

# Sharp Tone

*A Collection of Poems*

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## Shower/Cold Near Dachau

The cloud slapped shut  
like a lid on a boiling pot,  
clouds of snow knocked loose rained  
down on the stream edging past,  
shoulders furtively turned,  
against the razorwire rules  
you've built around here.

The color of the inside of anything  
shut down tight. Lace curtains like slices  
of snowfallings. You told me once  
of a pretty song, how it kicked  
away a snowcloud and painted near purple  
the sky with a filtered sun-dark light. Is this the world  
we're standing on—or is it just the sudden  
hardening of the chillcold beneath our feet?

## Junk Park

Discarded sticks playing trees,  
mounds piled up by yellow hydraulic machines,  
yellowed swampgrass in a marsh as cold  
as your hands binding sluggish movements  
as a sign of life,  
the sun dropping has abandoned us behind a row  
of houses. Where I come from they play

a foolish game, one like the children  
play in this park thrown off and dusted down  
beside the highroad. In the cold air that day  
the warm parts of our faces were placed in red,  
the hidden parts ran wet as water.

For me hearts beat, for you  
hearts beat, and this park is the space  
between those offset beats.

## Of Something Else

How slowly can the last article  
of clothing fall past the most seductive

part of you? Could be it catches  
(in the)  
jam of door against door

slamming shut on the train  
railing away from the preposition

that starts with b? Something old judging  
(by the)  
rust in your freshly washed hair. Hair

smell or odor freshly erased  
(wait—Neil Young is soloing—this music

relates to his fingers in  
an unexpected way. If your

last article

fell like the unexpected flake of snow on the head  
of Neil's vintage junk Les Paul, tuning

machines might be  
<a line containing "last" and some dots of elision>)

by a songline in blues whose  
microtone bends hint at dominance . . . .

I mean dominant.  
All this to say I waved instead

## Vinyl Polychron

time his song phased out  
of joint kilter tune time money sync  
with me and all us buckwild boys he sat on the sidewalk holding  
a sign in cardboard neoclassic style of bum and I  
knew places he could get that but the marker or crayon  
where was that from it said U.S.M.C. which means 1967  
all that a cakewalk through flamethrowers and pole charges  
and interlocking bunkers I knew places those he could get but  
the cakewalk where was that from they don't stop no more  
he said they work their fucking .coms unbrickworked  
though clickmade lay down pavement tile mausoleums  
final liquidations vinyl liquefactions linoleum defecations his song tuned  
in and she walked by bleeding rich a rich henna hair  
and thin vibrant cloth that fell from a high arch of her ass  
clung as if tight but hung as if wind to advertise her available  
assailable malleable mouthable of worth and now come

come correct of the two songs one olive grunt one silk ass the henna red hair  
black marker cardboard sign singing singeing slinging signing  
soundless song song and one more neuron path made my head was in

## Some Kind of Cakewalk

She gave me a good wound hiking away  
business-like in thick highheels like hiker-punk  
meets tux on a windy day.  
The air is filled with her secrets expressed  
in music like a wind or rustling branches  
nude of buds in winter coming on.  
Not a permanent wound aching after all,  
but one demanding rest and care in a warm, safe  
foul-smelling place with men and women engaging  
voices. A good wound takes out the engagement  
permanently but leaves one fit on the perimeter or more.  
The good wound must dig nails deep or fracture the solid  
and make the blood flee the site of any occasional  
or happenstance friendly fire. The good wound  
floods the fires with cooling blood and stains the skin  
with the smallest but most richly detailed tattoo. Make me  
the good wound.

## Where She Danced

On top of Route 66 the desert air can be dry  
and small movements in the air can mean  
what they want. Since Route 66 could not

make the leap to full color it small-faded  
out like any pricked-awake dream and what's left  
I'm sitting on. Your redhot dance barefoot

across the blacktop was a shimmering sham-dance  
seen from the backseat of fading outasightings.  
You told me 6 of 60 dreams in that quarter

moon we had strange sex & to tell  
the truth: Route 66 did not fade out:  
you chopped it up and I threw it away.

## Swift Cold Stream

No one told me Dachau was a peaceful town,  
a neat suburb of carnival-loving Munich,  
Swiss in its devotion to proper windows,  
and prosperous—votive homes in Catholic  
rows—and near the edge of town they built a fenced

enclosure meant for safety—so small—with one  
yoke-like building of unknown motive with neatly  
rowed foundation blocks formed before it.  
Along one long side a narrow swift stream of curious blue—  
unearthly—with bubbles of turbulence

made on its surface speeds while branchy twigs and stems  
look in on it. Like a side pocket they built a peaceful park  
of oak and fir and neat Dachau grass mowed close  
with a sandy brick incubation house sitting  
low with redbrick roof tiles and industry-sized

chimney. Two rows of neatly planted poplars  
line the road between the barrack rows  
and it's here I think someone like me fell  
with arms bent back in this safe enclosure—so  
large—with the thought of floating swiftly down

the curious stream into the peaceful  
town of Dachau hiding as an ostrich would  
under the curious blue sky.

## Everything Will Be Done in Small Steps

Her house. My car. Her window.  
Like Romeo fattened by slaughter  
I will receive the lovely sounds  
your fingered manipulation  
you will make on her tonight.  
Streetlights will reflect off her window  
onto the tuning dial of my AM radio  
as I listen to the radio man count off minutes  
sent to him by digital pulses from a nuclear clock.  
You will do her alright,  
but she will wait for the buzz  
radiating from the end of your hooked  
finger like the 1 by 1 tick from a fissioning clock.  
She will receive it; I will receive the guitar's  
digitally crafted phase shifts made to replace  
the musical sound interference makes  
out of a signal and its bounced twin.  
The only small steps left in the world  
are analog: your soft index finger  
and Romeo's last meal.

## A Love Song to Most of You from the Deserts of Arizona

We spoke in tongues not to praise  
ourselves jabberlike, but to tease  
passing ears who might have heard in plain  
words closing doors and then dreamt sad  
lines. Nearby, longhorns gathered  
and locked horns in their grazing,  
the sound of their earthly lives  
sang in the air.

Of all the doors that could have,  
the mirror one reflecting two imaginary  
points became our flux.

Plastic clicks, uncrossing horns,  
the metallic shift-sound of unlocking  
horns—can we ever unlock the tangled  
speeches we rehearsed before each other?

Cattle sing a foreign song—their move and sway  
while swarming, their self-to-self measured  
distance discourse. If you cannot speak,  
move, as they do, in ever enclosing circles.

## Our Numb Circle

After Rilke

I have fallen like wind for you  
but in your heart I cease to exist  
even through the impression I made  
in the taught stillness of your limbs.  
How did my image enter your eyes?  
Did the curtain of your pupils lift soundlessly up?

Did I enter into your numb circle,  
the center around which you move  
in soft strides, powerful as any woman  
in her dance of strength? Did my wind-words  
fall still?

You have waited watchfully, bored  
and tired by the enclosure that holds  
nothing more. Outside it there is no further  
world. You watch the passing wind  
as it has passed a thousand times before  
in your tired panther gaze.

## I Play Guitar

and the pads of my fingers press the sharp  
metal strings against each fret to make a soft  
note buzzing in two tones from fret to bridge  
and fret to nut

and the tone of buzzing wires  
excites the magnetic fields firmly established  
by three clustered bars of vintage Texas single-coil  
pickups on my tobacco sunburst ash-body Strat bolt-on  
maple neck with rosewood fretboard  
and sends bursts of electric  
signals out the jack  
and through the fat copper strands  
of a monster cable electric guitar  
cord with gold cold contact jacks  
and into the Dunlop crybaby  
wah-wah pedal where a foot-position  
activated variable-frequency-pass filter  
mimics the cry of a lonely woman

and from the wah a sculpted slice  
of tonal energy is by another monster  
cable fed to the gaping mouth  
of a Sylvania 12AX7 vacuum  
tube preamp stage that is fed  
to another and then fed

by a cable into a loop whose deepest  
parts are A/D converters  
and digital sculptors  
which through a process not  
unlike time travel and not  
unlike breaking physical laws

press the signal into the shape  
of a woman's cry in a French  
cathedral transmitted by AM  
radio over the cornfields of Kansas  
in a phased recombination  
in a chorus of like-minded

converts before moving back  
through digital -> analog  
converters and back once  
more

♪ ♪ ♪

to the funnel of a 6AU6  
class A push-pull power amp  
section that feeds to a load of 2  
8-ohm 12" Celestion speakers  
and the sound I make with my 1949  
quarter/pick as it pounds  
the strings into chaos

and sweat from my head  
and hands coats the loving  
strings that I bend  
to haunting microtones  
and sustain in sensual pulses  
of vibrato is fed  
as a cry upon cry  
through the wah

to the preamp tubes  
that burst and bend  
from the strain  
of the overload I make  
that is coolly with reason  
patched into the shapes  
of a lonely world  
and into

the hungry jaws of the power  
stage and into

the clattering fabric of the speakers

making a feedback shrill shout  
and whispering cry

like a song might sound like  
like a bird might fly like  
like forget might like  
like loss

unlike a mistaken tone  
or a slip on note  
or the language I mean

being invented through  
mechanisms of unfettered  
distortion.

## Art Struggling in the Weeds

When art is spoken  
all alarms are ignored,  
and the death of women by saber  
and the cleansing of blades  
on their white silk dresses,  
perhaps their blinking eyes  
make faint applause,  
or so thinks the god of art  
who stands in the aisle, saber  
at the ready, and sharp.

## What If All Were Or

your hand shake  
your hand shakes  
your hands shake  
does the thin not fully formed veneer  
of science unstick in places  
my tongue/fig  
or plum  
above the top of the sky  
your hand unsticks in places  
above the top of the sky science shakes  
my tongue not fully formed  
your fig shakes in places  
not fully formed  
this tongue  
may  
not  
only  
plumb the sky

## Mystery Us

standing with ankles crossed  
her left toes  
beside her right ankle  
in black to  
accent her hips  
make like: dark wine glass  
squeeze her lips  
hide her sex  
hold her pee  
bunch her ass  
invite my stare  
repel my approach  
pull all eyes from her small breasts  
mime her cheeks  
scratch her leg  
or  
shroud the woman  
in holy black

## All Along

The room I write  
in is as  
small as  
me sitting  
+ a table

a boat prow  
atop a third-floor porch  
and three windows—on each side.

The Three Voices:

cars fuming in wait  
for the harbor tunnel  
waiting for deep dark  
in dark  
is there  
anything, really, to say  
about it?

ships hooked  
to their moorings  
hoping to slip  
on the next tide  
will a banjo  
play that happy song?

planes caught  
by the nose  
by gangways really  
and melancholy steps will  
people take their places  
in lines through air?

A Fourth Voice:

there is one  
no?

## Page of Mount Parnasus

Everyone has a last message.  
A feeling they've had that persists  
or forms their basis.

A song that impairs hearing  
or feels good played too loud  
too often.

*I was your everlasting.  
I waited doglike.  
I left behind myself.*

A drink that unsticks  
the parts of your mouth  
that fasten at night.

*Find dust  
that settles  
all bets.*

Make mine sentimental  
like the maple syrup  
he reduced from sap those years

my father walked as himself.  
The time he left behind.  
Cure it in wormwood

—to slow down  
every thought you have,  
—to kill each one.

**whoever copies this sacred text without permission will be damned**

I beseche the o my lorde  
lyghten and pouрге my memorye  
and with the brightnes of thy light  
illumyn and confyrme my  
forgettinges with the oder  
of the switenes of thy holy sprite.  
Helpe me and quicken me as  
the error of infydelytie and the fylthines  
of my syght hast gayzed  
on the nayked bodye  
of Shrifa. Helpe me pouрге  
my memorye of her owtwarde  
partes. Infforme replenishe instrue  
restore correct claryfy and  
refreshe me that I may  
be the man I wonc was.

## Ruth Said It Best

This Winter the house fell down,  
as if the sun had changed brightness  
it took a minute for my eyes to adjust  
enough to the changed sight to register it.  
My car balanced on a fulcrum of plowed  
snow in front of her barred driveway,  
and beans of heat—black soot and sand—  
worked to melt the last ramps of snow, I  
stepped from the car seeing joists and beams,  
shingles, window frames, windows themselves,  
tables, chairs, couches, and beds, pictures and picture  
frames in loose piles all in a loose pile  
where her house once was. She moved  
on only last Fall, moved as her cravings  
pulled her and hatreds pushed, old  
in her ways, her sharp scraping skin  
hanging from her arms, her face, her voice  
like a razor, she is held together by a thin  
coat of displeasings and dislikes. The house

held together by the strong coats of paint  
she layered on it, like the lasting coats of pain  
she laid on me and my father—he had the sense  
to let his heart give out last Spring. In the center  
of the piles smooth river stones from the chimney  
lay, cracked from the strain and cold; it once  
formed the center of the house, and even  
it—held together by the strongest mortar  
he could mix—has given out. Father, pray  
for me to help her move once more  
this Spring, move as only the faithful can,  
into this falsely restored and fallen home.

