

Noisy, Smells Strongly, or Can't Be Aligned

A Collection of Poems

Richard P. Gabriel

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Two Depressions

The marriage bed
is worn into two depressions,
one hers, one mine. Were we to
turn the tables on

the mattress, a kind of even-
handedness would keep the playing
field level. She views as leaving

my decay. I am ashamed of it,
more so than any mistake.

Something broken,
something shriveled. I find one
every month. My bad temper
nothing more than like what
my body sends to fight it, a yellow
pus. How can the young know
of this?

I hug the wall
labeled *old*,
where people stand who
cannot play.

Lavender Berlin

New night, new year.
Before night the sky became inhuman,
color: lavender over grey.
But really it's just the residue
of Berlin over grandeur. Books
make that funny sound when suddenly
closed
or opened, of breath going in
or coming out. Books pretending
to be storytellers, confabulators,
isolators. Clam up,
that's what they do. Ah so.
Let's keep it hidden. Under a bush.
Every meaning of that word,
bush.

Three Scenes Demonstrating the Foolishness of Sentiment

Gulls chattering
over, hovering over
running crabs
making like vaudevillians
scrabbling for dropped bananas
and sausages rolling
in the froth and curls
of unimpressive swells
and rollers on a beach
where just last year
two died in a clench
and we've just hammered
in their headstones, standing
like sentries
a little beyond us.
Death up there,
life on a plane,
death down there.

Night Wakes

In the night I wake,
and among the many wonderings,
the least is who I am
and why and
the most is where
I am. The streetlights through the blinds
seem more yellow, the angle from the bathroom
window of the moon's setting
more acute, the heat
from the one next to me
less, her skin feels more translucent.
I'll take bids
on all the questions,
choose the one with the most to offer,
the most pleasing voice,
the least sense. There are many paths
to follow: The one tonight leads
from the cold stone floor of the bathroom
back to the bed baked to a high heat
by strangers to the most expected.

Moon Watch

From my bathroom window
standing after a pee looking
out at moon's decline behind
a hill of lights twinkling—
no, bending in the rocky night air disturbed
by heat from homes and the launchpads
of life. In the partiality

moon displays, its back turned
to us, its sideways grin or grimace,
its cold grey moon-like stare, pale,
sullen, clearly rocky and dusty
in a pure, airless manner,
it measures the distance from me
to my existing, it knows which of us—
me, him—
is the ghost.

Line by Line

let's finish the scapegoat
with applause and mourning,
let's wander in fields spoiled
by hoppers and light flyers,
insects intent on stealing
the show, on dying
without a shred of memory
left aside from a pretty picture
taken sunward by an artist
learning by repeating
line by line
instructions, precedents,
riffs. Let's blame the draft
for our mistakes,
let's wander into the unexpected
full of recklessness, let's grab
the first grasshopper into our hands
and make it immortal today.

Her to Hear Her

I've written her
lines and nothing,
hung my head like her panties
on the line to dry
the tears of Toms peeping
in on her creepy essence
dripping into absorbency,
postcards from the front
xeroxed and faxed,
facing forward and under;
lines, curves, they're the same to
her to hear her
silence always.

Noisy, Smells Strongly, or Can't Be Aligned

Bet your sweet ass: The news is good:
Heading for the rear, paper in Berlin
is still superior
in the posterior analyses
of positivists sure as shit
what rips is inferior
in the end. Note where
they belong: Middle fingers probe
the interior: No matter
how dark, regardless of cracks,
no matter how brown
the way ahead looks,
what's ahead is flush
with life's breath everlastingly
on hold.

Go For It

The grain elevator is silver
with a black longhorn silhouette.
Two whores are kind to everyone
but each other. Cats are fed by a sympathetic
but cranky old woman. It is on a map
but no roads to it are shown. No
snow. Lots of rain. Romance
and violence are on the scene.
Rails are rusted except one set
heading north-south. There is a lake
or ocean or river nearby. Girls giggle
when they pass. A traffic light
hangs from monkey bars.
There is no Walmart within driving
distance. Every year someone
has a hush-hush abortion. The cemetery
is always full of geraniums. The lone
steakhouse always burns the outsides
and the insides are cool. There are many
missing teeth. It's time to eat
a meal of baked potatoes
and wait for the TV to unsnow.

Questions Sealed Under Heat

I've asked the questions
laid like trout on the dock
to dry out and soon salted
to be put away in your cellar
privy to eating secrets.

Winter will find you
descending steps
to retrieve roots,
canned tomatoes in jars,
sweet pickles, dills, mushrooms
we picked and tested.

Behind a cloth curtain,
1 inch boards lined into shelves
hold all we need
to make Winter
hold its breath. Snow pasted
to the sides of candle pines
demonstrate the direction of flow.
I've asked the questions

that reveal what we've forgotten.
All I wish for is a warm hand on my head
when I die.

Road

Willing to look,
unable to walk far from weeds.
The road passes many barns
sweetened to grey by sun and wind,
rain has dried out the sapwood,
moss has grown on and fallen
from roof shingles. A gravel
ramp leads from the road to the sliding
front door locked but all
is visible through the missing
pieces of boards. We lay here once,
I was willing to look.

City of Stones, A Crowded Waste

Everything here is made of stones
or concrete—the city is grey,
bisected by a glacial river running milky.
Men stand on the lawn by a spur
naked, sunning themselves and proclaiming.

On a small hill a man walks up
and sprints down over
and over. Bicycles here have chain
guards and sit-up-straight seats
and handlebars. A woman
taking her lunch here—she
looks like a banker in a James
Bond movie—removes her skirt
and lays it on her blanket, takes
out her heavy hard sandwich
and lays it by her skirt,
removes her blouse and bra
and lays them on her blanket, takes
out a bottle of water with gas
and lays it by her handbag,
removes her panties and hose
and lays them by her other clothes.

My eyes cannot take
the long summer day and I lie
to sleep. She smiles at me like
a mother, the smell of the city arises,
the grass withers from all the sitting,
all the sun, and the woman banker
eating, with all her skin aimed
at me as I sleep.

Ten on Language

Like links
we follow each other. First

you turn the light on you
and second

I shadow you. You
in the dark excite

a little-used nerve
in the center of control. Then

frost forms five-lobed
patterns on the inside

of our window. Facing
the street we wish for less

yellow. We get a pointer
exploring arrow country. Look

butterflies is widely said until
the hog's foot gels. Links

I've set, you've set
nonanatomically, so I'm not

certain all nerves can
fire at once.

Strat...Wber...Ryfi...Elds

Lost it
under the rug
where sophistication swept
all the enthusiasm
and early onset pretension.
Maybe they play

better older
having heard Beck
and wondered—even

Alvin Lee
and Leslie West
succumbed to the smooth

influence of jazzers
and speed players, but me

I prefer the mistakes
and string burps,
the way a string
slid on

will scream under the influence
of overactive tubes and shredding
cones. Where would Hendrix

be today? Hard and
rough, reckless to grab
the unexpected.

Like Us and a Black Rock

There are many ways
to cross from the safe side
of the road to the one
with the cross leaning against a fence
with flowers dropped off around it
and balloons weighed down by rocks.
On the tip of the cross
a scarf's been tied and if
only the wind would blow
the scarf would rise
like a flag, like a wave,
like a hand waving
instead of lying in its own pool,
and the balloons would bow down
and maybe the cross would fall
and the cards still sealed
and the letters tacked open
would become honest
and we wouldn't wonder
about the movements of symbols,
only the symbols themselves.

Over You

we come in as if on wind

it is on wind but wind
of a stationary air
and moving mass

curve
the green harvest grows
the air is dimmed
by the implications of
green

each village
its church tower
its idiotic
brewery and hefty cuisine

hefty sounds
reddened cheeks

below as if off rails
a train winds
through the fields
and horses must seem
to look up

for this scene is welcomed
to the south you look
up but not forward
to me

I Flip

their glamour is lack of TV
they glower at me for watching
their glance lifts the remote to my lips
they glimpse my furious flipping from station to station from high to low

I pause and they have no understanding
fragments of stories are better than whole
I remember snow
my dad and I would watch
Godzilla like a cloud passing by
we rolled a blanket and put it in the middle of the bed

“we don’t even own a TV”
would you be proud to
not own a book?

they read Stephen King
I flip

Wrong Train

simple asphalt and concrete
spines and skin of building
where stones are fragile
or will to use them

we sit and we sit
goodbyes are crowding
their cage doors
locked inside our throats

I sit in the darkness
writing the end
of such a long
imagination

tv I'm ready for it
tv the empty hole that pours out our last days
tv stories like books but gaudy
tv made for simples

you'd like to laugh
but your mother sees it
your father sees it
pass time
forget

the hard and strong
grow fragile
and longing won't last
my proud exit
was marred when I took
the wrong train

Impossible Topic Advice

That day on which the bomb re-designed
American passenger-flying
much was not with flies.
I had the grind of the vacation swallowed—to
a very beautiful island, as production for easing.

My bedkeepers gave themselves much trouble,
in order to make the stay as pleasant as possible.

She opened to me
that I should feel as taken up.

Pictures of the fright appeared inclusive
in my conception, the common morning prayer,
but nothing such a thing adjusted.
I looked up equal the beach.

I got a first lesson in good faithness.

From fear of having next their foot
for couriers of chicken eyes on the desk
I said no.

I was allowed to observe two women.
They called it James and tore jokes
over it.

In particular the two women
could itself hardly in wars.
I could along-pursue
also the process of
the whole happening.

Against termination of the meal,
when the calculation was already situated
on the desk, the two women
said good-bye successively
to the toilet.

Its two companion
two splendor copies
of those women seemed to be,
of whom my nut/mother
never warned me.

Unfortunately the time is missing.

After Me

swampy mountains pushed
into piles and the roads waver
from valley to valley
along riverbeds scrubbed to stones
and up switchbacks to passes
and down

rollers
farm sections edged by
cottonwoods gardens in fields
and roads shuffling side
to side wind
blowing mapleleaves
flow up over my windshield
and hover before

corn rows wheat
inches of growth
a day longviews
headwinds
silos silage
old wagon tracks
I follow with a ditch between

I skirt
the mountains
head for the drainage
every turn I've looked and nothing
I watched for him
not here

not here
but then I made the turn
right off the sideroad
a dirt road
onto macadam that leads to the sea
and there he stands
indistinct in all distinct distance
he blocks my way
wavering in the heat ramps
his size unclear
he blocks my way
he is there
he is
death
he is now before me

Fountain of Grieving Water

no end to the water
falling from the green rust
of a copper pipe
into a moss-lined bowl of granite

fruitless motion
pushed by a pump up and out

round and round
the air taking its tax
the water whispering
how much might be

left in the heart
of this tiny motor
the supply of water

a hidden
watcher hides
behind
curtains like solid
mist gauze lace

the man has come
who will stop this

he will plug the pipe
and the pump will burst
the watcher will leave

the curtain
to its closing devices

in the walls
about this fountain
a solid statement

from the poets on benches
tangled truths
no ends in sight

Essence of Memory

when it came right down
to it
people left/walked out

horror
left in the dust

down stairs
past stares
what the mad makers

never imagined
was time
to walk away



I bought a furnace
to keep
warm this Winter

forgetting the fires
of people



there was a fountain
wrapped around the world

made of smoke
and up it
went



people made of smoke
walked out
walked away
left us in the dust

Older Man & A Honeybee

motion is limited
saffron colors stain
the whitened dress
she's shed before the older man
she poses with

she's uncupped her breasts
and light through his gauzy curtains
steeps light-tea colored

the older man is silent
unable to speak
or move beyond lifting two fingers
and cocking
his wrist his nurse will return
in two hours
we snap photos

last are her turquoise-lace hose

heat from her skin and the humid air
wring longing and despair
from the older man
blinking with a flutter to his eyelids
quite apart from his memory patterns

she is rounded and luxurious
her poses extravagant and sexual
her perfume natural but primitive

she neither
approaches nor touches

his view is obscured by a figure
in robes

we all smile as we leave
him alone and silent
a shell
a prop

we have our snaps

Was Was Beautiful

where the sky
where morning glory
a back yard
with the red barn
the beautiful red maple tree
a gateway to a beautiful day
this was was perfect
fisherman on a bamboo raft
pauses to gaze
sunset over South China Sea
double bladed paddle
paddles standing straight up
last day of hunting season

figured I could use
all the help I could get

Other Text Forms

meaningful statements about the world
and discourse clamoring
up rock faces seeking a more cautious
purely descriptive formula
it is obvious that we want to know
much more than we presently do
every art form knows puns

Up the Street from a Foreign Park

rain
slanting down left
river sluicing down
the concrete channel behind a fence
foreign smells
from cars and pubs
your window rolling up
your thumb on
a button
in the backseat of a car
about to drive
out of the world
for me

Rich Man, Don't Look

The rich are filing in,
thinking their luck makes them
powerful. The rich don't notice
some starve, and others
walk on their knuckles
or stumps. The rich
don't think
as we do. For them
a flat champagne
is a health risk. The rich
cannot see
luck. Nothing depends
on their shit
even though it moved
before the market went up.
The rich don't see us
watching and drawing,
painting and writing.
The rich don't notice
the language we've given them.
The rich don't notice the leaves
around them, the grass above them,
the way their skin tightens
around their necks like boas,
that the crowd that laughs
spares them today.

Web Presence

I run these pages
to provide you with information
about me. The cornfield,
sloped down to the river's edge,
green images and papery rustling
in a wind pulled down
then downstream sounding
of newspapers wet then dried,
holds its rippling color
as I will myself off
the pages I run. I am
like dew hunkered low
in the grass and you are
like lightning, meetings
of high and low
shocking the hell
out of me.

Will House

within this house
is a model of this house
and the way to walk west
is to cling like flies in love
to the backs of moving beasts

when the night of hot heats
seals shut the window
though the wax runs wet in the runners
the little house bottles up the heat
and steams its windows white

there are three or four or five
white hot houses thirsting
by the meadow denied
for the passion of cornfields
flailing before the skirt of rain

sweeps down the valley
and the cool support
of the reflective mind unsticks
the windows in the little house
and all are welcomed to this house

Take One After Another

regardless of what you think it
all moves the sound of it
making like marsh reeds and seabirds
and pine tops and rushes brittle dry
paper sounds of corn fields a curried
carpet in the rye grass an ageing creak
and sheer bark on wood in the deep woods
where we reminisce on light and finally
the air rushing through lava cracks
and granite spires and we come to it
the place of it where undulating
movements spill out and what was 3
2 becomes 1.

Poem for S. R.

The drive was through the misted dark
Up a coastline famous for grieving widows,
The hotel was along a boardwalk where in summer
Bikini'd girls roulette past seashell shops
Rubbing their intentions on low-slung boys
And gulls stand guard erect on picketed railings.
The poet stood—the ballroom boxing cigarette smoke
Like a second pack about to be opened,
The zip-tape strip, red, ready to tear off its top—
Alone: greyed: stubbled and tired in his eyes,
Seeking a lost leader or thread to follow,
Once the sharp shape of dangerous love
In a muscle car, once the strip that
Tore off heads with the work he mooned over,
That night he stood, no more than a guard,
Ready for his heart's roulette, happy to become
The part that's torn off.

choices and make them

find her? what have I
to go on? picture of me
cupping her my arm
under her head and our fingers
stenciled as if
the form of crossed branches
her sleep real mine
metaphorical. her breath
quiet moist welling up
in sensuous waves her side
warm growing warmer.
my joy welling up from memories
hers pumping in filling out memories.
she will awake cry perhaps I will be
carted away and long gone.

100 Art Lovers Watch

100 people watched
the horses' dust rise like mist
at sunrise at sunset as riders
pursued the villains run from a town
still green and pine tar scented

and fresh with hammer blows
and woodsaws heaving
and lingering perfume

of horses and whores and women
scented in lavender and pork fat
up here on this bluff windblown
but safe from small attacks
by the safe expanse around and below

the same high view that now enjoys
the rhythm and poetry of death
riding hard

So So

so it wouldn't be you
so long as space is filled
and time caught in a snapshot
skips along stuttering air captured
in boxes buried
carrying tears from last
so longs you wouldn't catch

the location is made
of parts and pieces of
stories and histories
many may have had
but no one
has seen let's stand
on our knees before our
prey

At Second Mesa, At First

on the roof we stand and watch
dancers and clowns dancers
doing their over&overs and clowns
today their Mexican make-fun-ofs
on Second Mesa not guests but known
as friends of people deserving of breakfast
soup beans and meat of heavy breads
and first sales of a son's silver
offer of bathroom rights
dance goes on the clowns
make fun below from First Mesa
the men sit shovels across
their legs and coolers of water
in the backs of pickups
along with a blanket
the hole is half dug
up on First Mesa the kivas
sit empty the dogs the sugar crullers
and below they dig the long deep
hole and only sand and that blanket
to keep him warm

women cook at home
the dancers move
and move

Pastoral Deflection Without Mention of Bees

birches and peaches
the symmetrical layout of apple trees
living matrix man-made and man-prepared
earth rows of sweet rotting McIntosh
and at the margins the singing
the sex play the lengthening
of shadows of things
and the first bites of desire

no satan no snake
no metaphorical garden
no topoi to confuse the mind
just direct action
and plenty of it

these apples all
have forgotten
and the sounds of jays and gulls
in our coastal confidences
we cannot count
apples fallen into rows
we cannot count
what will we lose
we cannot count

Obligation to Sip

mention
death and the tree frogs
chirp and warble
sibilant shy shafted
let's evolve the game
by choosing rules and discarding principles
all sit by choosing space
pushing our forms into structure-preserves
the extra coating that keeps us up
the concept of gaps or breaks
informs nature of her obligations
to chatter when all is well
consider wind
consider the breathing
consider the game
choosing changing chattering

Find-A-Grave

we find our ways to death
without fail—there is great promise
in this skill hope to be
found the unerring path
from metaphor to concrete
we measure the steps from the edge
of womb to edge of space
listen to the wilder birds
flushed to flight titter
and glance quick
as the place of our ends
close over and heal

Strange Ode to a Powerful Invitation

snow's heaped
odd shapes have directed
it into tall waves
heavy power lines hang
into it foxes and jays step
over it heavy power
zips through it waves
of power and strength
the power line towers
resist being pushed deeper
into the frozen earth
bears and vole mice step
over this power and the snow
remains white in the face
of long lost leaves tossed
across the snow and up and over
the snow piled under the power lines
till it's over the low-slung
power lines zipping up
a hill within miles of these lines
thousands huddle in small warmth
though the power of a million
fires flexes through the lines
any passing life can dance
over

are you ready to dance?

