanging in the bar
drinking more than eating
eating everything in grease
longing for the bravery
to walk out into the sunlight
instead I hold back until the depth of night
wander down to the docks and watch
the latenight boats and barges leave with the tide
on such nights as the tides cooperate
on such days as living the leftover life
strikes my fancy

it's hard to believe women like that carefully
arrange their panties to have that effect

Picture Painful

across the square the church is visible
Monet-like if clouds could make themselves
visible over so short a distance
they have mist has been made
the church is lit and around it the darknes is shaded in
by the passing fog and behind all this
the wretched city is draped over unforgiven ground
rising up from a riverbank to foreign inescapable mountains
to the East

but this is just distraction
she is crying
openly
underneath a soft-brimmed hat
in her sweater-soft skirt
underneath her ankle-length cloth coat
who wanted me to be her hero

she walked up the steep street thinking of my home in the warm dry West
she is walking downhill toward the silty-slow river and the chain bridge
and I am who I am
once again

Chains of Love

across the chain bridge
streets become straight
rectilinear head deeper
into the proletariat

she heads for her half-flat
where she had cooked something brown for dinner
before walking up buda's heights to me
in my expensive western hotel by the church

in her flat the heat is wicked
but sporadic like a spanking
her mood is like the dark street below
where women might be at work
the parked cars and vans seem parked
permanently

her stained sheets and unwashed blanket
will collect more of her tonight

tomorrow I fly home
to western sun and manzanitas and madrones
gold red auburn and evergreen

why did her skirt and hair
her eyes
fail
she wonders as the heat pipes click
ever less frequently

Would You Cry?

when she woke the pillow
was still wet
fell to pieces off the sides of the bed
would never find a way again
to support her resting head
her dreaming mind
her awakening passion

at that time I believe
my plane was rising above the city
above her part of it though I had not been there
I recall seeing cars parked
as if forever
on a broken street whose outlets couldn't be seen
but a quick cloud dark with its load of wet
passed over under me and what might have been the beginning
of a shining light passed beneath me
and soon I was home writing
as if that meant anything to her
or to me

Always Cold

by the wall above the city
cold in November
she stopped to see what I was watching
—a woman washing her dog's feet
before allowing him into her house
below smoke rising from one of two chimneys—
rising up as high as where we stood looking down
watching until the force of our gazes
made her look up and we looked at each other

that night after the bed had been turned down by the maid
we shared the mint and I saw how the dark hair at the back of her neck
shortened and lightened as it spread out down her back
and how it reappeared dark on her arms
how fully it covered her after she removed
her panties

outside the window a mist gathered
pushed up from the river
spraying it seemed the sodium and arc lights across the river
where she said she lived and where
we would share her cooked meal one day soon
I lied yes

she was warm all night and until the clock
told me to leave
she was still dark and she stayed beneath the warm pile
of blankets we had placed on my bed

she looked me fully and said in her sugared language
I am always cold

I Mean This Seriously

the cobblestones that form the street
down from the top of the battlements
form probably a rough surface for her sharp shoes
borrowed I suspect from one of her working
friends and given she was in a hurry it seems
likely she hurt herself physically going down
and then the walk back to her half-flat
must have been wrong all wrong

I am not to blame
she is not to blame

perhaps it was the cobblestones

Lucky () Lucky

roll of consolation
like rolling paint on a ceiling
we are given to the faith that the cling
of paint is sufficient to keep it above
our heads as we roll in onto the stucco
up there

or she would want to think that for herself
as she rolled the paint above her new bed
praying that some of the fresh pumpkin-colored
paint would fall into her exotically black hair
and add spice to our 7th night in my bed

O lucky O
lucky () lucky

Quickie Farm

two of the eager reasons
for doing the do
fit like hand in glove
for as you see
she's slippery
and I have my edge

get the point

Swimming From Me

I looked down on her as she half-ran
half-stumbled down the street
I needed the mist as much
as she did to disappear into

I could have changed everything for her
but she ran away
and disappeared
before I could think of that