## Hair Talc

Dark she walks besides me in a woods  
what she says is nothing you plainly  
see or is it here her deepest thoughts are mo-  
no-  
silly-  
la-  
bles and even those are crypto  
6 layers of crypto stack  
ain't nothing written but in loveyellow  
ink on like yellow paper o dark woods  
besides me she's walking in  
but listen I hear secret parts  
rubbing together what pubic  
hair is I figured is cheap grease  
keeps from rubbing too  
hard hotsteaming parts on others  
helps stop rash running I keep  
talking besides her  
but she talks I'm rash  
I tell her contents (o loving notes) she says  
love stuff's trash quit  
fucking spamming me

## Packings

My girl's Pop's going to visit A'nt  
Verna for the last time this Spring.

"I'm coming up to see you for the last time,"  
prob'ly what he said, and God's disquiet

is a twinge om'nous—how unlike  
last from first. My girl's no girl

neither, she's passed into  
her 40's and like for us all

her robust packings  
are feeling last at last. Joints

get stiff, joint's another story.  
We're dog-eared from lookin' up.

A'nt Verna once had puffed lips  
and a vertical smile the boys

like to make signs of the cross  
with kissin'. I'd go

myself, but it'd be  
my first, and I'm not

sure how full a circle  
God appreciates now

that some folks have gone  
to see him for the last time.

## 40 Love

Tag, we played it for days.  
Across 40 from Flagstaff east  
Through New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas,  
Right across the Mississippi. Corvette  
And Mustang. I was drawn to your color,  
Maybe you liked my acceleration.  
I paced you from behind and watched  
Your rich henna hair fall around your headrest.

When you stopped for gas I slowed,  
Stopped. If I lost you I'd  
Rely on my radar detector  
And the stealth of my headlights  
Turned back dispersing seeking signals—  
120, 130, and once 140,  
Whatever it took to catch you.

Nights I'd write notes.  
You'd raise your fingers as I passed.

All the small lovely places—  
Leupp Corner, San Jon, Benonine, Pharoah, Lonoke—  
That morning east of Amarillo,  
The mist held inches above the ground,  
Layer of wet clear air,  
Thick fog above that a thin blanket,  
The heavy morning sun rising up.

I lost you in Memphis.  
I crossed right behind you.

I sped.  
I waited.  
I searched until night fell in Asheville.  
Did I tell you poets weep there?

## Naked

Is there a word that fills more of us with joy, spawns more optimism, speaks of more possibilities, fills us more fully with the lust for art? Naked Lunch, naked women. Think of the clothed man sipping his tea with a naked woman. The contrast is exquisite. The Story of O. Think of Manet's painting, *Déjeuner Sur L'Herbe*, or Bow Wow Wow's version in photo cover art: *See Jungle! See Jungle! Go Join Your Gang, Yeah! City All Over! Go Ape Crazy!* Two men sitting, clothed—tangled legs—a naked her. Any man's fantasy. The day she first strips before you, you believe her nakedness—there are her breasts, their nipples and aureoles, there is her waist and bellybutton, there are her hips, her thighs, her ass, and all of them in the proportions of a woman. You have fallen for a woman's finest trick: You believe her naked, you need her to be, you must see all of her. She is not naked. Your desire makes you see what is not there. You have been fooled. Believe it. Trust me. Picture her standing before you, naked, arms hurled toward heaven, legs spread apart manly style. Stare, stare, think, consider—you will see her naked every time. You will swear to it. Take her picture and study it day after day. Use a magnifying glass. Put it in Photoshop and mangle it every way you can. Scan it in 3600 dpi. Zoom in. She is not naked. The parts she cares about are hidden. The ones she touches remain away from your eyes. They are not in her mind. They are right there between her legs, right where you expect them. Look closely, between her legs is a mound of hair, long and coarse as any beard, deep and thick as jungle growth, curled and tangled as gang colors, opaque as any nun's panties. Go ape crazy but she ain't there. It's just hair. Lips, lips, a hood, colors pink to purple, a small penis-shaped head, openings, engorgement in excitement, shades of skintone in variation. That's naked. Who made you believe in hair?

A woman's hair is long in youth—the pretty girl you first love has flowing hair like the mane on a groomed thoroughbred, and shiny. As she ages into each relationship, she cuts it shorter—to make it easier to handle, she says. Your remorse expands and she just laughs.

Listen: Can she make it any plainer how stupid men are?

## Dodge 50

Call me stupid but the day was pretty,  
even if that punk across the street was under arrest,  
dope I suppose, cuffed in a plastic bracelet,  
sat down politely by the cops until the pokey wagon showed,  
sitting on a cement curb—they even put a jacket over his wrists  
so he'd appear reclining not detained. And the old black man,  
roses in one hand & a paper bag bunched on a neck in the other  
sitting down with his bag-carrying hand touching the brim  
of his hat before he sat and sobbed for an hour. I touched  
you once and you were full of you, to the brim packed and substantial.  
I'll bet both those guys thought we were ready to trot,  
trying it on for size, gazing at slowburning leaves in mid-Fall,  
smelling each smell brought up from the plains to the east.  
They would be wrong.

Pretty is sentimental—poets beware. Even a dog  
probably smells the flowers a little prettier when he's tracking  
a bitch in heat. Any kind of animal that uses its nose to hunt rut.  
I smelled you that day, but I wasn't falling.  
A punk selling dope to buy his cave bitch a new sled;  
roses itching for the gutter. No way I'm cat-eyeing you,  
Miss pretty hot and tempting in a sweater from Milan.

A pretty day makes you love. Sentimental.  
I'm carrying no bag for you. No up north trip for me.  
Poets warned me. Shakespeare's crap—I give it a miss.  
And aren't I pretty anyways.

## the first step in your quest to become linguistically obscure

Makes no difference who you are  
words go one way: left to right.\*  
In. Top to bottom. Ost'n erewti enigami.  
Yes, folded enigma. They went thattaway (→).

You don't say.

Daily sex (me) dyslexia (you).  
English. As "in your head." Some Japanese characters  
(I) like it like this.

How do I fell? Postamor . . . . All. Us.

*We have out own thoughts.* Except rarely.

Word order makes order, unless:  
:whom **You**  
:what **Love**

Who? Me!

Thattaway (←)?

Funny grammars make funny gran'ma's.

Typorthodoxy in the alternative.

Ok, upstream is not downstream.  
I can feel you standing behind me  
the flesh of your thumbpads in my ears  
your hands splayed up like moose antlers  
wiggling.

Step 1: For words to go one way  
you need words.

---

\*Except etc Hebrew & like

## Lesser Birds

They one by one fall  
An erotics moves toe to toe  
A denial could not bend back  
Our hips space apart  
There is only one no to go around  
Can I touch the infinitesimal circle of the journey  
A watchtower is not all around  
Like S, N, and R, like a man their pace  
Wear fire-fangled feathers the first time we fuck  
In the spectrum of know and wonder  
A funny wind did stand up

Windfall on the park bench  
a spectrum of erotics wondered and moved  
first deny our feathers, fuck, bend  
pace only our hips, snare, watch the no go around and around

Can I circle the infinitesimal journey

Touch

## Yesterday This Was a Park

Dark heals,

sometimes it's like cutting out a cancer with the tip of a stiletto  
and an ice cube painkiller.

Imagine a growth of skin shaped like the early part  
of an explosion.

Hold ice against it  
until the sensation has moved twice  
from heat to cold and back.

Pinch the growth in the jaws of sharp new pliers; pull.

When the blade is done with its slice  
you know immediately  
you can remove the knife quickly  
from its nearness to your precious body.

Push  
a cloth over the wound.

bandage, cloth, skirt, dark long coat catching mud  
from the backs of heels

Dark heals the way a dog runs  
when you turn on the back porch light.

## Evening Spread

The computer zenlike sorts my needs  
like the proverbial chinaman  
sorting tickets.  
As fast as he can he piles them to the left, to the right,  
moves them from cigar box  
to desk drawer, marks some  
—on others he crosses things out. As if responding to a tick  
he looks up sometimes and says Huh? His job is routine,  
without thought, without careless sounds.  
He dreams his family is marking the backs  
of chickens with orange magicmarkers  
left over from Spring classes. His needs  
exceed my imagination—I am drawn to him  
like the boat adrift to the corpo morto.  
With a sweeping  
gesture he wipes his table clean—  
all, save the lines of toothpicks  
that spells my desire  
to sweep away blankets,  
gesture in full,  
make a pile of your underthings beyond the line around your bed,  
descend like snowfall on the tips of toes and fingers:  
this note I'll send  
once the chinaman's tickets  
review its spelling and the grammar  
of my interests.

## Heights

At night from the airplane window  
I see the line of dotted lights leading from one small town  
to another or to a larger city in a distant nearby. Some lights  
are the yellow-orange gas arc variety, stationary,  
brightening inverse squarely a dot of roadside farmland  
and road, others are cars with elongated ice-cream-cone  
shaped beacons that turn like vectors aimed at possible  
stopping points. Something about each light tells  
the smallest most general story of lonely life, that darkness is never far  
and something as quick as a blink draws  
darkness in without hesitation.

Or in the day over the northern parts of Canada  
in the dead of Winter I see a sheltering stand  
of trees where perhaps the snow is less deep  
in a cove around the trunks, and maybe some parts  
of the ground are visible—cold but a connection,  
a place someone might wish to stop and light  
a small fire, a warming, a soup break, a prelude  
to a night in a warm tent and bag. At night  
the possibility of a flickering light, a dot of humanity—  
is it any wonder I search for them at night  
from the airplane window over the least inhabited  
places.

In light or dark  
but especially in dark  
each place like these sends me signals,  
begs me to step out. How cold  
would it be to step outside? How swift  
would the downtrip be? If I stepped out of the dark  
into the orange arclight dot by the side of a small road  
or within the simple reach of firelight at the base of a tree,  
would I yearn for the flickering lights that tonight seem to be  
passing far overhead?

## From a Scene

As you lay there naked in bed  
you are like the sinewy muscled foothills  
of a tropical mountain range, covered  
with a pastel and cotton mist  
that swirls and rises as the heat from the sun  
moves the air around you,  
and soon you are fully revealed. But

tell me,  
is it the offering of yourself  
that moves your fingertips  
to the thickest flesh of your soft legs,  
or the desire for warmth  
from my fiery skin?

## Sentimentality 101

The room is 10x10, small addition  
to a small trailer in Central Florida.  
The walls are covered by art—duotone  
night winter scenes in blues and white,  
woods scenes from the forest behind the house,  
mountains from up north;  
flower studies in orange and blue, mixtures  
of flowers and mountains in miniature. Something  
is off about them—color, proportion, perspective,  
too much of the wrong half-brain.

All are signed in the lower left traditionally,  
but in the upper right is his mark: a flying bird  
made as if calligraphically with one fluid stroke  
or two. Perhaps it was the same way he died  
one year ago, stumbling out of bed at 4am  
to puke, his hurry and rush too much  
for his damaged and not fully repaired heart,  
for his weakened brain-supplying blood vessels.  
Just one stroke—or two—and he went down  
to his knees in the position my mother found him,  
kneeling as if in prayer—she said  
he must have been struggling to or from bed  
at the beginning or end of a final trip to the bathroom.  
His last words to her were get out of my way.

Where was he rushing to? What appointment to keep  
that didn't involve her? He laughed about his trademark  
bird signings, as if it were the conceit of an amateur.

In his best painting in this room where I sleep perhaps for the last time,  
the bird sign is small: From just a few feet it seems like a small spider,  
and above it is a thin, drawn line that seems to hold the spider  
up as it waves its legs working the line. almost a laugh. And the spider  
line anchoring its descent goes up, up and up beyond where I can see,  
held finally in place between two hands, clasped in prayer.