The Insecurity of Technology

The light turning from the point
of a lighthouse glimpses
the bored waves, the elk pulling grass
by the sea, cars parked and steamed,
a fountain made from rocks and sea force,
a stand of small pines on a small island,
a clutch of boats moored behind a breakwater,
a trawler buttoned down, its crew watching
Japanese porn and laughing, the stretch of sand
you all were waiting for and the reference
to a sad goodbye said there.

The lighthouse has no master
of loneliness—has no master at all,
just a Web connection and a 1000-watt
halogen hailing with white light 27 miles
of radius circling every 15 seconds. The only thread
is light, love, loneliness, the lighthouse,
and the insecurity of technology.

Football Filmer

So in the night leaves turned
and cold settled on the field,
these eyes not yet formed
to the fullness of skepticism
conquered the crowd
and I walked across that field
and on up into the cameraman's box,
movies of important sports to make.
In those days words weren't mine,
nor space nor wit to throw against the mighty,
and those who were arranged
in high rows laughed at the cold
I felt while working above them.
I decided to wait and now my desire
is elsewhere as time became my friend
when no one would. With a lesson
as simple as clicks of regular pacing
I learned to face pure nothing.

Listen: Lost

So the wind keeps the woods alive
and the swaying fields of corn and
the ripples and waves on rivers and seas
turning to crash at the last second
on a steep beach, the pipers trotting
away and black strands of seaweed
wrapped around the beached keg once
filled with wine no doubt made from grapes
made sweet by the sun spilling on their leaves
and the wind that kept them cool, alive.

Berdache

We don't live
here anymore
but our sounds
do and the sounds
of what we owned
and wished for.
Start with birds
who start and stop
with every fear
and hunger, then
the cows ripping grass,
crushing it down
and boiling it in acid,
moving it up and down
like indecision rising
with bile. Chimes
fading exponentially
teach us the vastness
of distance closes up,
that as we rush toward
nothing the goal
is vastly far away.
But the remembered voices
sing instead of yell
or explain pudding
or the long shanks on
the beeves, and the voices
take on the two-spirit
granting a new gender
to our fear. We don't
live here any more
but have been granted
the status of those lives
once more.

Like a Thief I Followed Her

She walked slowly
but disappeared around a corner
marked by a yellow house
pocked with grey bullet holes.
What I saw really
was her tender dark red
hair, the dissent
in her skirt, and the tangle
of her legs and their shadows.
I had to steal
something of hers
and of the village. Did I notice
the stones of the street
making her walk lush
and the length of the stone streets
making of every sound
a music of worship
and light airs? Beneath each window
was a box of geraniums, and in the right
light each window showed its cross.
She stopped when the first crow
passing overhead cracked its voice.
She rested her body on one hip
and everything about her skirt
resembled the cognitive sky
filling with clouds from the swift
onrush of a dark storm.
I reached her,
turned to look,
and stopped.

Lesson

Now a puzzling example!
Let's examine the dog barks.

The contextual analysis of bark
to detect the nuclear
does not add more information
due to the previous example

with head, but its context refers to a cry
that reveals the existence
of two contextual subject classes
that may match with bark.

—the human being class (“the dog barks”)
and the animal class (“let's examine”)—

Two contexts emerge
depending either on the animal
or the human being
such as animal cry
or human cry
as in the boy barks
to the moon!

Puzzle and 'Possum

behind whose trees
behind which stonewalls
across which rivers
across whose fields
does the real one hide?
inside the head what rattles
around and is the sentimental
light lit there? or some contrivance
made to puzzle and 'possum me
light out while I approach
and laugh its mechanical laugh
to the countertap of my shoes'
leather on concrete
manmade miracle made?
would I rather be
mistaken or alone?

The Saddest Place in the History of the World

There is no scene to match
the couple separated
in life by war and in death by dirt
and concrete, their sculpted projections
in thin air a woman craving
with outstretched arms and a man
in uniform dead for a dead cause
at attention, unfeeling,
white as his last vision,
stiff in the stifling air
and stiff in the fetid air
of World War II captured
with his heart and hopes
at the cemetery of San Miniato
above Florence of the sweet night air
where she reaches and hopes
like the girl throwing salt on the fire
in hopes of seeing her husband
appear in the flashes, his identity released
from the bitter crystals, and tonight
the hope is that God is not crazy
and love is for something.

Afraid Wake

dawn is endless
scurrying voices in the wires are endless
same always the same
thing said resaid
wind whipping
once then once
more through the same grasses
which filter nothing falter
flatter my name which grows
at the edge of this plain
this prairie this prayer
this payment down
the hill swift to the brink
of a dambreak
and the water whizzing
like moonlight dodging
the trunks in the woods
and branches to hit the scarecrow
and all this in the space
of time of sun up
moon down.

Women = Civilization

Places of cheap food
by the highway and girls
drilling the balls
of their feet into the industrial
linoleum beside your booth
while you pray
for coffee to beat
the sun up and comforting
grease globs on bacon on eggs
on toast congealing
the way you want your life
to slip like Wyoming
through the cracks
of civilization.

Lies For Money = Morality Stick

What it says on the cover
is a truth designed
to sell more, truth
being relative to the efficiency
of the market which in this
regard is perfect.
No one's being irrational
when it comes to money,
particularly the rich
who spend it to spend it
on things like whores except
they really are only things
which will do whatever
the rich want, progress making
the rich rich
proceeds without a hitch,
and as I said,
it serves the rich.

The Righteous Brothers Sung by Some Kids from Haverhill

Drops gather on the insides
of windows, floor to ceiling in a high room—
the cafeteria decked late for the dance
in any high school in any cold town before it snows.
A band plays, they wear casual suits, come from
the big town next door, and somehow
they've gathered the money for real gear—
Fenders, Fender guitars, and a Ludwig single bass
setup.

1966

Words to their songs
mean more than anyone can think
and only on our dying beds will the music-syrup
rinse away and the meaning of the beads
dripping down the windowpanes
come clear, all the years later,
all the memories dragged away,
when everyone in the story is dead,
and the remaining sounds are spring
reverbs, Fender guitars, the robotic beat,
and tires crying while the car she's in
peels out.

The Cure of Imperfect Eyesight

My father practiced
it until the day he died or perhaps
the day before that. The Bates Method.
He took his glasses off and swung
left and right, allowing his eyes to come
to rest where they may but using a full
range of motion. He did this before bed.
After dark. While he listened to the Red Sox
on the radio and believed they would win it all.
Ten minutes each night since 1940. Quackery.
It only relaxes.

At night when I was 15 he would cry
out in his sleep, his voice muffled
not human. An animal sound
from a far-off place. The sound of belief
in search of imagination.

Dr. Bates gave him relaxation,
and his cries said he needed it. Dr. Bates
became a quack through no fault of his own.
Just that he believed
more than he thought.

Respectacle Receptable

Black sights, red restaurants
green shops, and blue hotels—
clever references or explanations
of references? Is the text color
coded? Instructions with arrows
pointing indicatively, Saint Sebastian
of the Apaches? Pass the tab
was the premier horse who helped
himself to the downs, shot like an arrow
to the Finnish line. Belief searches
for the most imagination in a bottle
and taps from the inside like a hard fly
hooked on Pepsi from the inside out.
Like girls at swap meets, like jerks
making malts. Like blue hotels
they all are. Are all.

Simplex Complex

The simple the simple
like an inside look at the girl
from underneath

fashioning her clothes
with a steal cold chilled
bored with the results.

It's a front loader—
all my will toward seduction
is turned on its upside down—

she once was a bottom loader.
Clay pots are sacred
even before they're formed.

Taken from the earth clay
is alive at once and more so
when fired. My thinking

turns to Abiquiú
and soul home to artists
working by side delivery

who think logic makes sense
when paired with the trapeze
traipsing from till to till

till dawn do us
depart the simple
the simple clay equalling alive.

Wishing Tree

Tree I once knew
as a car has grown up now
and is itself wise in ways
unforgiven by the external
lives grown up around it.
Someone in my family built
a shelf of rock around a pump
and two steps up to it, and between
two rocks this forked tree grew
—two trunks thick and tall,
a third short, between them.
Shape of the trunks
made the shape of a small seat on one,
footrest on the other,
the small trunk the height
of a gearshift. The shelf was tall
and car-like. I drove each day.
The trunks stand tall and straight
and the shelf has split apart
and been made unremarkable,
the pump gone and the trough
for cows filled in. I never knew trees—
can't say what it is—as a tree.

Who can say what this tree thinks
of me? It plumps its leaves proudly.
It hovers in light winds. It never
says a single word. When I approach,
it looks down.

March 8, 2002

Coral Bark Maple Rage

Fluorescent red bark
against fresh blued snow
at sunrise—

afterlife?
or fore?

The Ribbon Crying

She
open
wood digging
you
her; I.

How I
replied not
she started
carried on;
dribbling
spunk
red faced as
him, he got
torture; he
running her
taunting him
shaking his
sat on the
as he left.

Into bed
she was
to happen
experience
time.

à la Descartes

Scientists are stuck
bouncing from true to false
like an elephant stuck in a drying-out
watering hole, and then belief
lands like a tick on their latest theory
which smacks its head against the cutbank
and awaits the eating-alive
which with the daily dose of angry puzzles
fill the mind with the fat of logic.

Derivative Boat

Surely there's a way
to brand the nightlights
before the stabbed sun sets
in a spreading pool
of blood-pink cotton
and night falls like a denim shirt
and, through speckholes,
stars perturb the long walk
down to the pier where waiting
tucks its legs under, brand
them with my motto gloss
on boat facts and timetables
for the boat docked for winter
whose next departure
will be early.

On a Site that Pushes and Pushes

Your name came into view
on my screen, in a list of classmates
from our school dozens of years ago,
email addresses volunteered to a company
who lures you to buy their services
in exchange for a way to contact your past.
It makes me think the present is the shadow
of the past cast by the light of despair
through a mesh of hope.

Shall I pay to find you?

And find out what?—that your marriages
failed one by one and now you await
me with a candle made from a champagne
glass poised on your window, all my faults
forgiven or forgotten or for laughing?
—that your marriages failed
for lack of tigh pants and I'm still last
on a list that grows each year by the number
of men who turn 21?

You've made me make questions
from statements. —walk behind
your pronouncements by a cautious
4 or 5 feet. You have your dignity
though you've lost all the elasticity
mind and body need.

Shall I lay it to rest?

The prints of recent visitors
covers the site, the messages
that reveal little but sadnesses
unembellished and inartfully stated,
and hope and fading tracks and a foot
poised above a stair leading down,
before a trail into a woods
made dim by meditation.

I've made up my mind
to turn...

Cushion of Secrets Under the Tongue

you sit I stare
long back under the ride
and along the river running upstream
drunk with the sun and the moon
feeling along the insides
passing behind white lightning
hall loud with the sounds of symbols
being brushed you are
what you can never be
eloquent pains often local
a man comes to my door
and fishes out the penny I dropped
out in the oiled sand by the side
of his rural home 40 years ago
and smiled with the last tooth he had
and whispered his secret to the wind
passing by I sit
you stare

Writtenness

the nature of the book
is not in the writing nor
the conceiving the dreaming
neither in the blood strewn in calligraphic
curves or in the stops and restarts
do-overs and re-wonders, nowhere
to be found in the leads that break
and puncture the skin not
the pen and its dried out ink
paling like the world at dawn

but in the turning
one page slow after another
front to back
until the hard back
cover closes over
the reader's slit
loose eyes

Boss Among Us

God on Broadway
smoking a butt
leaning against a closed
department store building
in the old part of a town
inhabited by Mexicans
along 99 in the Central Valley
north of Fresno. His boots
don't fit right and his hat's
too big but he's just
checking it out—
the cars riding by slow
the trucks heavy on the air horns
the girls wearing skirts too tight
the two dogs hugging a strip of shade
beside the cantinas and mercados
across the street
the crows feeding on road kill
up where the road turns to mirage
the ants piling up a hill around the crack
in the sidewalk.
He wonders what life feels like
and what the black mirror hair
of the latinas feels like
when the sun flares the gauze curtains
around back at sunset.
An old man who hasn't shaved for a week
walks by and he smells like a feedlot
and God lifts onto the balls
of his feet and heads for a shady spot
where he can rest his foot on a rail
and his elbows on a bar—
throw one back before the padre
happens by and shuts him down.

Sidelong Furrow

Along
the shape of the street
the passion of haplessness loses
its balance and scrapes
to a halt

one leg
up one down

filaments or rather
long shots trail up
to jimi's sky

these streets
are my kind
a stale heaven
used used overused

bigroom
blue ceiling
green brown blue floor
waves of grain

two primes fought it out
one was the winner

I'm lost in the forest
of a girl's poem
that spelled itself out

like grass
becoming dawn

Stance Using Time

why birds flinch
from stance to stance
by the stream
that stops and starts
on the whim
of its owner
who sits drinking a black
tea at a sun transition time

quick
without using time
figure which

Avoid Dance

some writing
cannot be done using
heads foreign rooms
frightening curtains
away from windows
dead sleep before the phone call

the night was filled with the smells
of apples and Chinese spices
and urine behind low walls

the wind settled into a breeze
so slight
dandelion fluff
just floats
toward you

dancing a foreign
dance on an evening
drugged by being awakened
at the bottom of sleep

my head is eroding
its valleys filling with old thoughts
washing away

the way
is a void

Repair Bay

car nose-in
hood up
thick blanket hanging over the fender
toolbox tall open
troublelight hanging
by a hook from the latch
gas and burnt oil
the lavender of men
too silent
for better luck

Limits of the Perch

on the business of the day
windows hoard
lines of sight

perched on their sills
the crowing crowd craving
hovers over the acetylene
sidewalk single file beneath

the feet and hearts and soles
of the walking healed
and despite the cost

the healing the hearing
the hoarding the first line
lurches by
sings single file

in the heads of
the high-minded

Speech on the Wastebasket

Some will say I deserved it,
that you were courageous throughout,
that the blunt towns we lived in
served our needs
better than the important cities
we circled. One by one
the towns moved on,
the food changed as did the games
we played, but we
remained constant
and fearful remembering
the pieces and the anger,
the streets choked by dust
in the part of the world
famous for incoherence.

Some speak at night,
make their speeches
standing on overturned
wastebaskets close by beds
where women wait stroking
their hair while dogs
circle center posts that anchor
their chains.

I heard you laugh
while I fell asleep,
the green storm started up,
and the face of truth
was the rainsoaked window
beaming sparks made by the streetlight
fragmented outside.

Atrophy on a String Harp

Lunch in a funny setting
odd dishes and their contents
atrocities wheeled on carts
like desert trays
and you pick by pointing.

At the virgin café
the barrista's matted lavender hair
was knotted and flecked
every piece of her
face given over to thought
had been pierced
her lips were the color
of an atrocious death
she was color coordinated
down to her down
she lamented the departure
of the lira when we fingered
a euro by mistake
being from Milan
I tried to kiss her
but she took it for
lip synching.

In the distance
a plume of smoke
click my heels
something burns.

Circular Illumination

There are no houses that turn
as lighthouses do their attention
round to everything and round
to ships in distress losing their ways
since the last sweep of clarity—
what seconds can do. Alone

on hell one boat takes on
water and its pumps have nodded off
and the 3 times a minute strobe
will mark first our feet then our knees
then our privates then our hearts
and finally our heads below the crooked
sheet of surface poked by spikes
and heaving like lovemaking.

Happy endings? Noise of wealth
groped and grappled downstairs.
One light lights the world above
in sweeps that thin the light
that clips the tops of poked up
waves. Safe harbor? For those
who love only.

Death of My Nana

We have no photos,
never have, so it all resides
uncannily in my head
which is pieced less
together than fenceposts
I recall were here
once but no more.

We had a swing bench hung
from a swing frame I once had and nana
sat there hour on hour after
her stroke and wished. She lay
in bed with all of us
gathered near with Dr Davis,
all her family, and we watched
her die. So quiet. No fanfare.

Just another hour, another day.
So little. He came to fetch her in,
and though we watched, no
one saw.