Standing Aside from the God-built

the room is wide and expansive
filled with people speaking earnestly
—as they might not wish us to observe—
as if their thoughts were deeply connected
to the reality god built for us

two things

the ceiling supports the roof by a set of tough beams
and oddly angled steel wires and cables tensioning the wooden contraption
like a corset but without the tensioned sex

tomales bay sighs its breathing tides
in and out quenching the breathable thirst
of oysters and fishlike things swimming and crawling
by nearby

reality
god
built

It's Me

their eyes
as they wonder where it came from
the words strung together
like poetry
like the song everyone hopes humankind makes
as the rims radiate out in radio waves and tv
telling our stories dumb interpreted by comedy
writers in the '50s '60 oh you name it
but like poetry is what they hope we sound like
like what I sound like when I take
words hauled out like terrorists primed for torture
and laid like the drawn and quartered on the sitting room table
their eyes
clouding over before they recall
it's me

Count Me Out

as a poet
I refuse to participate
in life
as you do
because with skin in the game
how can one tell whether the ball
is in bounds
or out

Choice Of Quiet

it is so close
your voice calling to me from across the road
across the half-field
I lie behind the boulder your father left here
when he cleared the field 30 years ago
but the sky has taught me
the boulder the field the grass turned to hay
this late in summer near fall
that the choice of quiet
can be as powerful as the choice
of disquiet

Steel String Scrapings

music—imagine
a guitar playing alone or among
other musicians
its richest music
is the sound fingers make
when they scratch against the windings
on a fat steel string as the player
goes for the high notes
the ones connected directly
to the heart

On Her Beach

the tones of disquiet linger
the walk through the hallways still
make me cringe and this is
where I learned

longing is the most desperate response
the peculiar voicing
the slipped pronunciation

where her heart is today
remains unknown
her recollections almond-shaped and aloof
she must be near a beach
a warm beach where she can see both the sun rise
and set

she listens to birds
while she cooks
while she sweeps
while she paces the beach
her beauty didn't get her what she needed
so she listens to birds
tell her the contents of stories

she is the tone of disquiet
the sodden beach knows it by
the weight of her passing

After A Disaster

along the margins of the field
field mice dive for cover
beneath the apple tree burdened
with wild grapes
and there also I dive for cover
in the shadows where a figure
apparently in the open
can remain hidden
and so there I remain
even now

Three Ignorances

simplicity is the virtue
enabled by random walks
and a keen eye

the ditch looms on either side
an avoiding one tempts the other
to swell

someone has walked past the door
stopped
turned and returned
stopped to listen
then move on again
this is the wisdom
of shadows on the floor

What? We Carry

we carry pictures
all sizes black & white
color sepia all tones even green
on mantles in houses in abandoned
subdivisions they are left behind
for the curious to find
like letters written to lovers
with their messages obscured in case
the wrong hands are the ones they fall
into words whose meanings change
by the frequencies of their use
this diminishes
not in the least
the coverings that the use of letters represents
as if the words' meanings were somehow related
to the pieces they are made of
perhaps a good q is worth three th's
see what I mean?
carry a picture not a letter
an essay a story and never
a poem

Life Is

is it true
children spend their adult lives
trying to understand their parents
maybe as a way to understand living
can it all be this simple
can it be just a puzzle

maybe it's a movie
we watch and watch
going over favorite parts
wearing them out
wearing them down
like children we go over them
and over them

were our parents still here
we would demand the read and read over
because like everyone else
they never tell us
they keep it inside
until finding it is picking through ashes
rejoicing for bone
rejoicing for the hard but
unrevealing detail

Fragment

clouds passing overhead
frightfully fast with shades of gray
making their ways to black
something so soft examining you
an artist does
God does
the end will be like this
like clouds passing overhead
like examination