## Lover of All Things

On Buck Lake Road in Central Florida  
the people are of two kinds totally:  
reliant or self-reliant. Take the majority:  
pickup trucks (several) with 'gator lights  
up top and hunting dog kennels in the bed,  
4-12 fox hounds and blood hounds, fishing tackle  
always packed, a double- or triple-wide with a swing-set  
and swings enough for 3 or 4, a trampoline  
but not too level, wives with 3 or 4 curves too many,  
satellite dish, and a supply of spare parts  
rusting in their chassis' in some tall  
saw grass out back. Did I say it was a sand road  
scraped clean and level 3 times a year? Did  
I say it is on no map.

The rest are old, they eat sporadically,  
say ok ok under their breaths with every move  
of every chore, who do everything in slow steps.  
Women fart and belch day long, every aspect  
of any female packaging long disguised as hanging skin.  
Men indistinguishable from women.  
All they own that is covered in webs, mostly cob  
like the inside-out palimpsest of their skin. Everything  
they own is rusting and decaying, under attack  
by heat, wet, wind, and bugs. The neighborhood  
mimics memory loss.

I wonder why the affinity between the totally self-reliant  
and the totally reliant. Heat? Or the not cold? The opportunity  
to make something of nothing. Prying eyes and judgments absent  
except in pronouncement? Or maybe it's a love affair  
with that most intimate of lovers,  
that most fervent clinger to life,  
that most reliable of all:  
you know who I mean.

## Ars Poetica

Take the finest book of poems,  
say a collection of Neruda's love ones  
or The Duino Elegies by Rilke (your choice  
of translator), open the book to your favorite  
poem or passage, read deeply with the parts  
of your mind that have remained longest undiscovered,  
lose yourself, heighten your soul,  
move the book slowly still open as if in for a tango,  
hold it out away from you, time it your best  
and slam it shut like jaws of life in reverses  
on that damned Florida deerfly circling your head  
who looks like that movie you cannot watch,  
who stinks like the hole behind satan,  
who looks like what the poet really means to say.

## Walk

Florence SC, walking, busy road,  
groceries, facing traffic, no sidewalk, tall weeds,  
2 lanes each way, some cars switch lanes,  
others straight on, swervers male,  
killers female.

Men more or better:

empathetic  
driving ability  
caring  
manners  
familiar with the shame of walking with groceries  
prepared for the unexpected  
global

Women more or less:

willing to kill  
willing to yield  
daring  
helpful  
predatory  
willing to adopt new rules  
local

Were they hateful to murder of poetry?

What I know is this:

None of these people were thinking about passive sex.

## Hoarsepower

Sometimes I'm a poet,  
sometimes I'm a hater.  
If I could only combine the two sometimes,  
I'd really have something.

April 20, 2000

## The Hope of Love

May your lovers all come  
wrapped in plain brown paper.

## Despite

I am paralyzed by spite,  
not a word, not a drop has come of it, can come of it.  
I would take back not a single word,  
except it delete the world along with it.  
Spite please be enough,  
please be the right spice to pickle language,  
the right acid to curdle ghosts.

## Work Makes You Free

The day has been atmospheric starting with dreams  
then snow and freezing rain making crystal of brush and shrub,  
branches and hung wires. In the dream there was a conference  
where the lunches were served on mud tables—roadways  
were plowed between them in rectangles. Despite how I ran  
my loudmouth enemy followed from mudflat to mudflat,  
so I fled to the registration booth.

Then the European scientist arrived and we kissed  
ceremoniously first by one cheek then by the other.  
She reclined, her silk dress was loose by her thighs,  
and I drew my calloused fingertips up from her knee  
plowing back her skirt until she pulled it up to reveal  
her densely curled public mound. I looked into her sweet  
face and remembered to wake up to vomit in my mouth.

Today spite petrified into remorse, solitude  
reduced to sentimentality when Celine softly  
singing as her niece died in her arms made me cry  
in a motel room decorated in diluted Bavarian or Swiss—  
blue and cream. Everything that has happened this week  
considered as a unit reminds me of a pair  
of old men adrift off the Irish coast in a dory, eating a formal  
dinner in trays on the seatboards, the sun behind them the way  
a cinematographer would want to see it, so the scene is really in shades  
of pink and lensflare.

Not an option—failure isn't when speaking about getting the well  
primed: something I can try when the weather clears. When it pumps  
I'll pass by Satan's ass and out into purgatory to pay off the 1000-year  
debt my spite cost. Is waiting part of the punishment?

What I mean to say is that neither poetic seeing nor scientific  
attitudes is going to save us from the thousand 1000-year  
acts we'll perform and the need for the heart to contract then release  
over and over. Celine dropped out of school at 15 and everything  
she knows about life comes from the lyrics to songs she sings  
along with the mood of the music as commentary that tells  
her an attitude toward those words.

So what will happen to me the day I decide  
to trigger an episode of impromptu skirt lifting—do I swallow  
or breathe in?

## Haunting Drops

Rain is such a symbol.  
For me it is the symbol of never going home,  
the way it prevents the work that is that journey's  
precondition, the way it has shut down the airport,  
the absurdity of its slushslop sounds when it puddles  
outside the windows of the most convenient motel  
day after day while I get used to forgetting a now-former life.  
Rain endures, transforms into floods, gets messy in the way,  
soaks rats to near-pleurisy, provides an excuse  
to share warmth with a different gender, renders common  
the most unusual, keeps inside everything  
you want to keep outside. Rain is the ghost  
of sunlight and shade.

## Can'ever

Love can never win  
even by cheating: replacing all parts  
one by one—one could say lovingly—until one  
love is replaced by another. Let's say  
this method includes hillclimbing—  
each part improves upon the one it replaces.

Is perfection preventable?  
Considered a function,  
choice depends on what? Let's change  
the subject. Take hair. The possibilities  
are fragmentary. I love her  
and she wears suede skirts depending  
on her ass.

Love's focus on "one". It's like  
a guitar with a floating bridge tilted by fever,  
fresh springs,  
beautiful chords may wobble.  
Sound still beautiful,

wobble.

Let's wander;  
if it snows that stretch  
of incandescence will never know  
already. Away to win.  
Love can't.

## Lit Study Guide

Sand by a park lit by  
incandescent or gas arc lamps  
casting her shape in black on orange,  
the sand is orange and park parts  
green. She will walk home  
with thoughts of death camps in her steps.  
She finds twigs that remind her of memory,  
branches floating on fast-clean moving  
waterways fatherlike toward a mothering  
sea. Somewhere someone is lighting  
a small water heater, holding a flame  
within a stream of gas, holding a button  
down until a bithermal sensor is red hot  
doing that work for her. She is watching  
that flame expand as its movements  
make black on orange shadows dance  
within a sheet metal apparatus whose design  
is toward warmth and human comfort.

What reminds me of these things  
is the park-like appendix at Dachau  
where the cremation stations are. How  
I wonder how far I would get if I tried  
to make love there one night  
while the erasing stream flows past  
faster than water can flow  
without the forcing presence of satan's  
hatred at its back.

Compare and contrast—relate if you will—  
the echoes.

## Rosetta or The Exotic Dancer

The angel came up on me fast,  
I mean—too  
different, unexpected, lusty,  
really—like a lusty slave,  
physical presence of a woman.

Came up—I mean  
entered a place of recognition,  
named, categorized out  
of the compartments of whore,  
seductress, first lover whose  
local circle of passion and cognizance  
now includes me.  
The sort of oh  
attached to surprise  
not the one of relief.

Fast—I  
mean the sharp transition from wrong  
to correct  
not graduated so that one  
would blend into another.  
The wings—like the sudden  
close of chaos when the needle  
drops on the record  
and music emerges—  
they popped out of the indistinct  
background and condensed to wings.

Shallow carved, by a digital process  
perhaps, more like shallow dark dots  
or worm tracings on polished marble  
or maybe even a granite—blue or green  
tinged grey with dark flecks or chunks  
like a confection.

The stone had a lap or portico  
or front yard—a small red brickstone  
fence, each piece a small rising sun,  
all arranged into a curved entry  
garden of maybe one square  
foot, filled with white porcelain  
rabbits and squirrels, cherubs and  
marriage archways. Sprigs of vibrant  
then frozen then thawed flawless  
flowers, each in a vial cracked from the sudden  
snowstorm.

℞ ℞ ℞

The angel—good mother-sized breasts  
under silk or chiffon, a womanly hip  
3/4 revealed, her left leg advancing  
to her right in profile as if on the cover  
of a swimsuit issue, her thick thigh  
cupping her lap's bowl. Sexual—  
predatory. But her arms were held  
at an introductory set of angles  
back to her left, in forms  
meaning her's Johnny, hailing  
the word "Mother" carved  
distinctly, with the fast coming up  
being the coming into view.

On the back, her name,  
"Loved mother and grandmother"  
and the dates of birth and death,  
her life the contents of a parenthetical  
remark made in this most attractive  
of cemeteries on a cold cold dim  
late spring day, when all I wanted  
was a warm hand on the side  
of my solitary head.

## Force and Simple Dynamics

This is my exit, a ramp  
that lets me cruise  
alongside the main road some at high speed,

same speed as yours, and maybe I'll pass,  
then off I'll veer at a normal angle, meaning  
I'll make a right turn or left. A normal finish

for an all-talk situation. Enforced starvation.  
What I've come to see is that there is nothing to see,  
I've heard there's nothing to hear,

come to grips with the fact there will be no touching.  
Radio on, top creased and folded, tucked by the trunk,  
wipers on—it's raining hard, hail or sleet, the thin layer

of skin between the pellets and skull is pierced  
in places. The rain enters.  
Hail enters and greets

hearty. I've come to rest in a wide spot—  
Bernoulli says to slow down here  
and I've joined a very small crowd

each of whom has found their exit,  
a ramp easy to negotiate. Each of whom  
is content to have left you or someone isomorphic.

Smarter, I would have taken  
the ramp that exits gently on the steep downslope,  
exits straight and heads 10% uphill

through sand, so even the most hot  
and passionate truck comes  
to an eagerly unanticipated slowly burning  
stop.

## Lines

Crimes of anatomy: Guilty.  
Crime of shape and filling,  
size 6 woman in a size 4 dress.  
Crime of arms, hands, and skin;  
voices and ears; eyes and surfaces.  
Near is the first rule of human  
contact—love, let's say, or romance, sex, for example.  
Or just handholding or admiration of form  
and skin,

visiting what's revealed.

This is where lines come in. Crime  
of distance. Missing person, another  
missing her. Or him, I suppose. The first line  
is mail. Sending word, writing of love and gone:  
having gone, continuing gone. Rail line—  
possibility of reuniting, visiting,  
letters quickly answered.  
Physical exchange in the offing: Kiss  
a letter's seal.

Lips—time—lips.

Lines with movement at the gross level of matter.  
Conveyance, in short. Airlines, the jetliner, the ship line—  
nothing new here. Conveyance.

Lines that trade  
information. Encodings.  
Telegraph lines, phone lines, power lines even.  
In the plains these lines are lines,  
visible, curved hanging in parabolas—  
inverse square laws. 3  
times farther, 9  
times more ways not to return.

Long distance lines pretend  
to bring you closer. Length is desperation  
only. These lines respect time. Predictable  
duration.

Better then than a letter.

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

E-mail, voice-mail, pagers, faxes—  
dull variations with better print quality sometimes.  
Make rejection as pretty printed as Donne sonnets  
in the latest printing. *Goodbye you  
loser.*

Or voice delay, like the 7-  
second obscenity buffer.  
One-time echo.

Think about storms  
stretching lines. Think  
back/ahead.

People in pigpiles, night  
storms made us. Storms, line  
break.

## Thickness of Paint

Brushstrokes, layering, paint as medium  
whose physics matters. The texture of paint  
matters, the direction, depth, and swirl of a brush

stroke matters. Painting is additive, nothing is taken  
away, or rarely. Mistake? Paint it over, cover  
it with more, build up never subtract. The mistakes

are always there. When we speak  
it is like this—in bed, at stove,  
with others, what I say is added

to all I've ever said, nothing taken back  
only covered over. Branches and leaves  
piled by the tree, decaying to constituent

parts. Rebuilding material. Do  
my words rot, decay, reform  
under the weight and resulting heat

of newer dodges, newer explanations,  
more refinements? Does the under paint  
of thick masterpieces

turn, somehow—chemically,  
physically, relentlessly—  
into canvas?

## Easy as 1-2-3(-4)

Winter turns to summer  
in Silicon Valley and even the live oak  
bulks up—leaves block the view  
by adding themselves to it.

Fog through the wind gap 5 miles north  
enters the throat of the Bay at 50 mph.  
What does this crap have to do with Lonely Heart

left under a rockslide or covered by graffiti.  
Backalley licenses. Translate  
that into something that runs  
100x faster. Or make it small

to fit in cell phones.  
Make it a better offer.  
Better Off-er. That's what we want,  
isn't it: Poor turns to Rich  
in Silicon Valley, and even the lowly hacker  
bulks up—riches block the view  
by adding BMWs to it.