One Junk Pile at a Time

Behind our house
out the back door and down a short
path into the woods
we put our junk pile. Cans,
boxes, old tissues, broken
toys, milk bottles, bedsprings,
tvs, old medicine, old food,
old romance novels and other thrillers,
bones, beer bottles, bikes,
and even an old car. Everyone
in the country had a private dump.
Small, each one rotted
fine and fast. When we pooled
our junk we made big problems,
toxic quantities overwhelming
good earth. Fresh Kills.
This is why we fear
mass graves. O, fear them.

Art on Vacation

I'm sick of art
hanging around museums
taking on looks
and requiring specific humidities.
What someone does with a flair
after decades of practice doesn't
interest me more than that I
discover things new to me and old
to other people all the time
about art. Like dischords
in jazz—minor ninths for
example. I just learned of them
last night after viewing
scrolling art strolling
halls hanging pieces
sliced from practice.
Art's not new?
Who knew?

Art's Little Secret

in short the goal
is to speak nonsense
not gibberish to reveal
pathways of sense
abstracted as paths
without benefit of sensemaking
metaphors or enough
references to hang much on
to step as close to sense
as the edge of a cliff
but not fall into the lava
below which otherwise
we would call rationality
minus humanity it's called
the fall right?

April 1, 2002

Adage

I'm not part
of your summer
and winter's

on its way.

Guesswork Out of Imagination

By making a change
we can explore

the opposite of be
sure

By placing rocks
in nongeometric positions

(can you imagine?)

we can predict
new rocks

By taking the guesswork out
of imagination

we can be at peace
no more

Daddy

My hope is to see him again,
not alive but something like
it, when he felt confident
and not alone. when he was strong
and not on his knees wondering
who to pray to, when he didn't have to stare
into the woods to swallow
his pride, when he didn't need
to hide what he loved, when he could understand
what it meant to live and didn't need
to be told.

Hairwashing Day in the Square

The square is a funny place
to wash your hair but she does
at dawn where the water drizzles
down from the iron pipe
and roosters rest having done
half their daily job and only
the oldest men are there to
watch her strip off her cutoff
pants and blouse her hair
failing like the water from the iron
pipe and the sun blinking in the drops
on her hair and on the surface of the water
and soon her whole naked body
glows from the sun's stare
and the men's stares as she washes
her hair as if for her lover
whoever he may be.

Almost Asleep in Oxford

Sleep is too hard
the spires too brightly lit
in this Northern sunset
I've joined reluctantly.

From below my window
facing East the fans over
cookstoves force fat and smoke
into my window opened
to keep me cool and awake.

Long enough to pry
out of sleep's jaws a few lines
maybe three stanzas just short
enough to complete but long
enough to light up spirelike.

Brambles

This road
seems diversion detour
distraction on the track
from home to home
from one to other
like a branch needing
but neglected from
pruning. My feet tread
it but the way out brings
the way back and could
the straight road lengthen
were the short ones cut
away? Would the heart be
willing to bear it
to hear it all straight?

Must Duck

The fence holds in a mossy ground
cover, mints, and daffodils,
some elms and an oak,
keeps out brambles
undergrown with ferns
and ivy. Birds sing pretty
songs warbling
long lines and centerfolds
of sonic leg spread. A black kite
hovers and pigeons huddle
but hold their stance on their high
wires. A pheasant blows,
ducks creak, the Earl's gardener
who hardly writes bangs
a big box end on a smaller
trying to loosen the mower's
blade to sharpen it.

This house spreads for me
as Oxfordshire darkens
and I feel when I enter
I must duck.

Backhoes Wait When Life Calls

Sweat is expressed
as it should be
that the living
remaining must
work to send her on
as did the
living preceding
to bring her forth—
sweat, back bending
labor covered in dust
caking dirt in the cuffs,
building layers of skin
by growing one over
another, one layer
of dust piling over
another. And then
the work is done;
it's dark.

Walk on the Verge

The river's run through
this meadow for centuries
and people've laid beneath
these elms and oaks
every night the wind
blew from the West. Upriver
lovers made for others stroll
like leaves blowing downwind,
downriver, crosstown. Nearby
buildings hoard shelter
and snobbery. By the verge
a duck minds my close
swing forced by the wide
swing of the lovers' arms,
and among the outcomes
destined for me is the carefully
contrived slow walk away.

Persistent Performance

What comes to us we come to know
for its attraction to us signals
intention to interfere,
and its will will be stronger
than ours to select. What comes
to us persists and keeps on,
like a water seeping,
flowing, then rushing.
What we cannot know
is what is the source,
who fills the pool
that fills the stream
which wears and wears,
like persistence, like a pestilence,
like presumption, on and on
to become what we know.

Christ Church

It is simply driving on through
greenery and explosive leafing.
The wind insists on its origins
as it flees and underneath
the heavy lace is a fine skirt.
The bells cadence down tripping
on each note, all twelve like
disciples waiting for rot.
Even 8 centuries later the raked
grooves still hold some bite
though shuffling strangers
hugged the walls while the wily
moved up the center. Among the treats
is leaving. Let's do it.

I Joke

Let's unearth a secret
of life
which among the most obvious
has remained
hidden for centuries
and requires
the constant availability of video tape
and other
technological devices to give it shape.

Among the tens of thousands of sex acts
performed on
film or tape from the beginning of time
until now
there are only 17 clearly discernible
and unambiguous
examples of female orgasm
and all
of those women have been stripped
of their
right to engage in sex
by all
the rest of the women on the planet.

You think
I joke.

Naturally At Home

All he wanted was to move
from day to day, to
hear the loon before dawn
head from safe haven to feeding
waters, to feel the afternoon winds
pause for sundown when all
is an equilibrium, to listen to rain
bleed to crowd noise during a Red
Sox game on the radio mixed
with static and the percussion
of a thunderstorm just North
of Boston, to bike down the road
to fetch her a paper and stop
along the way to jaw with friends
and mix it up with humor,
to wash each blueberry
before pouring on the milk
mixed with vanilla extract and watching
Doctor Who, to relax his eyes
before bed by swaying the way
a false book taught him, but
he believed everything he heard
were it told with humor
and now look where he is
and what happened to him.

Torchlights

All so tiring
that the strings have broken
and the white-haired trees carrying
the torch of bright lights behind them
launch an attack
on the constancy
of persistence.

Arroyo Annoyances

stone in isolation
expressing emerging stoicism
refusing it thinks
weardown by wind
by rain by god
distances alert to distortion
and diminution expresses
a hazy foundation
and rocks fall

sporadic greenery
hangs about and cloisters
clinging to moisture
and enough fissures
opening

my worry is this note
will fly before it's done
whirl unceasingly
until a rain pins it down
and it enacts in minutes
what takes the stone
forever

Comeback Cold

the cold wind comes
this way
reverses at the junction
of hot and wet
comes and comes
back

In Santa Fe

lines uphill
light flushing shadow
back to shadow
little lives hang back
hang in the balance
fools and light invade
the places of dare
what things strive

up the street
a beauty walks toward
the café where I wait
for her stately power
and upright display
and the light
through her dreaming
skirt slows her skirt
as it flows around her legs
as I wished to

where the light falls
short my will falls

Burnished Radiant Black

life commingles with the making
of life the raven stepping
into the shallow stream at dawn
to catch his breath and drink
as birds do without the loose savoring
lips provide twists from side to side
walking in a swagger and pausing
his motion to watch fish watch
him in his burnished radiant
blackness all feathers beak and brains

later he flew by in a perfect
curve up to the top of a wide-spreading
oak where he wobbled and watched
the world be made in the image
of ambiguous black

After Carlos

don't ask
my eyes say and mean their view
is narrow and forlorn
ask ask
my heart says and means the world
is constantly swelling to fit
its shrinking ambition

Martini Sunset

sound of gin being poured
along the sides of a blue
glass filled with hard ice followed
by vermouth over the top

then the ice is stirred until
it seems it might melt
from such erotic contact

sound of a martini poured
from a glass filled with hard ice
into a hand-blown stemmed glass

the stem twisted
like a madrone

we sip them
sitting on the porch overlooking
a southwest town

if we could vote with our throats
dried from the air and dried from the martinis
the sun would dance along the horizon
all day

Orange Camo

Small lakes surprise
easy, freeze
at the least drop below 32°

Or still when wolves
turn upon them.
With logs it's the sound
of floating floating
by.

Bottoms decay
and make life from the mush
of life parts. Maybe
fish.

It's easy to watch streams enter
but the slow slogging
exits tear. The dam accidentally
resonates, attracts musicians
who inadvertently hum.
They have pasts but no
theories or deep
beliefs.

I believe in the sounds
of hunting but not hunting.
Snaps and brushes,
explosions and cheers.
Smell made of blood
and gasoline.

I did it once
with a boy my age—
his mouth was wide
as he smiled when he talked
of frying snakes
alive. He blew
himself up
by accident.

A trio walks in line
down the road in
orange camo. Where
is this hidden place
they represent?

Bad Photo Day

They took photos
of me today,

about 50 or 60
out by the waterfall
under the decorative plum.

They fidgeted with clever
light meters and an umbrella
reflector with a built-in flash;

the Hasselblad radioed
the flash and they had 30

years of experience between
them. But I was hopeless
as a subject for them—didn't care how he
looked, wore stupid clothes

covered in dandruff and even
a clever hat didn't help and soon

the most important thing
was to move aside the pot filled
with dying marsh grass

so at least
in their little salon
not all would be lost.

Waterskiing Satan

Florida awaits
like a line
of termites stretched underground
from the fallen oak
to the post holding up the porch.
Or a festoon of palm beetles
hunched beneath the door ready
to spring on you when you open
it. Or those flies as big compared
to horse flies as horse flies
to mites—they can aim
and aren't ashamed of the love
bite.

Florida is Satan's vacation spot
filled with all the comforts of home
and a few places to waterski.

Blurt Number 1

Today I promise to not be distracted
by the photo of the woman
posing hairless and nude by the glass
pyramid that forms the entrance to the Louvre
no matter how many times you tell me
I'll never see you undressed again.

Blurt Number 2

Your face and body
hold their beauty
even now in this photograph of you
taken 150 years ago,
angles of your face
cutting through the boredom
most must have felt
then and though
the blotches and stained
background hide the moment
it feels sudden like
reality.

The beauty that clings
to your image has fallen
from your face and arms,
your legs and what's left
of you withers in a box
in the ground no one can ever
find.

When I think of you,
what do I think of? Art
says live, life says die.

Blurt Number 3

Too much music
is made through rational thought:
setting up a framework
and filling in the parts,
gathering requirements
from this or that aesthetic,
choosing whom to mimic,
listing the complex chords
and changes, writing it all down
so almost no humans aside
from the players
need to get involved . . .

or maybe hire a soulful singer
and some backup girls
who could wail behind
Pink Floyd . . .

and a light show
pops, classic, or whatever.

Too much music
is rational.

Blurt Number 4

The hill ahead
is there to kill. It starts
slow and dips even
and then climbs and climbs
levels and dips,
climbs and climbs,
the maples turning to firs and pines,
climbs and climbs,
the sandy dirt turning to granite
rocks then slabs
that turn from steep to sudden,
climbs and climbs,
and birches laying on their sides
looking like bushes or scrub but
they are full grown trees laid down,
climbs and climbs.

The hill uses up all the breaths I have left,
all the heartbeats, all
the miles of bloodflow
and passion for height,
all the need for singing.

Cold rock,
high tower,
final day.

Jimi Says Jam?

The delay is real
from the part of my brain
between my head and my hands
in liquidating worthless
rationalities in favor
of cold hard passion
that can be exchanged
for anything from Mozart
to Hendrix.

Wouldn't you want
to see them together:
each burning down the fire,
each folding what he hears
until the sound is a pastry
shell and Wolfgang says
powdered sugar
and Jimi says jam?

God's Canon

The frame's around
linking the it to
the surround. Border
bordering on diplomat.
Boundary bounding
from inside to out.
Nothing is bound
to be. The clockwork
of the colorscheme
spreads like Santa Fe sunset
and the black frame
is coyote watching the wind
for death. If you watch
eyes you can see the border
like a scribbled sketch
like a bedframe. Colors,
what holds them in
holds God's canon.

Large Smoke

What watches becomes smoke
and the hierarchies of light
plunge into shadows. I'm under
the impression the close cut
grass hugs bottomland. Instead
of coding I've decided to burn some brush
up the side of the hill,
fill the valley and the eyes
with washing tears. Horses
nicker and tread heavy.
Many things are too
large.

Chihuli 32/50

Signed prints in black crayon
hung on capitalist walls
w/ three tasteful borders:
two white, one brushed copper.

The flight seemed late
but quick catching up
informed time of a different
outcome. Downstairs

the woman in the dull red satin
skirt wrapped all around
except up one leg
has reminded me by turning
away what beauty does
to the old.

Clueless Clawing

Which tipping point
appeals to you, passes
as withcraft, wobbles

like a top tumbling
but finding a center
to stand on, scares
your sensible undercurrents
with an underbreath
of gas and oil buried
like a cave beneath the hotel
where your sleeping
and mine
disintersect?

Lust List

Pink jammed on grey,
congenial assassins of lead metal
poking above the ghastly streets
aligned religiously East-West,
North-South making caverns
where the sides of hills
rising from the sound
once shucked downpours,

and you walk in an attractive
manner toward the single
source of titular domination,
a point-smear of neon judged
pink by censors and covetous
righteousmen, and declared
nothing more than the XXX
peep show. Within as without
the installed temptresses conceal
their stubborn allies and reveal
only the perfectly public
with perfect timing and dé rigueur
clamminess. I touched and the sky
dropped its pink and resumed
its regularly scheduled blue.

Take the Cake

I suppose the past's drag
is worth mentioning in passing
or in reference to lethargy
coupled with extremes of heat
and moisture. I'd like to be a fly
on the wall
when you discover the half of your body
you thought totemized your irresistible
self had been on loan from a walleyed
god who looked the other way
without your notice and voila
the piece de resistance's dragging
behind. Or take the lovely couple
strolling like English icons
along the berm separating
the Earl's manor from common
farmland even though pheasants
flap from one field to the next: Would
it surprise you to learn
the way they whisper
in the night is like electric
wires snapping in a storm
and his wife has met her
at least twice in the last month?

In the land of metaphors,
the shadow just before dusk
takes the cake.

Ars Living

crust is easy
to find

trick is
to penetrate to
the cream

Apopka

The land of the rich
looks rich with fully green grass
and dressage pens. Their worries
center around value. Too many,
too much. The color of the third coat
of paint in 2 years, the age of the whiskeys,
the whiskies.

Their distinctions are both fine
and gross. Their wives groan
like any others, but the cloth
of their panties and how many times they
are washed before being discarded
are differences men grow
to notice.

A Hot Day Working on an Old House Near Big Scrub

unbearable heat,
unmovable intentions

flags hanging
unrejuvenated

imagine bugs
that die as they rest
we pause to touch
their hind legs

and stutter when
there is no sudden response

nothing no movement
except heat heading
upward and bugs
turning to motes

that will sting
like bees
the eyes and throats

of passers-by on their ways
to the swamp to watch for
blacks bears and gators

to listen for coonhounds
and foxhounds sugaring
the night air with their bays

and no one who walks
by the river is a candidate
for marriage

On a Curve Aligned to Kick Dirt into a Half-Abandoned House

by the side of 301
in southern Virginia

a small house built in '52
wrestles with the force
of people moving out

and work left for the next
tenants the next switch
in main roads the way
large rivers respond

to small movements
by making crescent lakes

this house relies
too heavily on paint
and memories of main roads

hovers half up half
caved in though cars
are parked out front

their hoods hopefully
up the oil fresh

Horses And Truth

Would horses sweep
the fields in fans
like black teeth
combing wet hair
in search of order and longing?
These are the values of incumbents
and those who rationalize
to retain the familiar
even when sweat
says it isn't so.

Rain That's

the rain slams the house
turns occasionally to sleet and snow
fills the ruts to rivers and low
spots to ponds that run
into each other and down the roads
to drains where only statistics matter
and sounds like sucking looks
like snakes rushes downward
outward in tangles voluptuous
venomous revealing within
the trance the crust
of skin on inappropriate surfaces
and the delight of knowing
all and of the rain

Organ Player

the equipment awaits
the players

short stage but
wide and deep
small spots but

otherwise dark
a short Marshall
leaning against it a black
beauty

a tall bass Mesa
Fender Jazz Bass
by it

double bass drum kit
tucked in its innards spare
sticks cowbell other specialties

rackmount effects
for guitars and voice
saying what's real ain't real

Shure mics and Audio-Technica
cords and cables in veins
on the floor

a Vox amp
Cry Babies a vintage Tone
Bender

at both ends stand oak boxes
with fine finishes turned away
their backs to the audience
only enough light to see glints
at head level slow rhythmic turnings
and a methodical undulation at each's
base like predators searching
these boxes backs turned watch and wait
the sinister scene of machines lying in wait
for their animators to arrive vanishes
as these two boxes stand and watch
moving moving waiting to move
in and kill kill kill

After Winter by the Merrimack

Even after an easy Winter
the disturbed surface of the Merrimack
shines muddy black: Summer is teething.
Lilacs the color of Burgundy bloom
near here—anyone can tell
from their grape-sweet fragrance.

Everyone's sex yields
odor at the peak of excitation.

Really from
the right angles
the curved caps of wind-blown
wavelets sprinkle the air
with sunbursts. The forgotten
mind rejoices
at the folly of renewal
for death eternally waits.