Zectron

ideas packed in cargo containers
shifting slightly on the deck of a stacked freighter
heading this way from across the wide seas
the thinker follows the ship
walking like a jesus planning to arrive
just in time to help with the cleanup
as unwary workers crack open the crates
and spring their hinges
not knowing that the ideas will spill
out like eels spilled out of a sieve
or bounce like superballs
which like ideas pick up forward speed
on their second bounce

caution—like super balls regarding zectron—ideas
are made of exotic materials
and must be treated with care

all kinds of people will eat the eels
will watch the eels
will look at eels
they appear good
they won't dodge away from the net
already all kinds of people eat them
these eels won't dodge away from the net

all is good
it will be this way
nevertheless someone must watch the eels

the thinker follows
to clean up

leaves in piles

many ways to walk through the piney woods
the sounds made echoes to the backs of the trees
standing guard

leaves from nearby oaks and maples
have blown
into the piney woods
making a flat place of leaves and needles
giving the mushrooms something to push up
through

literal
figurative

the minds is unsure
while the leaves
and needles
just rot

Who Creates

living in a pale house
bleached by decades of high sun
on the edge of a sandy desert
my mind's as blank as the unpainted wood clapboards
as hot too as when the sunlight hits
in mid-afternoon

I'm restive and pacing
the miles between me and a real place
have bloomed and replicated

the paper is gone
the pencil nubs cannot be smaller
the world that I can create
is there in my mind
and I have no place
to put it

Far Away—Very Far

somewhere people wait
for their kin to die
deathwatch all over the world
on the day after Christmas
when we celebrate birth
and giving where we mimick the kings
but alas
they don't make kings like they used to

In, Under, During

a year of writing every day
in hopes of getting of improving
every night at the computer
whether hot or rain or cold or dry
on airplanes in hotels in Odense
in Copenhagen in Bergen in Budapest
in Heathrow in Virginia in the western
part of North Carolina in Illinois
in Chicago in Anaheim in Arizona
in New York City in Massachusetts
in Portland Maine in Chocorua New Hampshire
in the Frankfurt airport over Reykjavik
under copper beeches by a green bridges
sitting in cars as it snows in a blizzard
during a lightning storm after love
before love after hate and despair have set in
before memorials after them while eating
while drinking after reading before
sleeping every day with just a few more to go
as if the calendar would spread on forever
when a sinking or a crash or ill health could all be
waiting for their turns

now it's dark with not much left to do
but more than ever to say

By Design

the teeth are lengthening
taking on a deep brown after years
of yellow the tent is large enough
for several of us several of us
eating with chopsticks cracked
apart from a single stick carved somehow
into a pair joined together
they were made together and designed
to be broken apart then brought
together in the act of joining for the purpose
of gathering food to darken lengthening
teeth brought together for nourishment
for acting in concert after being split
by design

on the bed her hands reach for her skirt
it will go up like a curtain there are sounds
coming from under the bed
something under there is getting ready
something by the window is cooling off
many things are designed and in their building
desires are caught in ice for what is design
but the desire of one for the pleasure
of another

The Next Place

two or three clouds in the sky
the state of reality is back to normal
the strangers have departed after years
of pretending to be friends

we sit in a hotel facing the prospect
of breakfast made by a stranger's hands
consisting of ingredients imbued with the cook's
last-night grief

we'll drive away from here
put it far behind at our backs
as we head for what we call home
but which is nothing more than the next place

Drive On

well we drove
through the driving
rain stopping for bits of food and information
we talked through the air and over it
and like lightening interrupting
we cried at times and drove on
lights to either side fogged in
and out of sight
something we can do still

it's a story as old as time
but as fresh as a knife cut
when it's told to you
it stings the eyes which weep in response

it hits the woman hardest
but her hardness is subtle
and she will endure by virtue
of the hardest outpouring

we in our car
drive on

Think About It

the year is near
gone long in the tooth
what was lost needed to be
the walks across town were interrupted
each time by the same swirling bees
gathering close to a hole they found or made
we aren't able to see into it
but I've been told the world
or something like it lingers
there is made whole there

we are destined to walk past such places
everyday because our vision
of the past is no better than our vision
of the future and in this way were are like
the grand taoists like Lao Tzu
who sees the future as clearly
as he sees the past

think about it