Lonely Heart searches for meaning  
by substituting words one by one  
or meanings one by one  
gathered from butterworthy songs

bought mostly by teenage girls  
or younger. LH does that 100x  
faster than his coffin-bound half-circumcised friend  
and in a space smaller than the crack/hope  
LH has been left with.

LH holds the IP.  
Genetic swarm  
improvements, better-off  
money from clip-rate royalties.

As I write this,  
I think of selecting a cell:  
change its format to bold, first;  
change its color to green, second;  
change its boundaries from single to double lines, third;  
and add a Black Porsche and the girl who steps out of it & so forth, fourth.

## Singularity

I couldn't recognize myself  
so she did it for me, hands on ears,  
feet in the muscled small of back,  
slender slick silken shafts of hair  
pulled along, brush strokes swiftly past abdomen.

Her eyes looking out for me  
in a mirror's image she saw herself looking at me,  
recognition. The self in senses  
all trees and breeze  
Mediterranean seawarmth  
sweetbreeze  
vapor of slumber descendency  
muscle tissue hardened & relaxed  
curtain of memory pulled past each thought disappearing  
everything every breath deep in the chest

She to watchover,  
she like watcher suricats swiveling & humming protection,  
the first 2 digits of her left ring finger  
placed like a popsicle  
on the hard palate roof of my mouth.

In a minute the part of my mind trained as a brain  
will awaken, and all she'll be  
is the Wizard of Oz  
stepped out front of the curtain.

## Bridge Brigade

One day they will all gather at the river's  
transition from lake-sized  
to the swift final flow to Joppa Flats.  
They will begin their walk at the obsessing  
bridge and its funny  
green. With luck they'll choose moments  
when the river flows downriver

(woman/tidal  
river).

Because I want them  
only  
to see me the last  
time only  
one time.

Perhaps a crew will insert  
the metal turn-machine and march  
around 11 times to let me pass.

The parachutist drowned  
above Holt's Rocks may let loose  
his shrouds and sift my ashes  
through the combs his hand bones form.

Who will appear?  
How will they walk?  
What of their hair?

If the water be still  
I will be the dust amidst the clouds.

If the water be ice  
I will melt ice with my gathering heat.

One place I will place  
my initials, the last thing  
first on my mind.

Because I fell for them,  
let them  
let me  
fall.

## Stopping Courage

It's a simple cross  
built by a carpenter from clear  
wood dadoed together, untreated,  
in a shallow hole dug with a posthole  
digger with the initials AD written in lead  
pencil at the joint.

I saw a few beads from New Orleans  
and a perfect spiral shell atop the post.

The cross appeared months after burial.  
His house nearby is for sale.  
He has written his last words and some have been said.  
The old writer with simple things to say.

Will I have the courage to leave as little,  
will someone with talent say goodbye  
by acts as small as these whose remnants  
I find.

But the raw sandy earth on the road side  
of the marker has not been taken by grass  
nor flowers nor weeds, has not sunk,  
remained bare and clear.

Years I drove slow  
past his house finding  
no courage to stop,  
each time past slower than the last.  
Now I can stop  
these are the only times I can.

Excuse me for stopping my writing now,  
someone's car has slowed to stop,  
I see reflections, hear echoes,  
the car door clicks,  
it slams.

## Minimal Spirits

The years are sharper than razors  
—4 seasons wide—  
each year shaves off  
one layer of dark color,  
one week of screwing,  
one mph of speed, and  
one possible liaison. For 20, 30  
years we layer them on like  
coats of short oil varnish

and for 20, 30 we shave them off,  
random order,  
potentials come,  
go. But precise,  
precision.

Or more abrasive than  
low grit closed-coat sandpaper,  
grinding off layers,  
clogging,  
worn.

I sit toadful  
staring at the few years to come  
while behind me like cartoon speed lines  
the possibilities fall, sheets  
of paper, manuscript knocked  
and scattered like thin slices  
like dust blown  
from my hands.

## Smooth Curves

music can be played even  
when the players step on each other  
play leads  
play them too loud  
into and through the singing  
while other players are soloing

and an audience hears it as music  
well played and forceful  
high energy and full of life

discussions can be held even  
when the speakers step on each other  
state positions  
state them too loud  
into and through questions  
while other speakers are talking

and an audience hears it as discussion  
well argued and forceful  
high energy and full of life

I suppose it works as well when two lovers are split apart by an over-  
powering distance

singing would be too loud  
talking would be pointless  
all that's left is the solo

—skip to the sunset scene, you bozo—

that and one walking behind the other  
on the shoulder of a busy road  
with the low winter sun  
twinkling our eyes  
love is a young  
man's game  
honey

## Look Out, People, Machine Coming!

The famous words  
—famous in my family—  
when my Lithuanian step-grandfather lost  
control of a small flatbed  
in 1920 in Lawrence, Mass,  
Main Street, failed brakes.

What would the people have wondered first?  
Who is “people”? Or  
what is “machine”?

The eagerness in his voice  
—mugged by his accent—  
but combined with the indomitable p’s, e’s, & l’s  
would lead to quick apprehension  
that “people” is anyone in earshot.

“Machine,” though, is problematic.  
Listen: “maa–sssshéééén!”  
And who knows how many people glanced  
up at the rows of windows that morning,  
hazy from shoe factory smoke  
and the air of tanning—boric and oxalic acids,  
quebracho extract—to catch a brief glimpse  
of the pearl sheen from the rising sun,  
before recalling the brief deep “maa”  
like calling mother for help,

or pondering with the beginnings of great depth  
the abstractional choice and what it meant  
of selecting “machine” from the spectrum starting  
at the 1910 Ford Model T flatbed,  
passing through commercial truck,  
and ending up somewhere in the vicinity  
of inanimate object and thing,

before seeing the need clearly  
to hop aside quickly as the Ford flatbed  
plowed into the front display window  
of Neuman’s Department Store.

And from its depths the small cry  
still sounded  
—*machine coming*—  
people became angels,  
the flatbed truck and the soul inside it  
took on the pearl sheen of the rising sun.

## Black Horse Nightmare

I am just a dreamer  
and you are just a dream. Concrete  
and dreams don't mix: A dream  
tries to be forgotten. A dream  
that tries forgetting turns to nightmare  
when it comes to book the flight  
and plan just which ancient stones  
and hotel room overlooking  
them in a rich Mediterranean  
sunned landscape will become  
the likely site of someone's  
nightmare. Maybe mine,  
yours,  
maybe theirs.

Turn to my nightmare,  
explore it like an ant  
following sprayed pheromones,  
and I will do what you will,  
follow single file to an ugly place  
to decide, in any order,  
the who, whom, and when.

The wettest Spring  
I drove past a sloping hill  
by the tossed ocean  
where they led the blackest horse  
through the greenest grass  
in front of the bluest ocean whitecapped  
and frothing in high waves upon rocks.  
They led him by a bright red rope  
held by a man on the back of a dirtbike,  
a camera truck beside them.

At the ugly place you said they'd erase  
the rope with a clever computer program  
you wrote, because it was red  
while everything else was green, blue, white, or black,  
and I thought  
a red rope is all that connects nightmare  
to dream, and can forgetting  
be as easy as running your red-erasing  
code.

## Dreamtime in Carpentry

His first was a wasteland  
of joists running wrong ways,  
slabs where footings need be,  
nails in place of screws  
etc

He had seen houses  
but never one apart, never was told  
their secret So he built one

He'd read of slender women  
who lounge in them  
swigging pearl-blue Bombay martinis  
in cream gowns and slicked hair  
Seen deco-style cartoons of them  
with lengthened limbs  
and draped eyes Colors thrown  
off kilter like the tan brown  
of the third cappuccino layer  
that their faces were painted in

All his houses were built  
according to made-up rules  
and fathomless designs  
always wrong or faked

The women he lured  
with his operatic baritone  
rarely favored the pearl-blue gin  
nor were their colors monotone  
Too hairy and swore

He stretched brushed silk on shag-bark  
sticks and as far as sunlight could decide  
it decoyed a glossy moth  
Even I was humped by its shaggy skin

I repair all his things now  
All seem real and as sharply focussed  
as gin dreams and pearl-blue women  
stretched as tight as silk Those are easy  
But shag-bark limbs, wrongway joists,  
fathomless dreams—my imagination  
is wasted on words

## Over Dose

Make the world larger  
end the current period early  
Enter the year made grey: the second millennium  
is not over, the third not started—  
for calendars  
are belief in time which can exist only  
as mathematics needs it. I have  
fallen ill or into anger  
over the need to love  
(or is it live?)

when the assumptions of an ill  
life are glued to the roof of my mouth  
by the words wired through my head.

I've tired of following the slightly high  
heels of your fashion-ing boots  
that kickkick the back hem  
of your dark coat.

The overstuffed god is ready  
to pinch off the tuft of time  
that exploded zip into theories  
that negation alone can repair.

Our fate is in the hands  
of the action of not,  
a philosopher evening.

I'm jumpy over love  
this year, Cupid has gone  
upscale with a Remington 700 BDL .308  
and just when the edge of my heart peeks clear  
a whisper in the alley take him.

Jumpy year when time's in a pinch  
zip love on my calendar  
let's end the current  
peri

## Song of the Goatherd in Silicon Valley

Hitech valley  
high octane capitalism  
cars brighter than the fastest deal  
more dollars than a first divorce  
12-hour, 15-hour days our weekends  
vacations vacated  
digitorrid chat affairs  
overtones of typing speed

This valley full of hills laced with oleander  
manzanita madrone underlaced with grass  
tall yellow brittle to sparks

Broadband envy  
design coercion  
polymers as natural as vinyls  
lace desktop underwear

Goats shepherds shepherd dogs  
flexible fencing marking the places of goats and execs  
trailer lawn chairs  
warm days appetites elimination  
extraction and recompaction  
fertilization like intellectualism  
hidden within capitalism  
small goats eat

in the days when girls kept their underpants on  
undergrowth turns dark as earth  
and one Australian Shepherd sniffs a Lotus tyre  
when the oldest becomes newest  
as fast as new becomes old

## Wrong Dream

It's the dependency of love on dreams  
that makes God's choices hardly  
seem important. What He denies

begets drama since the negation  
of an absolute must vanish  
not soar. How many dreams

can I dream at once,  
immediacy the reckoning of solitude,  
the running away, the chasing

after depletion? In her hand  
she holds destiny like a scepter  
to her mouth as if to sing

or suck the dream God  
dangles near not,  
she becomes the hole

a void fills when denial  
vanishes like the sea  
from a near zero slope

beach. Leaves fell  
from aspen, birch and filled  
my dreams with scatter until

seafoam then greenwater  
returned, floating above it the leafy dream,  
the hangdog face of God, and the denial

of the simple act of sex  
she begged for, longed for, hated for  
when she was hanging from my wrong dream.

## A Tale of the Christ

I imagine an ancient street of stones placed a thousand years ago, the sudden embrace as when water overflows and the one not yours is taken, the adulteries and betrayals, cravings, flavorful flesh under many simultaneous touches, when whose hand or skin is touching whose cannot be known—all of that done 1000 years ago means nothing now unless something of those people lives on encrypted to eyes and understanding within the stone walkways, under archways, behind doors long withered and gone, in courtyards or in hovels. I think of Judah Ben-Hur gripping Esther on the rooftop garden of Ben-Hur's estate while biblical music plays, chords shifting as if the key of the music was changing, big shifts implying the majesty of Christian mystery as water turns to wine or blood, bread to flesh, desire to gratification where the scene takes place in a mansion whose courtyard has fallen to ashes and leaves, puddles with dark blue movie-light lit effects, and it means something now because it's Charlton Heston not Judah Ben-Hur and it's Haya Harareet and not Esther, and today they are old but alive and in 1958 or 1959 when they embraced on that balcony we were alive or nearly so, but we see it yet on TV.

But to think of the bones or ashes of the dead embracing on the worn stone streets or breathing air that cannot be still is to dream of phantasms, to fail at living, to blaspheme something that seems sacred or not in existence, and such clutching cannot be the same as our sexual rigors and postmodern annexations because what survives from the past is what the mind and spirit need to feel immortal, which is not the flesh nor the desire but an inner tension between scared and scared, there can be nothing like the look Heston gives over his right shoulder looking down at Haya with the weight of dominant chord changes and the slightly off-expressive Middle Eastern temperament of the violined melodies, darkened skies, darkened skins, as one passion is spelled out before another, Haya the Israeli beauty, Heston the gun-toting gun-loving bombast whose Hur-blue robe is on display in someone's collection.