Even the river that saws
upriver and down
cuts through time
and takes his place by her side.

Blankets

The water seems tinged with the red
of rust and minerals, pouring over rocks
it heads away and froths. Walk
along this river either upstream
or down, listen for voices
that hunker by day,
fill your waterbag and drink
on the hour, when the mountain
passes fill with snow and the air
fills with snow, remain quiet
and huddled in blankets.

If the woman should come—
and why shouldn't she, the music
leans this way?—embrace her
in your blankets.

Learning from Rails

We spend our lives
seeking what loves
us and convincing ourselves
that's what we love.

Unless
what loves us is killed
once we find it.

Think years later
of what loved you falling from the bone;
you live with mirages;
houses crumble, stoves rusting
on their sides outside.

Black is foolproof.
No man can be recognized
wearing black stockings
over his face.

We spend our lives
hiding bad eyes,
hurt ears. Along
a long straight rail line
something bad
has happened
and we've heard enough about it
to make good.

By the Merrimack on a Day Inexplicably Hardened by Snow

Snow coats fresh sprouted
grass—I sit by the river
writing yet another bridge poem.
Today warm spring water
rises into fog which swallows
the snow, heavy and wet but
solemnly melting. The bridge
reveals itself carefully in a pointillist
haze or overture of visual noise,
and it's hard to see the edge
of the green girders against
the new-leaf background
through the snowfall.

Today a repair barge is anchored
beneath one of the spans. The bridge
is feeling its spans and wondering,
perhaps, does this late snow
signal a final change?

Weary from travel
and hoping for home
I cannot pull myself from here
today—it's as if the weight
of the bloated snowflakes
weighs me down. Something here
does. Perhaps a final change
catches the air's breath
and chills it to death.

Fragmented Insomnia

Too many blankets.

The air's too cold,
too wet.

I cannot warm up.

I grow hot instead
beneath too many blankets.

This always happens.

Whose fault is it?

I have no place to go,
so I sleep here instead.

I am dumb.

Extending Situations as if in Friendship

The messenger has paired off
messages and recipients
who flamboyantly await
each other.

The embrace is known as meaning.

Olivia walks along the quay
spying flotsam in the oiled cargo.

People seem to have built bridges here,
placing them in spots few would think to cross.
Nothing here,
nothing here.

Related approaches provide only
low-level solutions.

The assignment statement evaluates
its expression. And scientists workshop
the sounds they make
and the fingerprints they place
on walls.

I stress this is complete,
sound, and consistent.

Baz is Not Bad

except goodbye
we pick the words floating by
like poetry magnets
and form them into
lifelong promises

if only they made the poetry magnets
pull toward each other
in as complicated way as people mill
then this

might minimize this God-damn
thing called writing poetry

When a Family is Too Small

one day

after a week of no answers
puzzled looks into it by neighbors
nervous hesitations by officials

I will drive down the dirt road
I once took to spend my first night with a woman
turn into the driveway where we all once posed
force open the door she insisted stay shut at all times

find what every son must find
do what no one has ever taught
find strangers
ask them the unthinkable

after two weeks
fall down
cry

Off Route 66 Where Lew Wallace Once Rested Out of the Sun

there might be ways to pull
things together
now that
sessions are held on the roofs of cars
girls twirl
dig with spoons in hard clay
roasted to near ceramic
by a sun perpetually behind them

music plays from the abandoned hangar
gift of producers of music
videos who have so-often chosen
the abandoned
they bust with reverb and plethoras
of musical cakes and treats
laid out on tables like Christ

spending the afternoon with Romans
just hanging out with them

until a sudden shower
ends life as we know it
on the planet Earth

Among Thunderheads

under a pile of smoldering pines
by virtue of unerring luck
overlooking two springs merging
without a thought of which came first
following a storm leaving many things
broken in its aftermath
as its scarecrow logic
chased away fattened reality
substituting pinched words
a sauce of commas and stutters
behind all this
the human remains

Another Go

when the door is forced open
& air allowed to expel its incumbent odor
as wind whispers by
heaves a week-long sigh
we will get to work cleaning
up remains & artwork absorbing the final tally
making piles for eventual pyres
we'll burn in our minds to celebrate
in the way people break shells to cure
incurable fables
the uncanny surprise of passing
although on the walls
hanging on the walls
human remains

Contingent Conditionals

On the floor, a pile of contingent post-its—
what if . . . what if . . . if—
and worthless glue clinging
like first-loves to the dust- and brine-
cured floor on which a great lady
in all her disarray
once lay and spoke
of the difficulty and great
verity of poetry as if
the shaking and hesitation
of the writing hand held sway—
and she rubbed
her legs together like a cricket
and soothed herself to sleep
while I sat & with hardly a hiccup
wrote this.

More

She never goes back
so time doesn't happen,
and her memory's peeling
so new ones never form—
the past slips closer.
I found an old map
showing her haunts,

names of places;
landmarks—swamps and hills—
resume.

Black boxes are houses,
and white ones barns.

Neat Pond.
Birch Meadow.
Brandy Brow.

What is the reason to resume
over and over? Like a bird
in a tree, a mockingbird in a tree,
marking, mocking.

Maybe we are young
once more—

just once.

Blood Music (What Else?)

My fingertips are pulled apart,
bleeding from popped blisters—
I thought I guarded against
this during the weeks before
while we practiced little
by little. But while dissecting
a Hendrix bend the string
broke through my callus
and now it's shredding.
Tomorrow the gig will unfold
and it's either pain or music,
blood or comfort. As listeners
do you care? As a player,
I have no choice.

Ars Musica

something takes over
I am aware only of small details

like which notes are hit
sometimes

I choose a note to pick
as I see my fingers about to pass it

terse interruptions
provided by the mental rationality of choice

I am aware these choices
are made of mistakes

as art hates any thought
run away and salute

tonight no beauty writhes
before us

outside in the cold distance
lights are abundant and some
weep

my guitar it's said
has become porous and what it holds

has no choice

Half-life Wandering Akin

What's the attraction?—
to walk through graveyards
on hot days, or when they're overgrown
so the looker is nearly cheek-to-cheek
with the looked upon?

Inevitability? Insensitivity?
Acclimation? Acclaim? Alarm?

Post-mortem branding—is this
the reason for tombstones?

We walked till we nearly dropped
of dehydration in a 'yard dirt barren,
surface cracked like Morocco. Later
we drank milkshakes so thick
they wouldn't fall out when held upside
down. She was 90, I was 50.

Half a life of strange curiosity.
We favored the ones overgrown
with grass and ivy to the ones
where the ambiance was consistent
above to below. Lord 'a' mercy.

Fall Flail

we'd burn
leaves blown off
trees in piles

smoke filled rooms and
empty spaces

in another
cartoon fall trees
click like
unfleshed skeletons

wind like passion passing
through empty
piles blowing more wind

beneath the piles
black now ground
will abound in green
come spring and reharassment

purses
enclosures
the simulacrum
we'd burn

Hot Day Off The Interstate

let's just imagine
it big shoes on
little feet
slop walking up a downtown street
dogs on bones like dogs on bones
porches abandoned homes
streetlights with wires but switches switched off
car cranking backfire caught
flies dead and dried between
screens
and windows cracked

ever go back?
aesthetic qualities of decay
never joints fountains the one screen say
I did approaching an image of culture

yeah sure

Verifiable or Very

each morning
its funny sounds find
endings one day
closer no matter how fine
the work between
detailed the tasks how human
the details the smells
moving from man to thing
then like oil deeper
in like mist disappearing

some say the sun dipping
through clouds and mist
must hiss in its quenching
if we might believe myths
and what sounds true over
what is tell me which you prefer
verifiable or very?

In Your Country

We've walked to the top of this ridge
and settled into our stuttering conversation
half fluid and half pulled like teeth
from your different tongue. Below
some lovers—who could be ours—
waltz through wildflowers
and use all their hands to hold
what's dear looking to carry it
years ahead. A truck crosses into our valley
hauling waste and the uncherished,
moves slowly at a funereal pace,
stops by our cabin, but finds our containers
empty. The chords in my head move like a machine
closer to the end of the song. Does it make
you wonder that what guides me
makes no sound you can hear?
A cold wind forces us downslope.

Photo-Anomaly

The photos are real
proving how famished I feel
for your tender touch, testing
clarity with slight movement.
Behind you the café is hollowed
into a vault of colors, some of them
eating eggs and others kissing
softly, out of focus to each other.

The day you walked here, your heels
kicked one side of your longcoat
then the other, and the air
parted and departed. The river
noticed nothing, but the camera
perched on the museum's rampart
cast you in big jerks
across the Internet where a man
who recently lost his wife to a swimming
accident watched your smile
one frame and your blank stare
the next.

Pure and Simple Minded

Do only the pure
discover new lands? The weaned,
the wondered about, the clandestine
studies? Many worry that the simple-minded
might be given credit or even
be right. Many worry that the poor
will step ahead of the rich, that art
will make mock of science. We
say pure and we say what that means
to ensure the favored are favored.

Many have found new lands
and died in their handhewn cabins.

Mother Remembers the Day the Principal Scorned Her

She sleeps in a cocoon
in a cold room though the night outside
is warm on the verge of hot. The insulation
works too well, pays no attention to life.
To preserve heat in Winter, the windows
are small, and there being little light
in Winter, small windows fit. Afternoon
darkness and cold forces her to bed
through the day outside is hot on the verge
of dangerous. She grows more tired each
day from hard sleep. She grows thin
for who can eat while sleeping?

The flight, the drive, the walk,
the breaking in,
the cleaning up,
the warming up,
the lighting up
the locking up,
the walk, the drive, the flight.

Today is cool on the verge
of warm. Butterflies lock their wings
into neutral and form their lenses
in the pines. Loons float in shadows
peeking at the sun, motionless on the verge
of flight. The wind and sun in the pines
and I watch over these signs and wait,
wait, wait,
wait,

wait,

wait.

From a Description Deleted from an Essay on Romance

Pride of life and townscape
that the gift of wide streets
and ample storage in the main storefronts
say nothing about the town
in the late 20th century after a century
of ridicule by time who sees little
to praise in abdication. Or take
the Coors can that rolls down the street
past empty parking spaces faintly marked
by white paint: Who dropped it here?
These roads are in the midst of a region
befitting a thick description
like Least Heat Moon's invention
of overabundance and incursion.

Seen from above it's not
even a wide place in the road
for the roofs are dulled to the brown-grey
of the beaten down fields around it,
and all the white in the lines has evaporated
their obligations to mark order,
and the coming storm's multitude
of motions will enhance
only decay and fortitude.

Shall we pray for an opening sale?
A newborn's howling segue
to the wind spirit?
Shall we pray for wind
winding up for another?

Love Girders

My job is to love
until it turns sour from lovelessness
from longing to touch naked
breasts whose tips are filled with nerves
protruding from intimacy,
and in finding the mean truth

the milk that could have turned to cream
turns harsh, ready for countertaste
and cleansing. Bitterness shrivels the grace
of intention and longing, and teaches
the lonely heart to never look down
from the highrising girders
made of the desire for love.

Dream Like Layered Paint

Night,
I've awoken,
the sentinel sodium light up the street lights her silhouette
which rises, falls, rises like her homeland's mountains.

Her breathing is heavy and close,
which means she's far away, perhaps on a city street in her home
strolling in the cold, her heels kicking the hem of her long coat
and her shadow interrupting the low steady sun,
and I may trace her shape if I'm quiet and slow,
feel her tensions and releases.

Wind makes the branches rattle our windows,
and the simplicities of cause and effect
make the simple actions men do possible.

I recall the first time I saw her
standing before an impressionist's impression
of a steep slope down to the sea yellowed by dried grass
and wind-whipped water made of pastes of oil paint.
She stood still while my need to rest my palm under her hair and on her neck
became a fact in the world, her breathing heavy and close,
which meant she was far away, unaware, releasing and tensing
like the form of her hips when she walks in the low Northern sun
deep in Winter.

And did I mention
I've awoken? Is that what I said?

How I Apply Makeup

I find websites for places I want to visit
and Photoshop myself into quaint or bizarre
photos and make an album of me there. In paragraphs
written one or two a day like a disconnected collage
I write the novel of my sudden trip there
and the long life I led once I met a strange woman
with a foreign tongue who had to speak slow
to speak to me. I find might-be photos of her
and I paste myself in right next to her.
I buy plots in famous cemeteries nearby
and commission headstones of the local sort
with brief historical notes about me. Sometimes
I add her. I buy old trunks and put my novels in them
and put the trunks in abandoned buildings.

Someday they'll investigate these me's, and their
favorite will become who I am.

Foreign Piles

A machine drives piles
all morning and halfway through the afternoon.

The endeavor is foundation.

Machines take on the colors of their countries
and cities. Partly through paint.

The sound of sexual intercourse
is the sound of women.

What I say reveals you. This
is how statements work.

The hardest rest is made
of weariness. Like a song

many things grow pale
from overcautious riding.

Instead of asking her
I watch the pile driving machines

gracefully pounding into the earth,
then awkwardly trundling

like me toward home
on to the next one.

Bedroom Poem

Her bed is isolated:
surrounded by the L
of the room's corner and the L
of the floor. On her bed
only she may lie, but we may propose
beyond the limits of reason.
Her bed is surrounded by her recent
clothes and few who enter her room
notice the green sunset or the odor
linking now with yesterday.
Her eyes are naked, and we can guess
what pounds in her head tonight,
but don't act on it. If we were to walk
from her room to the shore and rest
on one of its imported granite boulders
watching sandy seawater rubbing
against rocks and relics
we'd buy the poetry of statement
a limited consensus gawks at.

The pier is shaped like an L,
the short end whiskered with fishermen
who have a taste for bedrock and flatfish.
We wait for her to wake and regather
her flung wardrobe. We know she
will walk down here and make poems
twisting the new,
forcing the new. What is not necessary
is for us to hear.

Genesis

gangs
and the group mind
no mind from any one
approach the center
avoid collisions
extend the sense of the last thing said
or cheer volunteer a whim
but provide nothing
more

act purely
never plan never think
never reason
find a victim
choose prey
observe the bodies

this is where God
began

Over Your Head

The charming inn set high on a shoulder,
its little restaurant serving only heavy
food—meat, sausages, potatoes, cabbage—
is our home for a week. Like the village,
it is made of heavy wood to steady
it in the high winds Alpine passes
like this endure. The cows are heavy,
the goats and chickens too. On our roof
logs lay across the downward slope
to keep heavy snow on all Winter
to help heat the inn. We drink heavy
beer made from a Bavarian recipe.

But the sun this Summer fills the village
and forest with light,
and breezes smelling slightly
of the Mediterranean and Italy
scoot up the slopes and makes leaves glisten
when they turn over and blush.

When we leave next week
the contrasts will lessen,
the light will fold within the heaviness,
the beautiful will tail off,
and the ugly will brighten.

Water coursing down the river
will coagulate with glacier spoor.

Romance is contrast.

My Dreams Are Piles and Piles

in my dreams it's always a house
or a conference site, maybe a hotel

and there are common features
to all of them—a rambling nature

a wide place that overlooks a narrow one
weeds bushes trees debris refuse

blocking the way in I'm always
moving from one part to another

hiding or searching or finding
places to relieve myself some

places have curved walls and windows
others have beams that have fallen down

sometimes it's a school or a conference
and I'm late to everything just by

a little bit it's about failure I
think and cycles that go

down and down revisiting
common patterns several

times a night my bathroom
window overlooks a close valley

and a steep hill covered in homes
and when I stare out while addressing

the toilet three streetlights tremble
out of unison it won't be long now

Heisenberg's Roads

Two roads diverged in a yellow desert
one heading north, the other west
and unlike quantum particles I can't go both
ways, see? The northbound one—I could
see it until it dipped into an arroyo
and the other into a mirage at noon.
One seemed rutted from heavy truck wear
but the other was pitted and worn
I think anyway dust and sand were blowing
across and who could tell which was which

I went my way—less traveled or no:
what's the difference?

Poetry and Science Discursively Defined

Poetry? Imagine this:
a boundless description
of every detail of the truth
of the world, of creation,
of destiny, of laws, of God,
enough to satisfy the strictest
thinker, the loveliest dreamer,
everyone who ever lived or will.

Imagine: The thinnest line drawn patiently
and with precision even without ever
crossing itself can fill the largest sheet
of paper, the infinite plane.

Or it can wander loosely,
be straight as an arrow,
short as a tick mark,
fancy or ugly, cover as much,
or as little, as anyone wants.

Now think of this line on the description
of Everything, and if we could see only
those words it touches.

Science seeks to touch
them all.

Poetry seeks them
in their best order.

An Old-Fashioned

snow like sad upended
clouds and accumulation bound the flakes
in burrows the small prepare
wind works against the dark

desert all around everywhere
stubble that is its greatest growth
pokes through like rocks in a filling pond
and beneath sleep begins

look in the eyes of the storm
that approaches
tell yourself
scare yourself
sit under the outcropping
never lift an eye

it is easy to be clever
for men hate to die

Short Disturbance Amid Regular Poetry

The moon seems a sunny place—
gray and dry, rounded shapes like drops in milk—
it seems to favor us with its manlike face
and varying smiles. It lights our way
some nights and makes like a murder freak
popping in and out of clouds other times.

It covers our sun and we cover it.

It disappears periodically and is fun
to write about: No end of poets
waste their time on it as if
there were something special
about this freak of nature.