We alone are left to clutch at one another, penetrate and stroke, make wet the other because what becomes of us will never be played to a background of 50,000 extras and special effects, framed by 3 hours 41 minutes of spectacular, filmed in never-ending Technicolor or digital fancy, and neither one of us will be played by anyone else but us once you are burned or buried and I am languishing in the mud of Joppa Flats, not played by anyone, not by the likes of Charlton Heston and Haya Harareet.

## Shagbark Rattle

My earliest memory is being sinkwashed.  
Memory mine alone. Two others in that house: Running  
into the living room when the Shawmut  
ad came on, the Revere Italian  
playing indian, and when he raised  
his hand in greeting so did I;  
the other the low Spring sun  
through the dining room highwindow,  
slow song trebly with violins playing on the Kenmore,  
reflections from sun rays  
polishing the oak floor and raising dust motes.

The third's partly mine, clearly story's.  
Father just home in his blue 1948 Pontiac,  
Mother panicked, asking him to hoe  
the rattlesnake sunning itself under the shagbark tree  
in our front yard not 3 yards away from the shiprock  
he left there, too big to move and too shapely,  
to death. This is clearest.  
Pontiac sold when I was 6 months old—  
Sight and story memory each as solid  
as the granite shiprock, each as slinking  
as the snake flinched from, each as clear-skinned  
as my back in the sink, each as blinding  
as the sheened floor, each as sober  
as the falsified indian hawking Shawmut.

Our number is still memorized:  
Fireside 6-2926—to recall it takes  
the dropping of a needle  
on a record it's so old-fashioned.  
Infidelities of sight and memory, only the story  
dug into the hole beneath the shiprock,  
nose to rattle behind that snake is honest:  
clearest thing I see,  
furthest thing from truth.

## Management Techniques Using Weeds

It's good to see the world revolving again,  
as if it were making periodic progress,  
with then again some regress. I think

the foam that slips across the bay  
or rolls like dust bolls onto the piled dirt berms  
are enforced by wind cycles fomented

by the revolving world. One of these dandelion  
heads of bay foam seems to have blown  
into the car window and onto your nose

where it is trying its darnedest to remind  
me of how you might look in your shower  
after our first long night together

where the small details of the backs of your legs  
(and source of the Nile)  
shortens my sleep cycles

enough to . . . enough!  
Poetry on sex is the final  
sentimentality of the previous millennium.

Doesn't it seem like this:  
the world going round—through lightheaded  
intermediaries and manmade dikes—makes love.

## Lingus

All poetry flows from the mouth—  
breath divining rhythm, word shapes and clicks,  
warmth and moisture of the soul,

tongue wetting the lips, complicated shapes  
making complex sounds, tasting what nourishes,  
what excites, sweetness of other mouths

after rich desserts, bitter fluid from just-whetted  
genitals, shape feeling and palpitation,  
pushing and prehensile pulls, licks

such as performed on frozen slush  
or beneath the hood; teeth, white  
as few things natural, sharp as dull knives, unyielding

and several making them robust. I've fallen  
for women just for their mouths—words,  
shape, movement, what they could do down

there. Trust enough to risk the teeth, explore  
her, tongue that makes everything it touches  
large, teeth in many configurations. Some say

it's the complex brain that makes language  
and its feral half-twin poetry, but I say  
it's the strangeness of the mouth

and its parts and variety of purpose,  
its punctuation and profusion,  
its genitalia-formed processes.

I say this: the brain is made to fuel  
the mouth, fatten its nerves,  
lick the last line off any poem.

## True Dreams

I will make your dreams come true—  
the words of untoward love,  
unguided direction, bass-heavy

leavings in a shady spot where a statue  
should be left alone to face its transformation  
to lime. Your first move was by hand

—stopped there, and I made the promise,  
and true they came, falling in love, falling  
as leaves do sometimes swarming

and marshalling abandon  
when the recent act is a mirror job,  
falling in love micron sized bites.

I made them true, puppets move  
as like they might think,  
I've got links to make and shades

to pull, blinks to close, myths  
to make up in sharp fonts  
whose fat angles clutch at our breath.

Ok, you introduced me and all I did  
is all I do, but your dreams came true  
being a puppet, a toy, by your hand

and what I got was corn-fed,  
cluttered—when hair was long,  
was soft, reminiscingly real.

## Touch & Go

I found you in the details,  
by grains of sand, nibbles of rust

on the funny green of that bridge.  
Or by drunks hawking woes, or

passers-by who know me and shocked  
by my eyes, one dead and lingering.

Behind you in the woods it snowed  
without accumulation, nothing

catches, piles, picks, shuts, lets  
up you put up look up

and it's the same every time  
when what's weeds blooms

like bee-liking roses, wild  
wings. I've heard you sip tea,

heard you bathe in the sea  
like any siren's sweetly singing

you've gathered the ashes by your side  
and it's the talk talk talk, stores of narration,

and sirens blasting past in city streets  
where friends see us, see it, small spandrels

beneath the string of the stare—people  
who expect fewer small parts, fewer small pieces

to the puzzle, fewer clues and more news  
from the frontal lobes. Details. Small facts.

Tell me when I touch down.  
It's the detail of reality I'm missing.

## Z Z

She lay there,  
hump of her hip raised up double high,  
her left hand between her thighs high up,  
her right arm covering part of her breasts  
in the high night heat in the town  
of small delight.

She snored lightly,  
just enough sound to tell me the night was off,  
there would be no sparks tonight, no sweet  
songs nor sweet word love, sounds  
would be left untempted by her left hand.

I walked downstairs,  
and switched on small lights, powered on  
my obedient and watchful computer—  
alone and longing for life,  
I brought up this file,  
the one that starts “she lay there.”  
Upstairs the muse snored lightly,  
her left hand hidden between her thighs.

## Jazz Yard

Today the heat,  
and I learned through signals sent through wires and space  
that few listen to what I say, though many  
in fact  
will take the time to inform me of my shortcomings,  
except some who like the clanging of one word on the next  
the way a scrap yard sings at 8am some days.

I like the jazz dogs who roam the yard  
and skip on 3 legs to the beat of scrap on scrap,  
iron filling the role of percussion, the heat  
damping the rings just enough to jazz them up.

A refrain of "who cares." I'm aware  
that junk yards and jazz need excess  
and what's wrong done wrong twice  
is music beyond range.  
Heat affects the body and how it reacts to sound  
or sights. Today it's the sticking of one part to another,  
the scrap that says "who cares" that sticks  
to the part that puts words in files, lined up  
in trains like thoughts on their way to the censor's  
fire.

Today the heat,  
and my muse left on vacation.  
The fire is lit carefully, sadly,  
and I'm left here sick & lonely of a home  
trying on my own riffs  
in place of real ones.

## How Do I Live Without You?

The cool air that settles through my open door tonight  
is pasted onto this earth from the golden black of space  
which when seen from within and afar is the milky blended  
blue and red of the damning equations that fell  
out of no one's head when they were pretending to be god  
before anything but pretending was.

## Anvil Hopper

The idea  
or everything. One night  
or day beads strung and counted rosary  
style. These choices seem abstractly  
boring in both consequence and precept,  
although I'll throw everything away  
to comprehend the idea a night  
with you conveys, give it the thought a raven  
might in hop-flapping from one trunk  
to the next while the maple leaves turn  
up the faces on the bottoms  
of their leaves to the rainstorm coming  
in from the west on the heels of a shattering  
cold front, as shattering as throwing  
all those rosary beads away for an idea  
that can't be written down with fewer  
than 3 exclamation marks.

Tonight you sleep  
unaware of the back-sheared thunder anvil  
nearby, and at its top, this little idea,  
hopping cloud to cloud,  
that could mean everything.

## Art Driving the Big White Bus

Sentimentality is creeping back into popular art,  
TV shows showing funny romances movies  
playing "How Do I Live Without You"  
after a cargo plane lands on the strip in Las Vegas  
killing dozens. Imagine there were two realities and part  
of the day we'd be in one, then the other. Imagine  
we could talk about each from the other and make plans  
across them. Imagine one of them was life or heaven  
and the other hell or death, and we'd play or kill.

I wonder what it would be like if self-interest didn't make  
you stupid. As in, are you one of those stupid people  
who thinks when a writer writes "you" it means you?  
Suppose I said, "darn those Red Sox, are they ever going to win  
the series. Well, whataya gonna do?" Do you think  
I expect you to tell me what you are gonna do? Here you  
means me as much as you or that other guy over there

standing in front of a knick-knack shop with a stuffed iguana  
in it, tail in a hoop, mouth open like a mummy. What're you  
gonna do about that iguana? Hey, I mean you, reader.  
Hirsch says you're as much a part of this art thing as me. So  
tell me, what are you going to do? Writer me a damned letter  
(in the form of a villanelle if you can, you twerp)  
and tell me.

## General Love

Love is a car  
—in a land with amber waves of grain,  
where wheat is a bit plainer more living  
than the main characters who  
die at the start and die  
at the end. Pity the car that took them there.

—in a land that shields secrets behind  
sullen lines of yellow shafts  
like protesters who can never leave their ground  
but stand it. Love needs a place for us  
to stare into, like the road coming up,  
heat lines rising up, passion of sun wave  
on asphalt in the cerulean desert.

—in a time when a back bench seat  
pretends support, and the oddly scented night air  
rolls down partly rolled up rear windows.

—in times of cheap gas, the smell  
of it like unguent, a rapidly evaporating sip  
in the belly made of steel, cooling in the heat-still  
noon air.

Love is a car because its body is stronger  
than desire, made of unimaginable  
bits of unmoving leavings on the cell floor  
called industry.

—in fact the legs that push and pump,  
the hands that hold on despite the road  
cling puppetlike to strings.

Love is a car because it becomes  
the instrument of leaving,  
motivated conveyance, a coffin of life  
which mimics forever,  
like love in the foreground,  
with soon.

## Winnepesauke

When I arrived—he was long dead  
(long dead to me)—we'd spoken last  
fifteen months before at the airport—goodbye  
was all it was—she—had exploded again—sickness  
I think now but obstinacy was my thought  
that night. A year passed.

When I arrived—it was hot—Florida  
is that way in mid-Spring—bugs flew  
and leapt, spider webs or just webs  
on everything—he'd replaced the roof just months  
earlier—himself—now I had to clean up,  
pack up—her.

When I arrived—she—pointed  
(to where) he died—it smelled of urine  
there in that shack—I put “to where”  
in parentheses because “pointed” and “he died”  
are the emotional centers and “to where”  
is just English—“get out of my way”  
were his last words to—her. She—  
knew he was very sick but thought  
it was just another fight—her favorite.

When I arrived—a man  
drove up in a 4x4—  
with a box—  
and a jar—  
it was him—she—  
signed for him—asked  
me to carry him away into my room  
which was really—hers.

When I arrived—in New Hampshire  
with—her—after hell,  
the insults and making me him—  
we drove past the boat in dock—  
the Mt Washington—they went every Monday  
—she—  
closed her eyes and wouldn't look—said—  
he loved that boat so much—she—  
couldn't look at what he loved so much.  
Nor will I—  
look at what he loved so much.

## Again and Again

With the smallest steps  
we run ahead.

When your head will not turn toward me  
we walk as one again and again.

Again and again we twine  
after carving goodbye.

We know low hills  
and anthills upon them, ants  
who bite  
when we lie  
again.

We have seen  
the end of the river, how it flattens  
out broadly—as thin as mist made plain—  
before tearfully entering the sea.

We speak  
and the cage beckons again and again.

Again and again we stain  
ourselves with continuity.

How I hate  
                  concepts.

You have found, been found,  
one who is lain upon.

I go on down the hill,  
down the hill  
that falls  
to the sea,  
again.

## The Womanly Curve of a Feather

Today leaving takes center stage,  
a weakness exploited, the gift  
like that of a bird landing on a finger  
taken away by startle. Both times

I left you, scales holding  
exoticism in one pan  
held the duty of being  
somewhere in the other.

Leave me this time.  
Turn. The back of a head.  
Make you wonder  
about the passing of light

into shade, how small  
the mottles. When I last  
left it was into a clown  
crowd costumed fully

for fun, everyone in shades  
of difference from being, children  
even in tender pretending,  
in their continuity of moment

to month to memory  
and it made me to blame.  
Today two birds came to my door,  
and when I opened that door

they raised their wings,  
held them curved, feathers  
spread as if to fly, pretending  
to fly, pretending.

## Overlooking Munich

Below, forest tufts stand shocked  
straight up, thin fragmentary patches  
of farmland in green colors, red  
roofs, wavy streets and roads, some towns  
walled, but always a black-roofed church,  
and we descend toward Flughafen München  
through clouds scattering, my thoughts  
are on the city miles to the south,  
in the park made of scattered debris.

But what this trip to the airport means  
is nothing, what the stopover intimates  
is nothing, the reason for coming  
is no reason at all, no part can name  
the whole, nothing signifies by anagrammatical  
pointlessness.

The fragments of woods lay as if sculpted  
or drawn in calligraphy, lay 3-dimensional  
as if words or a message, or messages.

Well, the potentialities are the point,  
the possibilities that might be are as if they happen.  
The red roofs are so familiar, so is that park—  
twenty miles to the south, in a town now whose familiarity  
is fading as the city does in the thickening haze  
as we drop down to burn off patches of rubber from the tires—where  
nothing can happen,  
nothing might happen,  
& nothing will happen.

When I leave, a rise up, the air which seemed clear  
coming in fills with mist, maybe small tears in the fabric  
of farmland. A concrete highway lies below,  
the same hue as the haze, but brighter.  
Soon the farmlands fade, the kanji woods fade,  
and all that's left is a winding road  
away, me not on it but above it,  
and now it's gone, too.

## Christ's Pre-Passion

Lordy, 9-lb magnet  
and 9-penny nail—steel nail  
of a sort seems like it's about gonna fly  
'cross the table to the iron magnet.  
Nail hammered 'to the table  
ain't gonna move not never no  
inch nor part thereof. Magnet's  
gonna twitch one hair's breadth  
of the way, gonna move jest  
that much. 'n' Move  
no more till rusts apart  
it will.

## Beyond Range of Vision

Dealt short life and loneliness  
fortune tellers walk away,  
even in Prague, cobbled city fashion-  
wise off base, forgotten flash loneliness,  
short dogs & leash  
queens, luck amuck springing streets.

Kafka found here—fondness  
transpiring the grave, bugs abounding,  
12 experiments shall not be forgotten,  
legs expired from freshness wrapping  
failures. The short life is briefly  
forgotten when 2 experiments  
in loneliness go wrong  
due to mechanical failure before any clue  
is found dangling above the river run below  
the waterhouse. A fortune teller  
glimpses her palms and joins the writer  
in a plotfull for topless queens.

Short message,  
letters alone,  
electronic writ  
ephemera flakes.  
3 simples,  
one undone.

If life is this simple,  
she representing everything  
was seen swimming  
far out to see.

## Rhapsody of Funny Images and Sounds with a Funny Color Thrown In

With the sky the color of blue Bohemian crystal  
with the Vltava the shiny sheen of oiled amber  
with the weight of walking heavy on the memory  
with the last time also the loneliest  
with the weight of warmth like warm wine in winter  
without the system whose centers run abreast the flow  
without the wrapping legs are used to in these recent days  
without the cravings for small steps imagined like a fiery tale  
without the links that make life's little sense  
without the remote sensing of the heart's desire from the least careful images

I find myself holding onto myself again, curtains opened on the rear  
windows of people in flats,  
the sound of aerobics in acerbic Czech,  
the sound of singing transformed to jizzled shizz  
by the trundle of electronic tantrums over its overtones.  
I pray you find me the henna-haired woman whose widespread  
walk was presaged in the icy quiet on Čertovka, winter in Malá Strana,  
whose attention paid to detail was as increased by questions as this computer's  
latency was reduced by the jerking twitch of my pinky on the ? key.

## This is Prague Just for Us

Last Prague winter  
air so cold it turned red  
all parts of you, shards  
of would-be mist chilled to razors  
in the wind whipped your face,

and I think it had something  
to do with how we clicked, let's  
say—made a difference  
to how many fingers you put  
in my hands, where you wanted  
me warming you and how.

This Prague summer  
exactly like winter but  
cold turned hot  
sharp airborne ice heated  
to swelling moisture filling faces  
with reasons to change slow  
putting up low places to pool.

The same parts on different sides  
of equations are wiped away  
it's clear Prague remains  
air and moisture remain  
the heat and movement have changed  
and you?

Your fingers pulse slow  
silence pools  
some skip in your walk has subtly changed.  
Across the way in the casually open  
window a proudly tanned and hair-dyed housewife  
prepares herself for her lover's arrival  
combs her henna-ed back-length hair  
slips them down  
slips them off  
drops her panties.

In Prague I write  
this  
miles from bed.

## One White Tomb for Every Thousand Black

Franz Kafka's stone—  
his tombstone they say—  
is modestly small and white  
among the others 100 meters  
down the cemetery wall hard  
right from the entrance, but  
reflects his modest aspirations—  
whatever they were they say.

Those aspirations would be tremendous these days—  
though his writings frighten me I say—  
since his stone is taller than me  
and shaped in an inverted position,  
white like a kind of raw marble  
or smooth granite, and in front  
a small white rock garden  
with a granite or marble fence  
and gifts of stones and notes—  
dead parts of this dead place—  
left by people of low aspirations  
for sure.

Laid out in ivy-over-grown streets  
and scraped gravel boulevards  
and tall ivied elm trees—  
very tall, so tall that the sun is near blocked out  
and the blackness of the black marble is black  
indeed, and the ivy absorbs what little is left over—  
this city where Dr. Franz Kafka now resides—  
he cannot live there any more they say—  
is filled with secrets kept in black boxes  
as tall as Shaquille O'Neal  
(who is 7' 1" for those of you in another century)  
(he is black as well, 340 lbs—see  
the word "black" 2 lines up), secrets  
made so full of secret stuff we needed grave little wool caps  
to walk around in the yard, so any secrets escaped  
from the tombs that bounced into our heads  
wouldn't escape up to God—  
or that's what the man at the gate  
who fears Kafka says  
they say.

## Sunsets Underlined

Sunsets say a lot about a place.  
Compare four places.

New England pewter is just a post-sunset thing; I remember when young thinking kaleidoscope sunsets were a Pacific-dipping effect on our sunset. Sunset Strip. I tailed a Mustang once with those black and yellow California plates—a friend said girls were in it—down on Bridge Street. I had my bike and saw them finally—not blond. It was hopeful in 1966.

California, the sun just goes down. Sometimes the sky's a pink then red. Any Pacific-dipping effect is too casual here. I heard sunsets are no event at all, night's just a dip in heat. I felt that way once. The first highway I saw in California looked like Baltimore after a bad weekend, crabs out of season.

Tucson, Bisbee, Taos—sleek sunsets here. Think of stylish pink-green, a silver-streak cloud like expensive watch ads. The colors turn Southwest-like, maybe they'd call it spiritual. Probably these effects originate from Sunset Strip, but no connection I see. People here listen to Coyote, who signals death with godly metallic hiccups. The cool night sky smells of iron-blood.

Dachau & Prague: here are two places that scare death. In Prague the sunsets never happen or always happen. The cemeteries here are miracles of passing woe. Oily but without smell. I snapped a picture of the Vltava once and it came back only reflections reflected, like two infinite mirrors with 0 in between. Dachau sunsets are like cymbals crashing—either it's sunny or it's night. Work hard and free yourself of transitions.

☞ ☞ ☞

Sunsets are placed by heads in the sky—  
live with them, live under them.  
Live in their cracks—that's all they are.

## Paler

Where do people go when they run out of ideas?  
Is it a place built like a garden but shaded like death bags?  
Are there shades of green that cannot be seen by open hearts?  
Is goodbye the same as delete?

Tell me something that you don't believe  
but tell it with a sensuous mouth.  
Move like a samba past fallen twigs  
to me and raise the hackles of old mothers  
who forget, only forget.  
Listen to the wind whose blowing turns  
to rack-pounding, keys blowing loose  
from unbuckled pants.

Let's buy each other things that sweet  
-en, -en, -en on the lower steps of passing  
out. Let's find a key, let's find a lock,  
let's stand before still the door,  
let' hope. Why is innocence un-  
something? Uncircumcised,  
unhappy, unlike,  
until?

One day beside the mountain  
I wrote it. The disaster is  
I still remember.

## Street Sign, Orange, of Great Teaching Power

No stopping 100 feet  
on & on  
the sky fills with such a clear aspect of no  
single memory, art taken into the mouth  
crunches, teeth bend—that's how you know  
sentimentality  
seeps out under cover  
needs evaporation  
forms anvil thunderheads  
hails upon the masses  
who flee—100 feet as 2—fleet  
to the shelter of old war horses  
to know art. The poets sing  
“this is art” “this is art” “this is art”  
like as not up is down.

Sentimentality is the odd duet  
of art against memory  
an interval of irrational size  
somewhat less than 100 feet  
the size for the crowd who would embrace  
embrace and kiss  
kiss and sing a sad song  
as the lover turns and walks away  
becomes the cottonwood in the river gully  
turning the merely sad  
to lingering art.

## Plainstone

When I arrived—expectations black  
 with a little white in it—the thing was long dead  
 (long dead to me)—she—pointed  
 (to where it was) tossed—on fine  
 sand ready to absorb—at the edge—  
 no box—no jar—the sea of heroes  
 touching it—turning it of-wetness  
 beautiful—she—tossed it here—  
 let-fell from her hand—packed-up  
 sponged full of—her—small-sized  
 last words, just another fight—her favorite.

When I arrived—she—had walked  
 across the mountain small though it was  
 as the rather plainstone—she—  
 carried part of—her—not  
 me—signed for stone  
 just months earlier—was really  
 —hers.

When I arrived—a stone left—  
 already washed into sand—  
 I asked—her—plainly  
 black with a little white in it—  
 toss, fling, throw  
 —it far away—  
 into a sea flowing with heroes—  
 where it—the I—could rest  
 in pieces, dissolved  
 bits, bits of sand—plaything  
 for children—bed for lovers  
 —thing on the bottom, but—she—  
 dropped it—catpawed by the sea—  
 harping plain and beautiful, pleasure dancing.

When I arrived—outskirts—  
 the little stone had turned from wet-beauty  
 to plain, lying on fine sand washing into sand  
 —(she—wouldn't look)—  
 where I expected a symbol—  
 plainstone, warmsea, a footstep—none—  
 lost up the beach.

## Symbolics

On the beach  
wet stone black with white bits

warm salt sea upon it  
fine sand washing into sand

across the small mountain  
but not back

what woman with many years of nakedness ahead  
has dropped it here

telling some old man  
so be it

## Nothing All All

Nothing is left to say:  
all the poems have been written  
all the poets have flown away

Dull is pursuit in the beauty of language:  
all that's written is written quick  
all that's said is sufficiently said

Praise the wrong things:  
all unwept so far will remain dry in spirit  
all unheld are enough in pain unswept by tender tongs

Place the spirit in symbols:  
all symbol stones wash away  
all requests in praise of self remain sufficiently unwritten

Dull is the way of all distinctions:  
all spectators have made their final boarding  
all cold all full all not only

Nothing is the rest I take:  
all the poems have been shuffled  
all great lies are made from their words realigned

## Car, Waves, Road

In the dream the tongues are rhythmic,  
overwhelming forces. The road falls  
down from rockpile slopes, grass, & glades

to stony gullies by the unstill sea—  
moonless night, oceanic phosphors  
in the heavy curls make the only light save

headlights fixed in relation to my car,  
seeking pointing-like with fingers or arms  
outstretched sleepward. In the dream

down the sea-aimed road I drive ,  
make my timing match unmatched  
waves washing over and upslope,

dumbwise, trying like decay  
to wash me from the script of rock  
or grassy depressions whose arrangements

or colors signal like clouds, lowlike.  
The waves are aimed at me. Like a start  
they seem to disappear whitewashed

before firstlight, recede, drop their storm sense.  
The waves, instead, grow, and my only choice  
is who they are or maybe when they'll catch me.

## Making Fun

Where there's heat, there's desire  
to lazy thought, romanticizing  
the off pastel band of green between  
the eggthin shade of pink at the horizon  
and the light French purple in the sky—can you

bring some cool, bring a way to sleep?  
Climate more suited to long views,  
far-off places darker, cooler. Things that wave  
in thinnest breezes grow on the hope  
of eventual rain, designed to withstand  
hell's wind. A man and a woman are not

one. His desires match hers like a 7-long  
string of tails. Her desires are piled beneath  
birdsong and wind secrets. On the cottonwood  
I'm imagining, a blackbird dangles its feathers,  
sings a rusty song, tweaks its head round

in funny jutting circles. I've made a line  
of corn crumbs leading to our bed,  
and perhaps tonight that blackbird will light  
on our pillow. If it's true that a man and a woman  
and a blackbird are one—hell,  
forget the f--fangled blackbird!