If you really want to know who
the freak is, look homeward, angel!

When the Sky is Orange

The is no movement of air
in this narrow urban gorge
in which this frantic river finds itself
dropping 100 feet in a half mile
with fresh snowmelt refreshing
it torrents 100 miles upstream.

There are, of course, locks.

This island is surrounded
by turmoil and spiralling white.
We sit on a park bench feeding
finches from a bag of black thistle.
The woman with me's brushed hair
remains motionless even though it is thin
and light as down. In the river
many dead must be flowing down
to the Gulf and the roar
is as a squadron taking off.

I've kissed her before, but each
time is as the first, and I'm barely
ready to touch the invisible
hairs on the back of her hand.

I'll wait until she's tossed
the next batch of thistle.

Car horns must be honking.

Unpleasantly Too After You

The river slows down
once its feeder streams dry up
a bit up river and we are unpleasantly
surprised when the finches up
and leave—our bag of thistle is down
to the last handfuls and then it's dried up
too.

After,
we stand up and face the glowing
city separated from us by a formerly
unrepentant river gorge.
Seen from the back we are clear
and precise colors and the city
is a brown fog through the mist thrown up
by the leavings of winter's snowmelt
blasting down and
you

can almost hear the melancholy pop song
welling above and all around.

Hordes

Gossiping while the waitress fusses
over conflicting orders selected
from menus in tongues, writers
are unkind and ineloquent over
their distaste for writers who don't show
for readings and weddings, write
beneath the needs of the art, divorce
at the wrong times from the wrong
people, and I am able barely
to put one word after another while
sampling with the tip of my tongue
the overspiced cilantro chutney.

classroom framework and arguments

dancehall girls in long skirts posing with men
who hold them formally each rests his weight
on one leg and twists into his girl

once the hips move it's all over
the historian of dance remarks
about step dancing

the room prowls through the wind
high and whistling like a framework
of stoppage in a storm en route

chipmunks rest in her lost shoe
beneath the oak whose placement
suggests a poet's prop or proper etiquette

I notice

a
s
t
r
o
n
g

f
o
r
c
e

o
n

t
h
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e
f
t

Music Muscle

take music
passion or white hot
varied not perfect nor perfectly played

technically flawed in current idioms and modes
pushed not polished

poets line up in the plush seats
applaud in white gloves

by a river vultures split booty
with hunters lives pulled apart

homes left smouldering
when their lovers can't run with the pack

and the nervous hunker by boulders
and hum songs written this year

at the crossroads of wondering composition
and propositional passion

Alleys

we watch fireworks work
their ways upward

behind old blonde brick
buildings above the river
holding forth back behind

behind walls women drive men
to the wall through the pull

of desire, degrees of curvature,
and of the hard and the sharp

we walk without touching
without talking down streets

and behind them the alleys

—

the air is a stew of departures,
hot heat gathered by rivers,
roots pulling up strengths—

your strength is towering,
hangs over me like willows and other weeping
trees, the padding of your footsteps
clings to the air like a breeze just below
our perception—

I knelt so you could reach
down to me, I hung on your hips
for support, you chose
to kiss me motherlike,
with some approval—

my work and yours diverge,
I wonder about voices, seriousness,
we discuss obliquely revisions—

we decide I must wait,
keep on, visit on a colder day,
many others walk by—

Dance Agenda

trick is fleeting gestures,
pieced-together filaments attaching
levels to each other, entirely new ways
to create reality for virtuality,

such as he has lifted her skirt
so that we see their feet begin
their complex dance beginning
with the way they face us with their bed behind
and ending with a vault of gold leaves
arched over them at one end of the lane
and over us at the other,

the other being
the warmth we rise toward
when the music stops
and we've all cooled off

In Memoriam

Someone died secretly
and was quickly laid to rest;

he spoke quietly making real sense
out of nonsense but liked to drive way
too fast. No one released the details

of his death though the cremation
is known and so the disposal, but

the force of his ideas or should I say
the soft pockets of still clarity

are drifting like the smoke of an ornamental
fire made of cedar sticks and aromatics

and soon the sky will change shades
just this little.

Can of Something

A can of something
has been cooking for 2 months
under the sun near Abilene
on a stretch of pavement
not even the bikers care about.

A pop-top all whose color
has been bleached out. Maybe it was blue
or could 'a' been green. It bulges
as if about to pop but when I listen
I hear only cicadas real far away
and some other buzzing.

What was put in there was made
for people to drink—such an honor
to become part of the top of the food chain.
Now it is just some chemicals changing
and waiting. This Winter a rain storm
will wash it down into the arroyo,
and another to the river, and then
to the Gulf where it may wash up
on a beach, be buried in sand
and one day become the trophy
in a very strange stranger's collection
of impossibles.

Is It Too Late To Weep?

Nearby the Holocaust is raging
like a kettle boiled over and blown
apart, its warning whistle long dead
and its sound wrapped like a scarf
around the neck of illumination,

and I'm afraid I've lost my place
in the long book I was reading,
and I have this feeling
I'll never find it any more.

Unkempt

Behind two motels just off
the exits on Interstate 95 in North Carolina
a graveyard sits among birch saplings
and raspberry bushes. Signs
I can't read point to sections,
and many markers carved of wood
are cracked and broken. It is part
of a larger cemetery that is well-kept
except for this. I wonder why while
licking my Dairy Queen softserve
cone and sweating up an odor.

Big Boats and Fast Turns

Big ships and barges speed under
the Bay Bridge, cargo shaped like boxcars
is piled up high and on the stern
of one they are piled on a framework
making a kind of heavy-pieced awning
shading Philipinos drinking heavily beneath it.
For some boats, shares are given for a fixed
profit, and increase comes from reducing
hands en route. How happy homecomings
are is as unknown as what goes on
belowdecks to passengers caught
off guard or when swells shift
contents and the sound of shifting
moans through the nights and breathing
is shallow while everyone hopes
for normal to wake up.

Harborside Exchanges

hem white skin faint sunburn
a young woman on a bench Bay waters slapping
a cargo ship forces past upper deck filled with slow traffic

her hair blown forward her ears covered her eyes tinged
a ferry pulls back like a thunderstorm pelicans cruise
sun and salt air baste the East Bay hills moon reveals

I lean toward her years of thought unload
between us an arm's length bench slats caked
I talk and talk her pelicans plunge

she watches cars slow
down

Spondeeful

Do we need at
the end the terrible truth
to pop out like a softened cock
after a wet fuck? Truth laid bare
like a freshly shaved cunt
capturing each flow of excitement
in the lips and not the hair?
I could make all this as pretty
as anyone and then nail you
with that precious click like
all good poets do, but what this is is
just a glimpse like you want to take
of that bare cunt right now.

Almost Right: Look's Off

The form of a modern poem is !:
quick start, dim-
inishing build-up, a
little gap where
readers hold their breaths....ahhhhhhhp!

Then a popping sound as the poet
uncorks his brain and real
meaning burps
out.

Lament One Day Early

Soon the way back
will dim away and there will be a limit.

The storyteller
is losing

her mind or is it that in her
forgetting it is getting

better?
She practices

starving and not moving,
her answers are

no answers,
and I fear it.

There is one last loon
hiding in the scrub

waiting to
hoo hoo

away once the light/dark blend
is right enough. Mark the end

mark the end
mark the end.

Lament One Day Late

Imagine darkness falling
 head over heels for one
more has been added
 like drops of water and salt
to sea waves or a loon to a pond
 filling with loons.

Then it's time to wonder
 like a puzzle filled out
not knowing what comes next
 what the cost will be
to open the door no matter
 how broken it may have become.

We'll scan the lines written
 not labored over
to find the ones that can never be forgotten
 and make them that way
then lose our way once more
 then mark the end.

Lament of Encirclement and Approach

we approach it like
watching out for

circling 10' outside
range uncertain

we sniff
the air is laden

one mystery
footprints buried

grass staining grass
only one good news

A robin pouts and pines
on the branch nearby, her
nest filled with chicks whose mouths
open and open. Their nest is on a sill
where looking out happened

once
in an older time
when nests were bigger

Lament After In

Beneath the coned mountain,
behind a veil of powder light clouds
leaking an orange otherworldly
like a gaping door to a world
of glittering uncommonality,
we've parked and take turns
holding it in the light behind
and the sight beneath in hopes

that the way we've admitted
to sentimentalism will be taken
as a blessing when she needs
it most, maybe wants it least,
but at last it's just our way
to say goodnight to her
on the first of her last 2 or 3 nights
at home before we send her
closer to where she'll want to be
one day when she finds herself
not here.

Lament Representing Ongoing Work

At the edge of a field filled
with round balls of lavender clover
a crew is dismantling an oak,
starting at the top with the long branches
that trace the bottom of wind, and after each branch
falls more trunk is taken down. The men
stop every 30 minutes to sit under the diminishing shade
and sip from jars of lemonade filled from one
of 5 big buckets, and when the shade is gone
they move their drinks and tools to the rim
of shade around the field. They climb like arboreals
or use ladders on the flat beds of a pair of trucks
to reach the limbs that go next. Later
the field is filled with limbs and leaves
losing their lives while the wind finds
the way less obstructed and the lemonade
buckets grow emptier, less able to comfort
the sweating work of the wearying men,
more able to accept the next refreshing drink.

Lament Upon Forgetting

Cleaning up is everyone's last duty,
and now, memories begin their work
of forgetting—first details then the outline,
finally everything. Soaking in is a good
metaphor, for what soaks also stains
as it marks and memorizes. Maybe
a carpet can be cut apart keeping
what's right, burning what's forgettable,
but the edges become frayed and soon
it all unravels. Everything unravels, every
single fact is forgotten. The world follows
what's remembered, so the world always changes.

Yesterday we drove past a pretty place
and remembered something sweet.

Lament Of Closing

Even the air, so soft, can jolt—
what once was wished for
is now mourned—clouds, once
so soft, fill the air with rain,
with lightning, with pounding
and thunder—and the ground, once
so firm, has become liquid and settles
and flows down to the sea
like a procession. Everything is
recently closed up, locked, left
behind, and crippled to keep
further change at bay, to limit
the expansion of the unknown.

Let's bottom out
the meanings of events
in the shards of memories and emotions
rampant when it was raining—
because some day it will stop,
the sun will be revealed,
and the way home will be the way
we once were.

Lament on Work

There is working hard in death—
by the one who dies by
heavy breathing and labored movements,

or the beating heart pushing too hard;
by the ones who clean up by
brushing hot caustic liquids through carpet plush,

or scraping from linoleum the last of it away;
by the ones who prepare by
digging holes, carving granite, marking unimportant things

on paper. Our job is to get
by, and by doing so, to pass close by
places of singularity in a frame unlike

our normal minds, wrapped in rigor;
by doing this we earn our lives; by
doing this, we do live.

Lament Draining Away

Just like that
what's been saved has been spilled

and like a liquid more quick than hot acid
it slithers down past the grains of sand

memory rakes into the mind of a woman
when it's nearing time to let it all pass

by. Just like that everything I wanted
to know has passed into the hands

of music where truth can be made
and pasted into the world in the image

of probability. What I mean
is the force of value is weak

when the wind slows, when
the skies lower, when it all runs

out into the welcoming sand
that fills up with nothing

but everything.

Lament Getting Too Close

The lesson starts with sunset visiting its last rays
through windows permanently shut for night;
the morning sounds of loon overhead remain muffled
for weeks as things change slowly but decidedly;

deliberately the locked doors keep out and keep
out forgotten objects of fear; many nights
are like the one night; lightning has visited
and the memory of a trapped cat seems less

tonight. There is a lesson here also
about obligations, what happens when they are for-
given; little doubt remains about what was deliberate;
outside births took place while inside the cement floor

became a sponge and pulled her away, pulled
her down, pulled the truth into peril.
pulled like a child asking and asking a parent,
now inattentive, for a story made to sound true.

Lament on Circling

we opened the garage and sat there
we found white lawn chairs and sat on them just inside the garage door
outside it seemed like many things were alive
maybe all of them

the house sealed up filled us with dread flowing somehow into us
the air became filled with grasshoppers and mites and birds flew by carrying grubs and worms
we could hear a storm far away growing near
its flashing lights made an unsteady strobe
later that night we lay in bed without blinking while it rained
someone important was not listening

someone important was not watching
we opened the door
all our senses were on hold
we held on for dear life

the darkness would not move
the darkness would not move out
the darkness would not move out of the way

out
of the way

we saw a pattern that we would not repeat
we circled the house until the moon rose and kept it up until the loons flew by

have you ever driven a car over powdery dry dirt and it feels like floating?
think of that feeling and call it the looming compass
there is little else to go on

Lament on Passing Days

I guess the sun came up
and went down many days

some warm or hot, others more moderate
and birds sang as they sat nearby

perhaps it was cloudy some days
and rain fell or even thunder flashed and lightning yelled

some nights maybe were muggy, others cold as usual
and stars passed by overnight and the moon came and went

could be people called letting the phone ring and ring and...
and people knocked at the door while the grass grew

oh and wondering took place in several houses nearby who had seen but no more
and the place endured and the floors endured and the carpets dried out

the situation didn't change much
and only the shape of the future did

Lament on the Realities Picking Up

She's vanished and her secrets
remain evident, buried but
with stems and stalks poking out
and buds about to bloom, and
she's won't say how to nurture and trim them.
Again, I'm left with no information,
no truth, only music to go by.

She said the pile was this
high but I see only half of it,
and that half is thinned out
as if rain had washed some away.

She isn't what she used to be—
could she really have left so little of her behind?
She said her daddy told her people would try
to take advantage of her. They never did.
His warning squashed them all. She did
what he asked and was strong until the end,
but what did it gain her, to be so strong
and to yield so little.

Lament on Knowing and Not

it's a real clearing now
with storms on the way
trees leaning over
ants digging and aerating

leaves turned over and pulling in the water
dust picked up by light winds and laced onto flat surfaces
a cloud hanging around all day
and now, there,
another

what did they see here
how did the days wring out joy

I see the grass growing
and small saplings poking up
stumps are filling with greenery pushing up

the locked gate is feeling a little rusty
at keeping things out
storms on the way
leaning digging rusting growing back

keep in touch
you said
explaining how the mesh of discovery
can be kept fine

Lament on Futility and Beauty

Clouds, rain, the finery of ferns—
none of this is made for us. Take
the sunset made of a burst jug filled with urgent colors
splashed on pewter drapes—
what we think of it is nothing.
What we feel when seeing it
was never any of God's business.
Beauty is the rareness.
Forward lies the rim
and deep within its pit lies what beauty means
to those who tinker with it.
Alone is how it ends,
and the word that is kept till the end
falters and makes the biggest joke.
O end it.

Lament on Smoking and the Ways Out

Someone said the way out appears at the end of each line,
that the beginnings are new terms of incarceration with variable outs.

Sing me a song
in a voice sweet with love
with a dog barking in the woods
and chickadees rapping their laments,
with a comb in your hand combing my hair,
and wind blowing down our valley and out to sea.

I am forced to sit here, write in the middle of battle,
no respite, no release, no responses as if the listeners
were dead to me or their ears or eyes were dead
to me.

It's all
rolled up
into a little
ball and the ball
has fallen down some
hole where only those in
the hole can find it and play
with it and I can't have it anymore.

We stole her cigarettes
and like lovers struck them alive
under a pine down the street,
sitting in the warmth only a Spring day
can make of pine needles in the woods
when the leaves aren't out but the sun is.

I snuffed it out,
he kept on.

The past is killing me.
It killed her.

Lament on Aftermaths

There is no way to say it
other than murmur and murmur,
no other place
than the bed of pine needles
laid on the ground outside her bedroom window,
no time other
than every moment from now on.

Style under duress,
we fathom it like songs sung off key
only to return at night under duress
replaying like fashions from sister to sister.

I've found the old well hole buried
under sand, dug over the course of months
under threat of death from cave-in,
under duress to provide water to an aging wife.
I will bury it deeper, cover

it in needles, make my bed by both these places.
I am not like them, my head is heavy with pain,
my heart heavy with thoughts it never could have had
until the songs started up and played and played.

The world needs superman
to set it straight,
to say what needs said,
to sing the songs right,
to fill in the gaps.
It's not me: All I can do
is just sleep

Lament on the Worthiness of Time

Is it worth the time?
—to make a line of sight between
the grave on the hill and the one below?
—mother looking down on mother?
If I could tell her, if she could see me
signaling for the clearest line, if she could
see the preparations being made, the care
I'm taking to do what she might appreciate
in the name of falling sentimentality,
would she laugh, would it seem to her
respect, love, something intangible?
I took her ashes to her favorite places.
Was it worth the time? Who will see
the line of sight? How many visits
will it be worth?

Lament Over 40 Years

I remember when we first saw the land,
sunny day in '63 before Kennedy
was killed and after my grandmother died
in her bed with us around and nearby, and we had
bought the last place on the hill—enough
for 8 of us with a line of sight to Nana
and my granpa whom I never knew,
and my mother knew one thing then
that I never could until now: One day
I would carry my father and her up
that hill, and the linden tree at the corner
would be 30 feet tall not 10, and all the graves
around would be filled, and the little shrubs
would be grown and trimmed into life-binding bushes,
and my job would be to write their importance
for a world that didn't know them, and
read it to a crowd made mostly of rain and wind, choose
a stone and design its decoration, line up her view to her father,
walk up the hill slowly three times,
and spend my nights pounding this beat,
and making them up—those little facts
I didn't know in 1963 that my mother did.

Lament On Enlivened Links

The sky is perfect,
nothing between it and its colors
but two thin
(so thin)
lines of clouds pointing away
in scrapey colors,
and there is nothing
between me and whatever I see.
Even the greens are bursting
out of ponds with their egrets looking
down at an angle for signs of the living
daring them. Behind a screen of trees
and beyond the fields beyond that a river
seesaws with the tides past a hill it will
(it must)
consume or abandon. On that hill I left
something valuable whose value can be gained
neither by taking it nor by leaving it.
The clear air is something to love,
something to look through when the eyes tear up,
when the walk up the hill begins to shorten.

I remember she patted the tops of their heads
and showed me the grief of her flat smile,
looking with her darkened eyes, never
saying a word, hoping I could made new ones
(for her).

Lament on Desire and Satisfaction

There's a food she loved,
she savored it when she was young
then forsook it for 20 years, though the stands
that sold it stood by the road she took every week.

I bought some for her. The cooking is easy,
done by novices in the crudest way possible
almost. This food was special to her. No more.
It comes from the sea and she never wandered more
than 100 miles from the sea. Lived in its salten
air, lived in its moderating shade.

These things special to her now just are,
like the words in this poem they are uncharged,
like the plain facts written here, it is just information
to know how she felt. She sat there and smacked
her lips and my imagination filled her head
with desire and satisfaction.

Lament for Him

His voice trailed off into the sputtering facts
voiced over a loudspeaker while the boat cut through
the over-yielding lake water the only time he spoke
to me representing. Listening I count "bless"ings and "pray"ers,
and though he wrote little poetry he can recite
it all.

She prayed for him and for herself,
she held his hand and let it go when she felt him warm,
he watched her walk out of his hospital room, just her red hair,
he said he would pray for himself and for her,
the world looked misty to him and it always would and still does

Facts went by, facts were available, he felt no
need to record them. He said he had pictures
of his father but my mother got mad one day
and threw them out. Should I lament
their loss or celebrate her spirit?

When he was in love they kept
him in isolation, packed in with the redhead.
His life was saved and all the doctors and surgeons rejoiced.
He lost his mind to her and he lived his years
in disquiet, wishing for the facts to become
once more available.

Lament on One Moment

On my side in bed
on a hot night, humid filled with
the green smell of fresh mown grass
and my hair sticky from a bike ride
to a ballgame, the fan is on pushing
air out its window so air's pulled in all
the others, and like a lightest breeze
the cool air coming off the swamps
is cooling me down little by little,
and the rushing sound of the fan can't quite
hide the sound of thunder coming down the valley.

These moments have been compressed
as if into a story because time is compressed
now that the moments have stopped. With
art they can be filled out and turned from
boredom, turned from the past, turned to
living.

Simple Lament

The sea birds sings,
sings and flies on placid wings
while we stutter and jerk
come and go, the eternal
versus the temporary.

Lament for Goodbyes

Here is what we see tonight
as the cool settles down from the dark
dreaded night and stars do nothing
but hang; the small meanings
turned away from and the untasted foods
left to waste, the bags taken to the garage
in haste and untidiness, the TV glowing blue
and a diet of tea and candies.

Night on earth is singing
with a voice that tenses
and relinquishes. In this sand
the trace remains of their recent passing
and the warmth from their feet hangs on.

Lament on the Beauty of Passing

From my window I hear footsteps
approaching the fountain and its water
falling on stone and splitting in shards

and forming drops under the sun, some
of it evaporating away like the throngs

of birds who leave the swarm and spot
away into the hidden caves of tree canopy.

Their eyes follow mine as I watch the water
flow away from sight and regard
the woman walking past whose walk

has straightened and steadied
as she casts off her other self
and becomes at last real.

Lament After Lorca

The robin who laid her eggs
while you were still here
has forgotten you, the fear
you felt over thunderstorms
from the time lightning shot
past your eyes has forgotten
you, the carpets you swept
when you could not walk
have forgotten you, the water
bubbling from the well
we dug when all else failed
doesn't know you, the heat
and wet from the South wind
will not look into your eyes,
the cool wet fog that surrounds still
your house has no idea of you
any more—all of them are condensed
in me who heard your last laments
and prayers for everything to cease,
and like all the dead of the earth
you are just a story I and one
or two others will tell for a short
time, less than the time it took
you to die.

Lament on Stories

I never saw her again
for the end was up in the trees

when I left, and she breathed shallowly
rather than confess. I looked for a kiss

and the gate was swung closed
even though the chain had been moved

forever. Did she wait for my call
to confess instead? I called.

How small was she? Light,
they said, was kept off

her face. On my birthday
birds will land and snails

will bellow as the sun rises;
a hoard of memories awaits

in the pit of dreams
devoid of stories.

Lament Over Dreams

She had every big dream
and saw the lives of many launched.
The grass in front of her window
bowed in the rain and withered
in the sun and heat. Insects
popped up, hopped up
and flew past blinding her sight
from what might have been visible
had the dreams been less thick.

Lament On Gazing

in the distance we see
an uncertain spot

which fills the expanse of sky
with caution

a thunderous echo rebounds
toward us answering a silence

at peace with roosting birds
what little we recall to say

we refuse in the distance
the moon gazes upon an

uncertain spot

Lament on the Permanence Enshrined Beneath Stone

I've been searching for the right words,
not many of them and neither clever
nor hard nor sentimental—length is important
and how they fall in lines and how hard
would they be to read when carved: You see
the way the light falls on the lines makes all
the difference, and what's in shadow can reveal
what's in direct sun. And what sense can they make
when there is little contrast or rain has soaked
into them or snow hangs from their little loops.

Lessons can be learned when our solitary little
minds are forced to confront the language of stone.

Lament Upon Art's Inability to Mute

The celebration unfolds,
emotions bursting like a paste of butterflies

alarmed suddenly and together

from a patch of buddelia
planted for decoration
by an artificial pond.

Their colors individually assertive
combine in their flush and our inattentiveness
to churn a gold butter that fans
before the staged pond water
and the leaking liner of the pond

in a way that links the celebration,
the laughter, the downward stares,
and the dead with the grasp of comprehension
through the mechanism
called artistic falsehood.

Lament on the End of Laments

Sunset stimulates indecision
as we move away from the celebration
and through alleys bounded by houses
decaying and lowering themselves
nail by nail into the cobblestones—
they've been buried and careful words
were spoken over them today.

Sunset bars our way by holding
out hope that within the end
something beautiful awaits
after the darkness is shushed away
and the rainclouds break for the coast.

Sunset hooks us by the lapels
and we're reduced to pacing
and by pacing counting and
by counting replacing
our memories with stories
whose passion imprisons the
hopeful gathered indecisively.

After the Funeral

The time for simple-sounding metaphors
is over: When you've put your parents
in the ground, cremated or not, your feelings
diminish or flee or you are overwhelmed
to distraction and there is their matte urns
for example or the river running gibbous—
it seems to the poetic mind—
nearly full and still filling
or the conversation of the acquaintance
with his arm on your elbow
or is it your best friend from high school
until you married his sweetheart?

Anyway, you are caught between
looking down and looking casual
or away or out for conversations
that would pull you into thought
when you want to pull the square
of sod over you and them and have
a reunion of three and not a wake.

Later you sleep
and the clicking of the air conditioner
and later the heat lightning flaking
off clouds in from New York
fashions your dreams into alternate
lives and the happy years of your mother
closing the door as you run to the bus
and your father explaining in Greek
the workings of algebra.

Above & Overhead

I'm here—I've left them
in a clearing of no shade and little fortune,
only two caps to shelter them, and me,
I'm 2500 miles away in a different climate
and I've left what they value in jeopardy
by ignorance and turning my back. By

chance I few over them this morning
through fate dallying with a flight director
and followed [childlike] the river down to the closest
bridge and then the roads and I know
my retina caught their clearing
and my head heard the heavy calls
to come back for they are alone
in the clearing among strangers,
which is their worst condition.

On our last day we heard
the loons flying on a track
adjacent to our whereabouts
and who can say with certainty
it's not them in a guise
fleeing their clearing
until I fill it more
fill it better,
fill it up.

Blame

Let memories begin
their decay and among
them the realization
that her last
years were about survival
alone. Moving too hard,
taste gone, no
one to deliver the paper,
no one to arrange
it. No one
to help
no one.

The loon glides
then wings away
even harder.

Witness to Weariness

Her lines her looks
are dulled by a day
out she pulls
into the gas station to pump
her own.

Her eyes
hazed over slide
to mine at the next
pump she stares
through weariness back
until the car in front
makes way and she can
pump.

Her skirt still sleek her sweater
still tight surround her
she bends to twist her cap
off then promises to pay
pumps the hose
inserted.

Her home is sparse
lit only in places only
she will move from lit spot
to lit spot.

There is no one
though many would wish
it to hold her in her
wearinesses.

We both pump
looking down
weary for night.

Evenings She Feels

The waxed floors shine red
in the false light of night,
the haze of music playing
is clear until muffling
chairs and rugs absorb
her footsteps, she sweeps
through the room from one pool
of light to another like
a plan forced. She does
nothing different nights,
only her body can feel
itself in the warmth
of occasional illumination.

Evenings, Hers

The cold rain makes a warm light
from sodium lamps lining the street
making jewels of blocks
shining up into her apartment
gilding the ceilings when
added to the bluish lights
she favors. She steps slowly
from room to room, tea cup
in her hand and the evening paper,
her form is hugged lightly
by silk made for men
but to be felt in the evening
when her need to smile
has been shut off,
and the cloak of night
covers a shaft for escape.

He Fell From the Sky in Misty Fjords

His attraction to living
exceeded his greed

but just barely
since he needed

greed to succeed.
His attraction to danger

excelled but in the end
it spelled the end.

His desire for immortality
was frozen but his head

wasn't—too much
time upside down?

underwater? When he fell
for danger, did he know

it was the sky?

O The Paradoxes!

His passion swam for hours
or days under pontoons keeping
his place up but not upright.

He wished to live forever
by a trick technology
was perfecting or so
he thought.

He wished to live forever
because he wished to live
near death. What was

his last expression
hanging upside down
when it like matches
could strike anywhere?

Can't Be

meditating
a path of resistance to thought

aligning the heart to
the feet on a path topologically a circle

freedom of a long walk
later carefully noted on maps with GPS

he noticed the very
thing he saw every day

was never the same
as itself

he wanted to live
forever but asked us not

to mourn (start over)
is to not listen

to the humming flow
of blood through

us and through us
to each other

Easy Road Is Not Fragile

. . . he of course would
shout hurrah dance

sillysideways burp
sleep eat vitamins

turn orange rejoice
step on it

hang it on turn a twist
of fate sleep on a cold hard

launch to meditation
forget to launch the safety

net net worth
net died & dead . . .

Liquid Lament

Time for the perfect
dream the linkage
of sweetness the I will
come back little clobber
the dream frozen
literally in a tank
and two skinny dogs
humping for shade
across a plaza in time
frozen in place.

In Philo Near Fall

In the soup of the midwest
trees and cicadas dripping with anticipation
of better when only more twisted
is on tap, I find the horizon
less level than fears and trophies
of last night's storm actions.

Her old house is still there
and lived in—

she does still
I think but walnuts and their
leaves litter the drive
and the wind continues
from when it started 30 years ago—

I turn in her driveway
pace myself past the rows of corn
and their seed signs.

If only the wind
would think
to do something different
with those leaves
those nuts.

Of The Road

this morning turkeys
crossed in front of me

the hazed sky shone toxic orange
reflecting on the crumbled road

their red heads shook
from side to side trying to see me

their heads mocked
the sky my car ripped

to a stop I was changing
stations in the air

music orange air
cedar scent and the shaking

heads of turkeys revealing
a taste for life on the other side

105 Hugging Midnight

Monticello's sprayed on the sky
the horizon runs to a clipped edge and one
quick flash links
a line of bugs and deer away from my
car ticking back to quiet. The "welcome"
light in red stops my entry and the Milky Ways
wait more.

A row of signs stands ready
for mowing, colored as brightly
as the fashion sun. I raise my arms,
I sing sour tones and log
my lament, I get ready
to back my car out.

Only Different

She is just a girl and her
stature is just
short of my type—

her flipping hair and Swiss
glasses, her slip glances,
her her, as the sex-men

would say. He hair frozen
in spray makes the moment
lengthen. I do.

This is what I would
say just to try it, try
her. Oliver—the name

on her shirt, traveling
informally to the same
place as me, only different.

Without Meaning, Without Feeling: A Foreign Song

high-beat music
the small room foreign
human but human

behind the French doors' reflections
a hail of German lights making up

the lingo of not here
not now but the colors

pine white paint white pile
piano black black & white keys
and the skin-colored skin

of my host frowning
as his wife passes between
us on her way to her bed

her own concept of together
in which her mother's foreign touch
is transmitted with an accent

to the light hair and tender
skin of her lovers
her tormentors
me

Bad Museum Filled Without Us

in sight
beyond range
over our bodies
under flags flying in remembrance
near a sketch as real as an Impressionist painting
at a time when depression hugged the trunks
by a pond falling off its rocker and not
into itself
within my desires the desire of no other desires filled me
up and we left
without a trace of affection satisfied
with what was
until we were safely back to square one and moving
on

Legacy of Goodbyes

One more goodbye can't hurt
when all the others were simple
passers by. The canal seems to flow
both ways with the inside coming toward me
and the outside pushing leaves farther back.

Did you seem, really, to be sad this time,
when we had nothing in common again
as we didn't for all our lives till then
and all our lives from now on.

Absolute Girl

she's the panther haunting her stage
throwing her hair front to back
side and over her rhythm meandering
through her hips and past the stage
monitors to the dancers on her
she rolls her eyes and her foreign tongue
swallows her appeals the lights behind
her glare through her her shadow
hides my lumbering stare her stage
her bed her ferocious teeth cutting off
her smile her hips draining she prowls
predator killer soul singer

Two Maps Made from One Thought

The map of her is exhausted
since every stash of her has been taken down
to bare minimum and her long stride
has been reduced to a little skip
and unlucky backward glance.

The harbor nearby feels like shedding
its cargo carriers and fishing fleet. Standing by
the bells in the city-hall tower the harbor
is a skin of calm water funneling in from the North Sea
and bells ringing mean the fleet is in and time
is making us over.

Since she is the map I am
the wanderer forced to nap
until a road resumes.

Face the water and bless you forgiven boats
tonight.

How Women Make It

They stand like sponges
soaking up cobblestones and dreaming
of home and statues and buttered food,
the walk home in which women lead
and speak of how they rule. The speed
of coming to the same conclusions
and the politics of positives.

I'm here and she's
watching the line of waves colliding
as they roll from opposite seas.

Our train is leaving
and my hosts are crying
to think of the weight rails
bear and the sounds they heard

when the lives of artists
whisk away and shelter
the mighty thoughts
that aren't said.

She Attracts Too Much

Across the straight
Sweden grows impatient, ferries
toil across cross currents and heavy seas.
Nearby

a train hauls fish down to markets
where it roils in its own essence
and artists armed with hope
hope the unsaid will hold its own. Like
life, the lights of Sweden are unsure

how to light the beacon to herself,
and we stand beneath beeches
holding on to canvases representing
our toils today in which the sparse

lights we see nearby are our only bastion
in a sea of twinklers that can't help signifying
so much.

Abstract Sitting Room

The conversation turns
on essence and we can speak
only of similarities since the realities

are fearsome. That is, the lights in our room
are heavy with reflections and light from the sparkling

incandescents lavishly slaving away to make
plain what can't be made clear, and outside
the dark is lingering, making what it can cold.

Her mantra is about worry and concern—
she sits demurely, the essence of sexual
indifference. Her life undercuts like the window

that blows open and rejects the implication of reflection
her eyes demand of the night.

Citation in an Airport Lounge Waiting

And so
cars mingling with trucks on the interstate,
flying past the airport, on their ways

to cloudy day destinations
and so

women,
who always expect more,
expect satisfaction from their

tours of duty beneath blankets. Who
hit the blur command? —The skies could
have been striped with long clouds

on blue but is uniform blue
and a dark streak across the middle.

I'll pass over many small towns
today while women there blur their hopes

into their lives. Like dogs sniffing
for a key clue
they will go on
and so
on.

Insulin Over Sunrising

...for no other girl

I wander the cliff edge

the sky is pea-souped at dawn
cold and intangible

colors of another country
across the strait...

cold crabs down the roof
heavy with stones and studs
to keep on shelter

few don't fear death...

they are destined to follow
....along

I amble

a flitty funny bird hops onto a branch which
bends...

summer has ended once more

clouds have piled up somewhere
ready to tumble out as from a closet

shut quick to avoid the care
packing requires

she is ravaged...

You Know It's Love When...

it was last friday night
my husbands friend came over to see him i will call him johnny
i have the hotts for johnny i saw him pissing

one day out our window he has a big dick
and i told ' i saw his dick one day
then he ask me if i wanted to see his dick upclose i said yes

he unzipped his pants and pulled it out
it was not hard yet but it was bigger than my husbands i got hold of it it was thick
my husbands is small about 5" but it is the only ' i ever had

johnny was close to 10" twice the size of my husban
i stared to suck it it was hard now i licked up and down and suck' on it
i pulled my close off he started eating my pussy i cum right then

i layed back he got on top of me i told him go slow it was big dam it felt good
johnny pushed in i had to stop him and relax

johnny told me to get on top i sat on his big dick and worked it in we fucked
for 30 min he told me he was going to cum i pushed down hard
it felt like a water hose cumming out

i got up cum was running down my leg
we kissed he went back home

How Many Tears Drop?