## Peloton

Today I found the role I play  
in my own life. There are 2 observations:

1.) ...

I do computer research,  
I play lead guitar in a rock/blues band,  
I do management coaching,  
I am a minor organizational guru,  
I ride bikes,  
I play volleyball,  
I play squash,  
I write essays,  
I write books,  
I write poems,  
I make love,  
I am a father (twice)  
I've been a husband (twice)  
I'm an only child.

In all these things, B+.  
Got there fast. Pretty good at them.  
Surprisingly fast study.  
Look at the length of the list.

But not so great.  
One or two notches down.  
World's most famous second rate computer scientist.  
Good poet for a computer guy.  
"The guy can play guitar real good  
for a management consultant."  
Almost kept up with that peloton.  
Inattentive father.  
Objectifies women during sex (jeez, we're just fucking after all)  
(No excuses)

Alright.

☞ ☞ ☞

2) ...

Not many friends.

Two (count 'em) two

ex-wives. One kid per wife.

They start off stripping before I get home,

end up on the other side of the bed,

in their clothes,

wide awake,

all packed.

lawyer hired,

papers already filed.

Listen.

Center ring.

Walkaround music.

Spoiler. Rennet best case.

Aspirer to peletons.

## Essay on Reluctance

Idea of romance  
is sex. Diminish desire.  
Deny. Visual objects. Seeing  
it is not doing it.  
Attention paid  
is debt incurred.  
Clutch her body,  
fleece her grave  
dress over bones.

Today we discussed our sex lives and decided we lived in different centuries.

Prefer a motor.  
Prefer herself.  
Prefer facing away.  
Prefer night.  
Prefer hair.

Today we discussed our sex lives and booted the Rage driver instead.

Render fat, render  
fractal-based scenes  
in games. Act of sex  
is the romance of hyperventilation.  
What we see  
around is what we see  
into. Ammo  
for pure sleep.

Today we discussed our Sex lives and our hands closed simultaneously.

Proving in the evening  
after discussing our Sex lives with  
Romance, Romance is having sex  
with Ideas.

## Chaos Theory, Part 1

The door is closed,  
each one has been closed.  
Sitting above the rooftops are flocks of lowing birds,  
communicating? No, just acting, reacting.  
All around, farther than communication can happen,  
faster,  
small pockets of activities merge into larger ones  
and sudden displays of sense  
appear. Complexity is mere  
large numbers of small  
senseless things added  
together to a soup of more senseless  
acts.

I am part of this. The closed doors too.  
Flocks of bird may have closed them.  
Flocks in unsense. The latest medical theory  
is that this is how the human heart  
beats.

## Mirage Ceremony

Stolen night  
still dark but taken,  
another night without  
the small fire in the wood fringe,  
spread.

Ink and oil unmixed  
lie bookside,  
inside you a flourish builds  
then turns.

Cakewalk over, the lights stun  
but it's only sunrise and its mirror-return  
from the house you left.

Stand and turn, steal promises,  
write without ink but make it hurt.  
Like an open book you turn and  
sigh, sight unsensed, spread with smiles  
now spread alone.

I am the cliff you walked off once,  
I am the cliff you approach as a wall of stone.

## The Poem as Pineapples and Hula Girls

An illusion, a poem.

The man who invented them is dead,  
his first were made of silk—light and loose,  
decorated with girls and pineapples.

The first poems, combinations of two unrelated items,  
were loose checkered songs sung by plantation workers,  
and nightmares or day illusions made of bright silk.

The poem is the ultimate expression of delighted  
creativity. You can't help but  
feel good after reading one.

Critics can't begin to describe them: flowers,  
reds, blues, and bright. Feel-at-easy.

The mind reals.

Imagine poems for under a dollar  
made of rayon. Leisure and decadence  
in a package no larger than a startle-awake  
nightmare.

You know it's real when a poem  
has travelled somewhere, cold and dark,  
talks out loud.

Speaks to nonsense  
speaks to you.

## Lies, Night, Tracks, Lies Again

Tonight there are not too many ways to fall for lies.  
The air has grown still through cricketry, let rise its heat  
to the heavens as if running. Have you noticed  
that lies are bound in prepositional phrases, in direct objects,  
sometimes in the verb, but truth hangs  
from verbs like meat on a beef leg. I'm not much  
of anything, not the captain of a ship  
whose cargo makes rare spices into rotten meat,  
whose sails shine like a depthroated O.

If you find things in lines, find things here. Find  
that this is really about loneliness, the work-made-free  
encounter that plies like windblown ships in beer ads.

Or imagine the stick match lit past midnight  
struck on a box-car roller door, imagine the start  
of light and heart as the horses shift from leg to leg  
wondering at the sickness at heart lies told  
to forgive loneliness beget. A sound  
from the deep, a sound from the throat, sounds  
not in protest, yielding to the lie  
held within.

## Outlawless

Read and learn—the poem is the purest window  
but being pure it combines with nothing  
least of all understanding;  
being a window it conveys the essence  
blocks the substance. Nights  
we walked; by tracing each path,  
by calculating with care, by figuring  
the tiled world the point would be clear  
pure, incombinant. unduplicitous.

The poem is the avoided, the path  
that avoids fear by fearing louder,  
that makes music with amplified pieces  
of noise. You who read this believe  
its path has led to you.

The pure fear, the innocent too—  
only the outlaw sleeps well;  
here's my job: play for keeps.

## How Fortunate the Man with None

Talker without listening:  
how could this come to pass?  
The way is down an asphalted slope  
to a lego-shaped barn or shed,  
roads bent on intersecting frame  
their destination. Dark but bright,  
cold but cheered by their lightened touch.  
The child walks cautiously ahead,  
runs to the roads fleeing slight shards  
of adulterous touching.

The shed though is home to homeward-marching  
trains. One waits. The courteous conductor  
signals him on, doors slish shut on him and clowns,  
and what could never be imagined  
nor ever stopped  
has been avoided  
like the trainlike meaning  
of clipped and framed images.

## When the Truth is Played, Baby You're Mine

Like you I like  
silences and the stillness  
of uncomfortable

pauses. Slowdown. Shuck  
dark, feign orbs.

Cameled pocks of water,  
snaked—  
vehement—  
meandering.

Sweathanded fingers clutch  
then—cool, reduced—ensnare.  
Argument from reduction

as if it

matter-of-factly faces the rhythm of logic  
beat out in ambient sand.

I mean, a river disappears  
over there; we sit in its gully cut from the mesa  
right here; and  
right there a river returns.

Flow in equals  
flow out.

What is the desert  
if all it does is drink?

## Inutile Reflection

Tonight we accepted secrecy,  
chose the drying slope of grass that preys  
above blue-turbulent flow, dragged  
our selves by the bark, head-drooped branches  
above us shining downcast.

Vapor lights collect moths and smallflies,  
mosquito hawks and gnats the way I  
suppose I've collected you. The light vapor  
lights spit across the slowing river turns its surface  
oily or languid, you lying like Lillith afraid  
to be named so surely by my fingerpads.

Those gathered insects intent on light  
slightly swirl like the first of snow tempting  
fall, and so I find it no surprise that downstream  
of us the half-finished  
bridge is imperfectly  
perfect, and as useless.

## Intolerable Temptation

No one goes down  
this road, we sit under the wilting shagged bark  
eucalyptus meltingly sweet mixed smells  
with tarweed and other exotics here, the place  
you come from like wet mud. Here dust  
from all sources fills the late day air to gauze

and your gaze is down the road toward its end  
or the sunset. For hours we've sat making bed  
or reclined our heads stuck

in idle. Soon you'll choose one  
end of the road and I  
the other—the only thing true  
may take a turn for false. No  
one goes down this road.

## Infertile Encounter

Huddled in a hard fall  
rain beneath a small bricky shelflike  
overhang 3 storeys up  
just before dark in one of the more northern small  
Canadian cities, what was she waiting for,  
waiting so long, soaked in a scarf tied  
under her chin and over her hair,  
in a long wool coat—that time of Autumn  
in northern Canada when snow deserves  
to fall—that she would not stand in a doorway  
nor wander down the street nor cross  
beneath a vapor light, that she would turn  
every few minutes to look down the street  
the other way, pause then look back again,  
minute after minute for over an hour,  
and I could only imagine the streaks  
down her face, the small pockets of warmth  
hidden beneath her clothes, the season  
made sharp through the efforts of bright lights  
on poles. I can never ask her, I could not walk  
down to her, I cannot turn  
to her before or after bedlove—  
the vapor light did,  
and still does,  
seem more important.

## In Tucson

Heat so dry it's just a just-warm sheet to the skin.  
Clouds formed by storms many iterations  
of simple rules ago levitate making fun of cartoons  
and heaven theories. In fact, fighter trainers care  
neither way about them. A pretty woman or several  
found the sudden pour overpowering and shed  
cultural standards and clothes to soak in rain  
and stares. Later they spoke in monotones  
about nudity, O.J., and a retro video rental store  
in the Valley, meaning LA. My sudden claim to fame  
was lightning gazing, or rather turning my head correctly  
with respect to the overfed spectacle. But appealing.

In the background, women spoke of making money  
through the slave labor of software developers while the angel  
asked quiet questions urgently—quiet urges. In my room  
the Southwest decor is tinged with chinee (to dredge words  
with the intent of shock), an encarpated lamp, gold on black.  
Somewhere to the East or West my love beholds  
the lightning strike which to me just flickers this computer  
screen, off then on, the one on which I just wrote just wrote.

## Ineluctable Interment

In Colorado near the spiritual flat  
of Kansas we laid like fossils by the cottonwoods,  
on the shovel of land we had, in the soon sunset  
that inhabits the plains or prairies and holds  
in the still, and the rising dark had risen  
past us already—but an amber red circle  
leapt up trees and meager milo,  
a light beacon as if from a shone lensed  
searchlight set on low, and in time  
it encompassed us, seeming spare as if diluted  
or uncompressed, a red made from the amber  
of pine or fir sap. The red in her hair flared  
or filled with ultra-earthen shine. This time  
of day the air fills with motes or mites,  
small flecks and flies or a blend of pollen,  
a sullen softening made of living or lifelike  
bits. Sample me, sample the reddening soil  
and hair. The circle was of a size to encompass  
us, our stand of wood, our ragged but rugged house,  
a quonset, and implements and tools, or things  
whose names may be forgotten. Follow that line of light  
up and back to the mountains, not high, but back  
up to the fir in the notch and in the crook of branch  
and trunk a small cup or bubble of sap formed the lens  
that sprayed that 100-foot circle around,  
that marked its path through small-living  
or lifelike things in air surrounding us.

Today, though, in the plane above that small-circled  
place, the sun is setting as it does and it does, and I'm heading  
east away, toward the rising dark in the direction shadows  
go. There are no circles of light anymore. Decades. Decades.  
There are things you may ask about the spirit light,  
the amber light, the red becoming dark red in the hair,  
the encompass of the circle. But I tell you it's all nothing now.  
Light simply cannot—do you understand me?—light simply  
cannot do such things anymore.

## Incessant Broken Freezers, Click-through Sonnets

### Statement:

Senseless to write poetry  
on a computer connected by phonline  
to the Net in lightning. Better  
to write you instead. Shakespeare did crap like  
that, but the lightning could only strike him, and hunoz  
what goofy triggers got to him:  
notes on foodstuffs  
scattered like chopped ham on the table.  
The floor freezer warped by the cold useless  
from heat leaks. That's inspiration enough. Things fly  
apart. Lights dim but the computer is battery backed.  
What about his paper? Too sensitive to water? Lightning  
flashes outside, lights seesaw inside—seesaw  
of insight, the rising swell of stupidity  
that love depends on, rising rainwater  
as if a final flood, rising senses and eyes. Sonnets  
have held our attention too long Mr William Shakespeare:  
the statement, the turn,  
the final couplet—that's where that damned "click"  
came from. Experimenting they said. Here's an experiment:

### Turn:

You stink. Your language dried up and the airborne  
debris makes nice sunsets. And damn it,  
we're the ones who have to read about them.

### Here's your goddamn clickshut couplet—fix my damn freezer already:

Damn you WS, damn your foolish  
sonnets, damn your goofy language stunts.  
Click! (not even 3 lines, you loser)

## Infusion of Age-End

Things here are old.  
Dictionaries last read 40 years ago.  
Wood so old and unforgivenly kept it melts to touch.  
Clocks heaving from one second to another.  
Machines made more of bluster than engineering.