The bartender pulls slowly on the tap
and holds it still

while he tilts the glass the right way
for foam to form
in the right proportion. Outside

deep in the city
the lights spangle off rain coming down
blue in the night. Taxis

slow down
wait for fares but there are none.

The waitress takes the glass
to a table where a man sits
who needs it more

and is willing to wait for time
to catch up.

They Say the Back of the Mind Really Knows

Sitting on a table in a bar
north near the Baltic
bubbles form in a glass
of yellow and brown beer
and rise to the top
forming a blanket
of foam. But the man

who needs it most has stepped
outside in the constant dark
to watch a ship roil and lumber
into the harbor where at least it
will find comfort tonight.

Ars Failure

While she cooks heavy potatoes
in a honey broth and pork roast
in the oven in her upstairs apartment
for her son and live-in lover
I'm on a bench in their garden
sketching a poem from memory

because she has turned it off,
the artist's link of mistress and poet
and the only hope for greatness
he will ever have.

God bless the home,
what it means.

Ars Failure II

She's finished preparing her special meal,
we've eaten and cleared the table,
she's said her goodbyes and has turned back
into her warm kitchen,
and I'm on my way to the train station
where there are no more goodbyes,
no more things to write.

End/Longing

when you walked ahead of me
it meant nothing

the paintings you stood
in front of were shapes of paint
artificial light absurd ideas

about the origins of reality
the waiters would not wait
we walked away

behind us a pool's sides
were inverted

were no sides at all
I didn't touch you
we felt nothing

the garden is passion
fetching the end
from eager autumn

?

the warmth that day was disarming a row of people
lined the front of a yellow building
sunning themselves facing West late

in the afternoon when we might have held forth
on love etc but the curiously staged
painting of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

made your pants unattractive
and the heat of the sun on the museum's walls

was like a Japanese girl just out
of her kimono anyhow you were
glad I left right

on time in the car for the train to the airport
morning during which I did not grab
at you the rain outside was storm-

troopers boots on cobblestones
the resistance to history is weakened
by repetition and like a muse

who knows she's been fallen for
you wore bad pants do you wish
it were different

Painting Gazing

I long for before
when we stood before

paintings like wisps
like us

and radiant sun flooded the air with heat
making the day warm
shadows lingering

a need for cool drinks
or ice

you supplied the longing
giving it to me
your share and mine both

I burned out on it
I long for before

paintings made in innocence
given distracting names
we walk streets filled with a history of hatred

paraded as honor and patriotism
yet the sandy yellow walls
are lined with living

warming in the late sun of early autumn
as we walk briskly away from nothing
to a further nothing

defined by absence

Places of Meeting and Crossroads

the slope down to the strait
is slick with dew on the browning grass

she walks to me her eyes green
and around her eyes her makeup is green

magpies throng from beech to cedar
cargo boats and barges buck the current

how many are not afraid of death
how many wring their hands each night of guilt
there is no warming sun here

just the thrusts of full boats
the throng the green eyes
she carefully has put
on

Sold Two Souls

song in the key of master
unused as it is

to the soul of sold
fill mine with cups of habit
fling your legs over complaints

of insufficiency link
locks into a chain
hook them hook them

let's imagine what can be seen
and see the rest flame the smiley

facing East be as nil
we look into it as stars cross overhead
and the possibility of possibility compounds
our daily bread

God Don't See

the poet writes to me
in blank stares and waving hair and arms
and the feeble-minded among us waver

expecting the linear
formulae at least with predictability
but they've known it for years

that what's right is made up
making good time on its way

elsewhere where where
leaves fall is as sullen
as where we grow up

and the crumbling wall
is proof enough the even God
didn't see it coming

Stopping Everywhere, Making Plain

the sound, stopping,
of stopping—rich in organic
overtones on top of
the inevitable scream, ha!

and the echoes, repeating
like tumbling glass splinters
from street to street taking 5
or 6 directions to us

you rolled away from me,
your nails in the quilt and blankets
peevied at my little touches,
my tries to arouse

we settled in to follow
the sounds channeled through the hollows
in the city around us, with bleeds
upward into the city-made heat clouds
above lit a dainty pastel orange

I'll wait till approaching dawn
lightens the greyed sky to leave,
to find a train traveling slow
to the North, stopping everywhere

stopping: an idea
I got from you

Inner, Far Outer

the windows which
in daylight prism the garden
into the room at night form
an encircling mirror
showing us and us and us and us

talking while foreign birds choose their night
spots as carefully as we choose words
where

you are limited by your known
vocabulary and I by fear
of being not understood or mis- . . .

we fear our intricate lips
how what savors touch
is ugly in its convolution

outside the strange hot wind
blows all fall erasing Winter for now
I see you you see me
and the mirroring window glass
sees all inside and out our foreign

words our fear how we convolve
like foreign birds seeking shelter
by becoming the leaves
by standing like branches
all night

Rational Street

the streets
dark, covered with the remainders
of a light rainstorm

wind coming 'round a corner
and splitting up three streets
you walk

by my side thinking
rationally about the evening
or the meal we just had

how the darkness
is nothing but an absence
—

the first world had no shade
no dark; like a hand
the dark reached out and held onto the light

—
leaves blown off two streets
up whisk by

our hands are less savvy

Your Door & Me

behind that door
you sleep

lover and son in and by your bed
far off lights barely light your room

you are freezing as usual
no one warms you so you
shiver instead of

dream

I'm outside your door
when the rain starts
and suddenly I'm unsure

of who is inside who outside
when a noise knows
I move back to my bed

a child's not a man's

Paid To Have Bad Dreams

we would be driving
now down South
along 95 in a forbidding heat

haze and humidity rising
I'd be eating quickly at lunch

walking to dinners and writing slowly
each night from one place like a hell
to another

she would tell the same stories—
Chauncy Pugh, Ethel Moon

and names I wish I had tried to remember

the South is decay
even the new seems on the verge

pumping gas and it's hot
washing the windows and it's hot
helping her in and out of the motel and it's hot
getting ice for her room and it's hot
driving even when I'm about to sleep and it's hot

what would we find and it's hot

had I not called
she'd still be up North in her home

on the floor I would be afraid to go in
I guess we would call some expert

someone whose job is to not care
much someone who is paid
to have bad dreams

Give Chance a Chance

I pray for chance
to intervene

encrypt logic beyond my ken
put salt on the wound of reason

like a leaf falling slowly
 twistingly
 convolutingly
 lovingly
to ground gold with dead grass

make mine numb
 my mind
the chance here is chance

the logic of careless illumination through the depths of a tree of leaves
 we don't know where to look
 and that is how we find
 divergence
 delirium
 drainage

the cold is seeping up mixing with chance
the chores are no longer here to be done
they never got to see me in my home

if only I could mow the lawn for her
once more before the snow comes and comes
and stays

Would Be . . .

. . . blown by looming winds
fall to the ground scraping into the tangle
of peonies

. . . early,
sealed all . . . drained
. . . and . . .
remaining . . . to evaporate
my mistakes

. . . with her once more
. . . questions I need . . .
. . . down and ask her . . .
. . . death and what she thought, . . .
. . . hurt, how afraid

if only I . . . once more
and ask her how well she thought . . .
and clean . . . to make it easier
and sharpen . . . a better . . .
and tell her how I plan

a road I know would
be easier

Long Enough

She lived down dirt roads
most of her life, on a place
that needed mowing every week or two,
no closer than 10 miles to a grocery store
and where mail carriers wouldn't deliver.
She put up fences and gates that anyone
could defeat, and lived in cabins whose maintenance
stopped years earlier. She hoped
that everything would hold up long enough,
that the food would last long enough,
that nothing would break before the right time.
She feared lightning every day of her life,
and something like it struck her.

She told me every day I saw her
how much suffering she endured
and what ailments she had.
She liked to laugh, but I wonder,
what did she want me to remember?

Little One

each of us partakes partially
our gifts are small like the corner
of a swarm of sardines

we hug the wall
pick up small branches

moving here and there
we spell out a great message
we don't know

who loads it?
who hastens away with a still-wet pen?
is it scraped or is the ink liquid?

how does the pixel
knowing it's wrong
change the big picture?

how does the word
alone
make truth?

Fickle Findings

the way paint sticks and forms wrinkles
changing the painting over time from fresh
relief to carbon copies of aging

the way when you look out over a Bay view
after a long bike climb and realize only
the rich can sit in their living rooms
sipping martinis watching it

the way a woman twirls a brush
over a window looking for fingerprints
while bending in her tight pants

the way a horse will blow its nostrils out
when you bike by
and a fat woman wearing jodhpurs
and a British riding helmet
turns her head toward you
rocking her hips

the way the rich can afford
buckets of cream while
we fortify on creamer

the way they fall
on their heads
helmets
or no

Do Not Quote or Cite

not knowing where to sit
I take a stand
pilings pile up pile on

wooden bridgings rot
footsteps carefully alight

these are the sorts
(of)
fish fishermen sort

basking briskly
the coed sheds her thong

enumerated as follows
assumptions are out of date
[might be]

the ecology of computing resources
is running out of legacy
built on a bespoke basis

sand squashed by
cars cars cars and more cars
sure is fine

Adventures in Art

sitting on the side of a hill next to writing
the girl nothing more than a muse
the ants really only a little love nip
the hands clammy fearing any touches
the day's air hot and fetid with river air
the road curving then as it does now
the ruined house where Roy Starr died
 one night drunk and out of love
the underlying lover nothing but a pot
the clouds growing angry then draining to tears
the little things left out like a feeling or two

[I'm struck she was nothing but a muse,
and to this day—but not beyond—I thought
the possible included her. Her personality
was nothing.]

Together for mere hours
we talked sparingly
but she seemed amused
in the end.

You Figure

Her belief was that money motivated me,
that to come across country to help her
I needed \$10,000, and I would help her
find a new car. Hers had stopped starting
and she was waiting by the phone for me to call.

She had never called me about it.

She hadn't been shopping for food
—not much was left.
She never told the neighbors, who watched
her shrink down. 87, still stubborn.

Did her mother ever wonder
whether she'd reach such an age?
The last 5 years of her life were hell.

She had never called me about it.
Hers had stopped running.

Imagine a son who needed
\$10,000 to come. Come
to save her.

Along the River, Watching a Hole Heal

The hole is beleaguered, aching to heal;
the charge from the sun is dwindling,
the beech is losing its wits while shade
predominates. All they had done was cut

a square of sod to find the dirt
where they'd put the hole whose healing
is all I would ever be able to watch,
or really just those photos we took
when the next day seemed too small a reason
to capture today. But 30 years, ah,

there's a reason. Now a fog is settling in,
the valley doing its river thing. Last week I stepped
out onto a floating pier on the river
and though children were secure

the old man who I am become
who is still afraid to mourn.

Would They Approve?

Cold air and leaves turning up the heat,
the sky smudged with clouds heaping in
from the West looks deathlike, and I wonder
how they're taking it. I get the cold air pouring in
through my car window watching the beech
hold its frog-green colors while the birches and maples
go hog wild across the little valley.

Today all the run downs were lined up,
checked out, and cried over. Cold, raw.
The day's long tear has dried up,
leaving a sky of stains.

Urban Vision

Piles of bricks
becoming covered in light snow
in late October—a woman
in a long red coat walking away,
her light hair dusting her collar.

Airport Art Lesson

leaving again—planes silver and the colors of patriotism—
the low sun dully, softly
yellow on the tower columns—
on Haymarket there's still straw
and onions being unloaded
paints a scene with bagged
yellow and orange onions
and somewhere in back meat—beef
—being hung in freezers for an early
market tomorrow—when I was young—
40 years ago—my mother bought
20 pounds of prime steaks
here—half-price or less off choice
and they read in the morning
of the hotel theft of hotel beef—
for farm people the idea—no, the taste—
of hotel beef was a treat—a gift
—a jewel—a lucky break—
good for us—bad for the hotel
guests—staying nearby near Beacon
Hill—the sun there red on the bricks
—the sun yellow here
on the concrete columns—and
the strange excursion
of holding up

Sadness Explained Instead

picnic tables piled
one face down on another
lined in rows beside the burger stand

everyone who's come before
me has left before now
beyond the kind of cold

days like today
bring whether the covering
is soil or soiled clouds

pushing downriver to the heartless
sea tonight I write this
in the face of needs

I hope you'll fill
one day before I need
to go you'll caress my head

as I lay in the darkness
barely holding on and above
us the clouds will skirt by

critical restlessness
less tenderness
someday—not today—someday

Under Celebration Her Birthday

passed on passed
by passing fancy past

did she hang on or
was she surprised

what thought at last
gripped her

the grass that grew and grew
whose was it and how'd it get here

they cut down that tree
how do I tell her

her father's proud day
dusted off and reclaimed

they could be together
they are nowhere to be found

when I go to sit by her
where O where do I go?

Complicating Around

small nicks
all around the trunk

axe swung down
 in
a flat one to cut out a wedge

all around
no place for whole bark

in a year or two it will die
thick one makes fire wood

thin one a good pole
he made a plan

I did not see
till I saw the gate pole bend

with that weight on its end
to make the lift light

and I saw he thought
two steps in front

straight not round
not like me not complicated

Fragrance

Hang Ah Alley's north end
filled with pigeons roosting and preening
on sills next to hanging shirts and panties,
birds that made their nests on the sills
of closed off windows, lime-stained bricks,
clothes drying while wind stirs down
up past the eaves into the heavenly sky
that once held on to the perfumed air
that rose up once long before this alley
was the backside of places where people
just live.

Dreaming of Aspen

her voice circles like leaves
blowing across the long black road
her car on its side raging beneath
the darkened sky in the rain

alone as if in a golden pavilion
reserved for white
her voice deep and melodic
moving without thought between
melody and harmony

whether its the death of love
or a real death that intertwines
with the song for today

slick road on a winter's day
in the rain

Tears So In My Eyes

the use of poetry
for poets

is to mask sentiment

like the septic
treatment tank

shallowly underground
doming over
gassy

heated unrelentingly
by a constant overhead

sun in the rain
we revert to prose
like a bad reaction to milk

a woman I didn't know
died
on a road

on a winter's day
in the rain

and now her voice
like leaves on that long black road

makes its case
and now I need
my poetry

injected
reflected
gassy

Much Rain in Foreign Cities

rain all day
forces your constant sadness

we contemplate diagnosis
I go to your walls your

ceiling concrete
heavy/rain makes

no differences my home
is wood/rain turns it to a sound

of music
of loneliness

smells from old books
my bed beckons

I look
out longingly without restlessness

you look full
from a day at home

let's walk drenched
enrained

rage for
tenderness

Too Far Away From Living To Turn It Down

slo-mo
smoothing out the rages of jerkiness

death of the singer a decade ago
I just met her singing today and now I must mourn

I won't confuse the process with the product
she lived full and not just this song
I can't untangle

the sound of it bounds out from my young days
and like a long-dead photo that you fall for

you remember
how long did this song wait for me
did she despair when the headlights grew deathfully bright

her voice so relaxed like the times she sang
will I go to her or simply

find the next most mournful girl
standing in the rain

Parrot Bite & Other Mistakes

scars still alive on my skin
lesson: copy flaws carefully
life found within

Significant Slum Sights

above a sidewalk where homeless hold themselves
erect and hang their heads to ask and beg
the row of offices shines out yellow
onto the rain reflecting sidewalk where lights
from passing buses sweep along past empty
trash cans holding sheets discarded
and more important even in their thrown-awayness
than the homeless hoping for the least
bit of sun

In (Ter) Vention

invented years ago sex
is still not worked out
unlike normal science of successful descriptions
our experimentalists don't move on
suffering of assumption
details are unbelieved
so new theories are invented
but they are just
the same old ones with better pictures
let's lean
let's learn
let's let our little ones persuade us to move aside
on along
God is rubbing His legs
like a pain
like an invitation

Clustered Leftovers

every street has its load of beauty
selective distortion provides art
to the beauty of a city in the distance
every town has its woman of beauty
who really is simply a girl with great power
let's forget the folly and follow on
and know she'll one day be like a death
with no sampled power

porcelain sky and black underside
wind providing cleansing and movement
cars stretch out up the least steep path to the ridge
and pour down the other side appearing
going up once more

there is something about darkness
the beauty who leans against a streetlight
the fun she has
the heat it all makes

Conditions

I sit in the cold
windows down
listening to the radio lilting soft versions of hard rock
while spotlights triggered by motion
or office doors spring off then drift off

it has started to snow
I wait for her to return
her therapist is a professional

I think of snow falling into the ocean
the sand on the beach is collecting it
tomorrow we will shovel half the morning

the songs are cold
they speak of going away
of growing old
but the snow returns even after
the hottest summer
it is love I speak of
in a voice absorbed by the layer of snow

A Fine Fetish

she stands exotically
on point in stiletto boots
that cover to her knees

she wears a black body stocking
mostly transparent but most of her back
is covered by her black hair

she picks a cactus needle
from her left palm
standing on a trail in
Cochise Stronghold
I'm sure she's hot
but in black and white

she seems cold bent
at the waist as if ready
for someone to come
along at any moment

For She Is Beautiful and I Am Dead

like The Boss
a girl from my past
unattainable unapproachable
in fact so perfect no one talks to her
any beautiful woman set off in a skirt
her hips tipped forward
her tummy and rump rounded and pushing forward and back
her breasts cradled in a furry sweater
informs me through her existence
that my time is long past
and the cold cold ground
is closer than I want
to think and she is further, farther
than I can stand

It's False (in LA)—Just a Scene

a third floor apartment
with a balcony
behind the tropical fish store
on a sun-blasted thoroughfare
in LA—cars like the one I'm in
pass by or stop for traffic and drivers or passengers
look up at the window where someone might be sitting

—if I ran and hid in that apartment,
would they find me?

I imagine sitting there
at the window
writing a poem like this one
while thinking about the tropical fish
in their warmed salt water
their colors like the bright sun in my eyes
rolling down Sunset at sunset

except for the fear some woman I finally had
the nerve to leave would spot me writing
while stopped behind a minivan on her way
to a modeling session

I can't find a lesson in this scene
worth my telling nor your knowing

Watching Ahead

is it fair
when we drink sodas and fuck
while the dead lie below?

when we hide behind the memorials erected
by their kin to show in death
they love them?

when we laugh at what we make up
as their stories though we know nothing?

when their names scare us
by being anagrams of ours?

Sleet Storm/Woods/River

snow is becoming sleet
instead of heavy snow weighing down boughs
ice is cutting them off and they drop heavily

the house sits alone among the pines
dawn is hours away

in it memories dissipate
and mature as time stands ready
to take over

miles away by the river
the ground freezes down to a foot or two

what we hid there for safekeeping
is growing anxious as the sleet falls
and ices over the damaged sod
cut square and replaced last Summer

nearby
cars drive by unaware
of my thin thoughts
and the meanings that hover above

Hover Therefore

the ones who never leave
hover like snowflakes above common ground
and because they never leave
they have seen have seen
see see will see will see

snowflakes
they say
float upward near ground
early in a snowfall

retained heat
energy released

entanglement
they say
is two flakes
curling and twisting
together far apart
into the valley
into the river
passing far away

the ones who never leave
see it all
and thereby see nothing
their logic caught
on the briars of therefore

Sandy Spot

in it they are laughing
and presumably I took it

it's one of only a few I have of them
they're standing in front of the Florida camp

I need to dispose of

filled with things of their's I need to decide about
for years she lived holding her breath
hoping she'd live less long than the things she depended on
but a long time anyway

now it's my problem
and how not to pass it on

the answer:
this picture & not the urns



they walked into line
fighting to find the worst
the man on the phone had forgotten to listen
so he sat silently instead his hand fisted propping up
his head soon they were all pumped out
and even the blindfolded told us they felt
they could see the hearing

did you hear?
∞ is a perfect copy
machine

Confusion #1

hall of umbrellas
sprouted off the tops of leaf trees
something uncommon about rain
liquefying celebrations

our delight is simplified
by shouting and throat-clearing

I suppose the rain
and snow and wind and sun and clouds and many temperatures
still happen

but being far away
is the same as being
dead

Lie of Master Planning

important are the reflections in puddles
right after rain in the streets of a city
that photographs blue at night after rain

photographs of nudes emphasizing
the exaggerated differences

a heavy meal laced with diary fats
and fat from pigs eaten while sitting
on a stool facing a mirror facing the wet street

I see a photo that looks like it could look like
her nude but it's only a guess made up of hope
and the lingering quake of disappointments

the parts of me I care about most have ended
their slow failing and writing about it
is all that's left

I've planned a scarecrow
and this is its plan how do
you like it?

Write It

by the beach of college men
and women the contest spits
onward and the final three contestants
have stripped and run and slide
on their backs on a Wham-O
Slip'n Slide with their legs spread
and their shaved cunts open 'n' showin'
lips the winner will be the one who
squats over the hunking judge
laid out on his back and lets him lick
and stare at her cunt and asshole
while the crowd witnesses the expansion
of her nipples

old I can only
write it

Plenty To Do

picking up
nothing much to see
weeds when the body might react
it watches waits turns in to silence

sand turned to dust
not death I mean from cars and trucks
dogs running the road

weeds go on
life is infestation
one meaning as meaning
as another

I've heard the hint
I heard it

Cleaning Out

we've waited rewarded with burrs
ants yellow jackets wasps palmetto bugs
crickets sounding smaller more metallic

we've left the door open
while we searched
we commented

in the end
she anticipated Fraser
Will & Grace political news
she said she would not be back
we found her notes her candy wrappers

we wondered what her father saw
since he declared it special

ordinarily
I would agree

Ann Manns at 85 on the Road

“oh, she died—really?—when did she die?”
85 but walking fast down the sand-dusty road
“will you sell the place?”

dust & pulverized grass & weeds flavor the sun
setting behind the cedars
I've just photographed without care for the lens

“oh, she died—really?—when did she die?”
my mother said listening to her convinced
you you were nuts too
repeating saying over you
can see the familiar pathways

after 4 of the same conversation
—most relaxing—
the sun was ready to set once more
and like weeds being cut down

progress was made
“will you sell the place?”

the bear

paces the fence from left to right
he places his right front paw and lifts his left as if to move
and stops he steps his rear paws out of the rut
right rear first then left rear halfway between his rears
and right front his left front goes down back in the rut
then his right then a rest the bear

paces to the right and stops and reverses the same way
left and right reversed
a dance 500 lbs in rhythm
deep enough to cut a trench he walks in
and foot rests where his turn takes hold

the bear
steps into those prints as precisely as machinery
which only the sound of his keepers
and mate can interrupt
the precision of psychosis as deep and human
as ours

Stave Church News

somewhere a church lies quietly on the shoulder
of a ridge and its staves creak sweetly in the wind
light enough to disturb only the thistles growing silent
by the church

someone always sits on a plank seat
talking in rhymes to a porcelain platter
and cup filled with bless'd water
from the glacial torrent in the valley

somehow I've found this place
bring disgrace by writing its daily secret
though my page lifts time after time from a breeze through its cracks
where the master sneaks in

something has been born which must come here
slowly by a diverse path with urgent news for wary
parishioners and preachers
alike in their doubt

Three Colors and Different Technologies

click on me to see more
take a checksum
so that I might know when I change
don't worry about the lost time
because we've backed up our state and status
everything about us is kept offsite
on a variety of media powered by different
power sources and technologies

I've chosen three colors
which are kept as separate as possible:
black for our feet on the ground
green for artificial assemblages
marble pink for us baby
for us

Phenomillogical

throw yourself off yourself
step back from common sense

and the need for explanation
bracket the bracket to sense it

in the state of mind of unfreedom
mud and mouth converge anagrammatically

what seems the cloud is really the smoke
what was beauty is death's marker

our breath freezes
our words freeze

one is whiteness in squirrelly strands
the other is blackness blanketing virgin colors

all thought this predicament predicts
is frozen and life the heat hurts back

With a Courtyard Left Unused

kerosene smoke
waving out of a glass bottle
curved warm as the nighttime of women

her intent spinning
her skirt shimmering where it's been worn to sheer

I find the collapse of tonight's weather
further removed each time I reach
to her shoulder her ears

her back the door hanging on its way to closing
there is something dark in her
on her I'm frightened of the weather

which closes in just
as I wish to clear out

Airport Surround

I'm surrounded by airport
in this high-priced hotel
terminals curving . . .

planes taxi along dark lanes
and wait . . . move forward . . . wait again

structures supporting airport activities
form a machine matrix
light tunnels
spinning lights where something special
or surreptitious is happening

up they go
their tails are lit
people walking through halls out to their planes

it's cold out there
cold as hell
and when I turn to walk away

her plane is banking toward the horizon
and I go downtown

Failure of Love Where It's Crowded, Antiseptic

in the lit halls
women stroll past
quick & deliberate annoying their men
with the effects of their passage
on the structure of their carriage

the lights fail
for a second & then again
the police dog drops his head as if to sleep
in these two scraps of dark

in the hall by my gate
actually in the waiting lounge by the door
a woman with legs too smooth
draws a seam down the backs of her legs
with a discarded Sharpie left by an earlier passenger

with the small lights of mid-Western towns below us
our jet makes a sound that would wake the recently buried
if only that sound could penetrate what we call
the cold distance

What of Their's

something has fallen
the sea closes over
like darkness is love
ignorance is the decor of longing
there are ways to play and they are opening up now

I was startled to remember my parents were just buried
and because they were burned to ash and powder
the grave is shallow
and if being dead won't hinder them feeling the cold as the sleet and snow rain down
why should their being dust?

though my love for them is strong
what of their's?

Dog Alone

along the lineup of telephone poles
each less crisp than the one before it

a dog with his tongue hanging to one side of his mouth
lopes along the desert road
no one's near

no owner no master
a dry river bed two miles back was the last wet
and the dog doesn't know it but the next is 20 miles ahead

but he suspects it
it's the sounds of the wind in the creosote bushes
the lightness of that wind and the depth of its dryness
the way nothing is truly green nor red

but the shade of gray that means yellow and blue
his goal is to find
but there are no details for it
he feels the eyes around him watching

from under cover
just behind rocks
peeking from burrows
from the tops of prickly trees
from a great distance
that dogs cannot sense

Walk Watching

despite a scratching wind
a man walks his dog by the light thrown up from the snow
responding to the moon responding to the sun

the dog's leash is long and he's a pulling dog
leading the man by pulling him ahead
snow scratched off the top of banks closes his eyes

the man pulls back on the leash to turn them left
down the road out to the river

the dog resists but suddenly fires
past the man and pulls him forward

lead
says the man

Peep

slo-mo sensuous slouch
dipping walk lowered hip
the walk of women invites peeps

look quickly and furtively
through an opening

be just visible
appear slowly or partly or through

a small opening

a quick or furtive or momentary or partial look
or view of black curls
of gold earring

neon lights seedy macs
tiptoeing feet spied through doorways

and gaps in curtains
very essence
of peep

Wing Commander Dead at 99

his skills as a pilot
came to public attention
when his first pupil pilot
—Lady Blanche—
asked him to co-pilot
an adventurous flight to visit her friend
the Maharajah of Cooch Behar

along the coast by way of Bushire
half way to Bandar Abbas
they made a forced landing

Lady Blanche if not herself accident-prone
had already lost two husbands

now she was marooned
in the wastes of Persia

they were rescued by tribesmen
and took off for Karachi

at Bandar Abbas on landing
the aircraft ran into a hole and tipped onto its nose

at considerable risk they flew on to Jask
where a new propeller was brought in from Karachi
aboard a KLM airliner

the remainder of their journey to India
was uneventful

High Atop Art

manifest your physicality
through sports and plastic surgery
exemplify and parody
concepts of fragmentation
nude imagery
obscene energy and inhuman
circumstances of everyday life
produced a document of city emotions
of desire and revulsion
fear and fascination
beds cots kitchen utensils are made
to appear threatening and strange
using materials that are both
emblematic and pertinent

Dwindling Numbers

the great tit is in decline
changing fortunes of many
monster trout
in cities like Mumbai and Pune
Siberian tigers shad
Christians in Israel
exhibitors and visitors
the dilemma of a fading people
members playing bowls
Shamrock Rovers fans
bookmakers
people on both sides
zoo frogs Cape vultures
mountain caribou Zoroastrians
harp seals Minnesota Moose
sage grouse Sci-Fi club adherents
canvasbacks parishioners in New Bedford
underrepresented minorities
giant pandas Sisters of Carmel

this all reminded me of the Cloud Dome
a studio-in-a-bag

diffusion fading out decreased passion
and rumors of folding

Anharmonics Are Key

the g string has plenty of depth
power and quality

saturated solutions of various salts
maintain constant humidity in enclosed spaces

clarity and how well it spoke
even at high speeds

a desirable evenness
a special quality high

wood is a rheological substance
the enhanced creep effect was linear

something very rounded and mature
power clarity and warmth

hugely more resonant
evenness immediacy and speaks clearly

peaks not at regular intervals
the wetting part of the cycle

a creamy tone
especially on the g string

Perfection Tax

it goes through my mind
her perfection those days

September when she left

she was lips and tongue
her wet was slick and sincere

now her smell in the closet and armoire
and what I know
another lonely day

her childish smile
her slut grin

her tongue
her thighs
her hands
her pussy

they were placed perfectly that day
her hand on my cock
her mind on him

red cars going down long roads
fade out slowly

of sentimentality

I know it's a bore having to get hold
of Chinese black vinegar and chilli bean sauce but it's
these ingredients that see off the cloying
glottally clotting gooeyness

A Room I Made

it started as a porch
screened in in Summer
covered by plywood otherwise
we slept in what would become
the kitchen and bathroom

it was walled in permanently
a living room
and bedroom a river stone fireplace
backing a gas furnace

in 1970 a woman called me to her bed
beside the fireplace
kissed me because I couldn't
her lips and mouth opened wide
I fell into that cavity
at first

take the first
double it
again
again again
again

that much longer

new rooms added
second story added
garage added
shed added
second well added
gate added

mother died there
one night she feared
I was far
the woman was far
when can I clean that room
sleep there again
beside the fireplace

Who Waits Tonight?

bright moon
behind a clamp of cloud
hot white powder
powder blue night sky

branch topknot
flinging up its peculiar brand
of passion

Lessons on Perspective

her laundry on lines stretched
from eaves to a cross
droop and parts of her
no doubt
evaporate up to a heavily clouded blue above
in the sleek silence the shock of air past feathers and wings
reveal the pillowed sound of the lives of birds

the wind picks up and her clothes billow
enveloping the shape she has taught them
and I can see her standing there in pieces
scolding me for my romantic laziness
and the sky for blooming in the unaccustomed
early summer

everywhere I choose
to look
a vanishing point forms

Small

in the old man standing
by the catwalk where a nude girl
kneels her perky tits plump for sucking
her vulva shaved
I see the despair of inability

Hip Lessons

I am part of the forgotten world
women who walk past dip lower

their hips accentuate the years I've lived
their silhouettes beneath their gauzy skirts
highlight separation

where their bodies curve outward
I retract

the remnant of my pleasure
is to watch as they walk away
never noticing

Poor Visuals and a Fade Out

hazed enfogged clouded
salt flats power towers telephone poles
pier posts ducks cormorants
floating debris
sky the color of the water the color of the haze
smoked hidden closed
we travel through the mist
or so it seems to us
seeking its edge which has smeared away

away is where someone heads
fading step by step
leaving her sharp shade
becoming a dessert of living

Prolegomena to Truth

unlike what it means what
it is is
unfaithful desert unlike
the crescent of beach
can survive drought and draft

the best is quixotic chivied
by keas on the mountainside
surely snowboarding
until tiled sky with faint cracks

a true word means little
the truest nothing
if s_1 is more true than s_2
and s_1 is false what of truth
what if I'm not sure about the 1

how does s_1 differ from the state it represents
how does the state respond to spilt gin

the desert is exactly like a beach
except for the slope and the unsalted water

you carry it with you

Harsh Like Spilt Milk

too many times
the easy thing
is better off scraped and split

what I mean is

the nice words are better off
cussed
or the sweet voice
cracked

suppose you roll your rrrrrrrs
cough each roll

you expect a warm bed
but there's a kid there
instead

the flat is cold
now
that the roller rolled on out down
the road

I think the road
once smooth as pulverized sand
is a rock
not rocky
a rock

Friendly Food Gone Awry

individual human product clientele
must rank swoosh rears
trouble is
seeking to reassess anambiguous message
Coca's mighty soon
greater highway speed bum
similarly Mac boughway spain's 30,000 burger a while

Americand posh
Ity That?
might make owners of the frademark among
the might make more sense

to tinker with it is nostalgia
for to a for
a more

Modern Art Lovers

we walked like confidantes down the boulevard
noticing dogs spinning before they poop
noticing each man and woman walking the other way
or leaning against the yellow museum sunning

later we toured a so-so museum
with a dozen good pictures
it seemed formal
or staged without our consent

we grabbed a table outside
when we were tired from talking
and we watched the fountain which was really just
a pool designed to overflow evenly
but no waiter came by

it occurred to me we should kiss
or at least touch but the mind
is a poor heart imitator
I liked the painting unfinished

of a woman in a chair watching
the uneven edge of paint right in front of her
next morning I left for another place
but we didn't seem to care

though the weather was warm
and the sun watched it all

The Score

maybe once

we would wake at 10 to prepare
after up till midnight
maybe the snow or high wind
had misaligned our antenna
we'd get up
on the roof to adjust our mast

we'd have a heavy breakfast
and at 11
the floats would come on
in black and white
maybe for snow we'd flip
from station to station to see the best ones
scramble to the bathroom for bands
or horses
we'd note the ones we wanted to see
order color film

that'd arrive in 4 months
now

we can go there
 watch HD color
 tape it
 digitize it
 put it on DVD
 download it off the net

I have a piece of the Berlin Wall
I have two rosettes from Rocks Village Bridge

I could have kissed her

maybe twice

Drive On

soon the door'll be
knocked on
it'll be time to see what wind blows by
the fragments
the high rain
art upon our foreheads
the taxi waits
and a driver with few teeth
or a hangover
his picture will look like a museum piece
his banter like psalms
or weeds pushing up
his smile will be yours
and I'll tell him
drive on
anyways
drive on