Things that are old  
need to be coveted, fondled, touched rarely, but with respect.  
This house heaves, breathes slowly; it was put together with clumsy care.  
Thoughts were used here. This building holds. Tonight  
I cannot say whether my way is east or west. In front of me

a doorhandle, held in opening a million times, will wear  
out after 3 more touches, though it breathes as a handle will  
normally through the night. And  
when it is finished, its last grains of brass will float away,  
the way things do when they stop  
being old.

## Inconstant Repetition

Tonight the night  
came calling, the heads  
of women blended, their clothes  
moved in unison. Bending  
circuits, overacted  
upon strings, primality factored  
into winces. Circles—  
irrationality and returns,  
circle parts skirts drape  
off, slide off,  
parts like a searchlight.  
Sleek blend of synthetics,  
rhythmics, one thing, bent  
back things. The searchlight  
came calling, factored into the night  
the silence of clothes talking back.

## Inside Rock

How does the albatross die—  
heartstop and plunge? The heart  
is involved.

The sap is blood  
to the tree, engloved in bark and hardwood,  
maybe we see it in the after-amber

when mosquitos filled with blood  
rest as the albatross never does. Imagine  
sea waves—40, 50

feet, wind like a particle accelerator,  
linear, ring—the albatross  
doesn't, can't,

planning an approach to wind  
that avoids anything but the stiff  
yet flexing wing holding in place

that makes death fondly  
appealing. No, the death  
is prosaic—think of the bird

itself, the size of the wings,  
the size of the heart, how both  
shrink, how the will to hover

over high waves shrinks  
when the albatross steps  
into the steep-sided granite

hole out from which it  
cannot step, cannot fly.  
How fortunate such holes are found.

## Informed Mourning

Good cemeteries live,  
 the best cannot form parts  
 of a metaphor. Consider the one  
 by Johnson's Gas and Plumbing.  
 I noticed it prowling the chainsaw  
 sculpture place by the side of Route 16—  
 5' bears, 7' bears. Take  
 a trunk and chainsaw the big parts. Heavy magic  
 markers mark smaller chunks, 16  
 lb hammer and thick wood chisels...  
 The slope is cut into a sand bank,  
 at the top, the granite post mark  
 of the edge of a cemetery. It is a patch.  
 I found the frantic tries at Eliza: died 1834, AET 12 yrs,  
 6 mos. Eliza 2<sup>nd</sup>: died 1839, AET 3 yrs, 8mos. People  
 extremes: Jesse Thing. The day is a spectacle.  
 Sun in the last quarter. The patch is part  
 of a hill. Walk from the lowest part of the patch  
 toward sunset and the patch ends just below a hilltop.  
 Fifty graves maybe, but the ground swells  
 every few feet in a 2' by 6' mound. Uniform.  
 Patch as island. The hilltop was taken for Route 16,  
 the others for a camp store, the chainsaw place  
 and Johnson's, a home—something  
 like that. Enough to walk, enough  
 for a warm afternoon, enough to believe  
 those coffins rise pulling the patch  
 with them, enough to reject metaphor, enough  
 to see the cutbanks linked to the chainsawed  
 chunks. O, it was enough.

## In Hand

River seems low  
as if yesterday's drenching downpour  
ran full out to the sea, skipped its usual flow,  
or the tide skipped its backward flow  
today, didn't push back. River

seems a scrawny dog, rock-dense bones  
protruding, channel-skin browned and dry  
where riverreeds usually prowl. The wind  
has picked up, raking into close furrows  
and worry lines the river surface, except  
three or four spots that remain mirror  
calm even after minutes and cloud-light  
changes. These reflect the bridge

green and foolish atop high & dry piers, river running  
more to sand and mud than mountain runoff.

Today it's a kayak's river.

Is this what's meant by walking arm in arm?  
Thin and cautious, wary of existing continuities,  
abstaining for incautious over-runoff,  
four calm spots among light sprigs  
of craziness. The constancy of birds.

On the other side, nearby the little red  
bridgeman's hut sheltering the logbook  
of boat-comings and boat-goings, turnings  
of the crank that opens this bridge,  
over by there—is that where we can walk  
for one day hand in hand?

## In Order, Too

Silence takes too much energy  
but you have grown into it  
the way a heavy runner will eventually  
run all day upslope on thick legs that shrink  
as he does. How many ways are there  
to interpret null? In as many contexts

as there are the ways are infinite, nil & all  
being darkened twins or separated-at-birth  
coincidences—let's favor surprises. Your best surprise  
is which part of the overall silence  
to attend. Of seven blackbirds all  
alike, which one holds song?

When Jimi played, God  
sat silent and brooding—wondering whether  
the image thing went too far. When Stevie Ray played  
I fell silent though the heaters in my tubes  
were ready. Who

shouted? Of all the things to make sense,  
the dark angles on the page and ill-sorted sounds  
seem the least likely. Where can there be prettiness  
there, or her shallow twin,

beauty? Should I fit  
you like a hand in a hand, or will arms  
do? Tonight the square parcels line up  
below—the plane happens to take  
me away from where you are secretly  
wishing when all it would take

is 9 lines in the right order

## Incredible Essay on Language or Stuff

Suppose the fellows found it exciting  
to slaver themselves with your smell  
by rolling themselves in the last 3 rhymes you wrote—  
take you onto themselves like skin in skin,  
of cannibalistic forays but without the food part.  
Bitter tinge to the odor—blank or free—sweetly  
smelling of petunias or jasmine—what can it mean  
for who what you are or wrote? I'm supposing

you've selected the roundworm defining you.  
Aren't you sick of the prepositions, how they like to  
line things up, show a direction of reproach, take up  
valuable sound counts when you want every sound to count?  
I'm taken aback by the cultures who value planning ahead  
enough to think to write a question mark upside down  
at the start of a sentence that actually turns out  
to be a question. Getting back to that smell. You've

no doubt thought about the sexual implications  
of this. I'm indifferent to them, but wouldn't mind  
watching. Let's say that writing an upside down  
question mark is equivalent to "signalling". What  
signal does approaching with someone else's odor  
give off? You've noticed, no doubt

that signals and odors are both given off,  
and it makes you wonder how much master  
planning those language designers gave off.  
Look, no one sat down and designed the languages  
we speak. No one did. So how much fucking  
sense can what we say make? I don't know,  
but I wouldn't mind watching that.

## In Touch with Reaction

Erotic photos from the 1800's  
evoke flesh full and only  
the breasts and buttocks show clean—hair,  
hair, hair (arm pit, arm pit, crotch pit) and coarse.

In one the photographer is level with her knees  
while she reclines with her left hand's thumb touching  
where the clit should be, but the thicket  
of unaltered chemicals on his plate reveals just what is wanted:  
nothing. No smiles and the use of darkness harkens  
to night. Things in the night go stupid  
when they bump. There is something, though,  
important about the way breasts hang  
when her body bends and her arms come  
slightly together, something that makes meaning  
less common or anyhow puts the perfect  
proportion to it. It's  
involuntary how the palm reaches up  
for the nipple in these cases.

The coarse dark pubic hair of a slightly older  
dark-haired woman no matter how soft and wet  
underneath it is tells every man who investigates  
there that this is mother country. I've read

something funny about this,  
it concerns silence too,  
what the poets call stillness.  
It's about the possibility of constant  
ecstasy and what this means for creation,  
what it means for the image thing.  
Who makes things.

One night I touched her leg—  
nothing happened, no comment, no rejection,  
no welcome. The next thing the train door closed  
between us. It reminds me of places, and how  
they take on the stench of what happened to them,  
and how one day all that's left will be  
what we've done, and the only images  
left will be the ones with key parts  
untouched by reaction.

## Infidelity of Sound Warnings

My back's against a willow's trunk  
the time of day when the dimmest visible star  
is not yet visible, but what can such stars

tell me? Across the meadow and choked  
marsh pond a cutbank—the freight  
train moves at a snail's pace south to north

reaching for latitudes that bring on steam  
heat in the conductor's quarters even mid-spring.  
It reminds me of us the rattling and light

screches the metals make against each other  
and the firm shaking of the boxcars' hips.  
Is this the way dreams leave? Through the open

window of the conductor's final quarters  
a dim light shows a showgirl's breasts  
but it's too far for me to see. Leaving,

the trains rhythmic slight disturbance  
sounds fade not to silence  
but to the murmuring background

rising roar of frogs and crickets  
and rising dark and hanging branches  
that sound and look and feel of me.

## In Light's Grasp

Stay with me tonight,  
ragged group of moths,  
beside my nightstand, outside  
the screened window in the small bitter  
white circle of an ill-chosen bare bulb  
stuck in a fixture stuck  
in the wall. Mid-summer.

Your wing filaments splash  
a mothy dust in the air—illuminated  
sprays or perhaps smaller motes or bits  
of dust. Small metallic bangs  
against the screen. Hotter smacks  
on thin bulb glass. Stinging  
heat. Singeing  
heat.

Later I will tire  
of the loneliness of moth company,  
the wet heat will keep me above the sheets,  
a pillow will be clamped between my legs  
for comfort and to keep air  
between them. Later I will snuff

out the nightlight outside,  
don't I wish for such a switch?  
Moths will fly away one by one,  
and I will be the one  
to greet the next persona  
of the lonely.

## In Cold Blood

Behind me panic has risen  
as the warm liquidblue sky  
has suddenly clouded over  
and a popcorn snow  
has started to hail down  
on us. As I bring my collar  
up and pull on a skull-hugging  
balaklava, a thought  
such as clutching your breasts  
from behind you as we lie  
under layers of feather blankets  
in the depths of Bavaria  
hails down on me. If only  
you weren't you,  
I weren't I,  
this place behind me were not Dachau,  
maybe I could hold you  
thus.  
Maybe.

## Interpreting Snow

Nature has no erasers  
nor has physics really.  
More like pushing love back and forth on a wide bed  
or an infant alchemist's seven<sup>th</sup> dream.  
Eraser aren't erasers either—this is the power  
of abstractions: to make us believe the way  
Jesus tried to on the cross. The image  
is of taking away, removing the way  
a woman will erase her last garment. Snow

erases the opposite. Green copper rooftops  
in Paris, a steaming ashpile after you've dumped  
your coals out back, blades of grass  
foolishly or optimistically green—all  
these erased by sifted snow piled on  
like sisters feeling something new tonight.  
Additive erasing. Big art's

whiteout. Think metaphorically:  
what can it mean when snow laces  
over itself, snow piles on snow?  
Does it mean the same thing  
as when I lie on your back  
and whisper two things  
into you?

## India Ink

Tall candlepines & the approaching storm,  
squall line of sharp breezes. You bend  
to watch me paint these images

in India ink on rough-hided washi,  
one solid color black but softened—the stiff  
inner hairs of the brush ensure

sure strokes, the soft outer wrapping  
slaps on ink. In  
all, the perfect way to sketch

the sound of breezes in pines,  
and what after all are such sounds  
but the movement of thoughts in the mind?

## Guessed Guest

In the overwarm park with the crying drunk  
and downtrodden arrestee, under eucalyptus shade  
its blended smells with the sickly sweet tarweed,  
by the fungal green bridge that strangely attracts,  
near tombstones of writers and unknowns,  
from the small offerings of tenderness rejected by jokes,  
from men sitting on sidewalks begging in latin  
and blank verse, from snips of food scraps, stories,  
and accents, from the hobbling half-walk, beside  
the soft strokes of pubic hair and girl-thin layers  
of slipping skin, under trees made from old harlots  
or piles of rye hay—

from all these pilgrimages  
you've gathered the rags and straw  
to make a scarecrow. It follows  
you, stops when you do,  
enjoys rain by falling  
apart, talks only on Tuesday morning.  
It likes to sit in fields,  
adjusts its approximations.

## Direct Seeing

Seeing is direct seeing.  
Songs over and over, drier night  
air pulled in by a fan in Merrimack Valley July,  
The same song over and over, but it's a tape  
and I need to rewind it each time and find  
its beginning. Look at one picture  
over and over. Dream of the one dance  
over and over. Hour after hour. Midnight.  
Two.

She would wear a suede skirt and dance the Pony.  
She would sit like a queen. I would stand by the wall  
of windows with drier night air pulled  
in by the dropping of night.

After, I would listen to a song  
over and over, or  
two

songs. Seeing is direct  
seeing. Once I hesitated,  
thought, and the drier air  
turned moist and floated up,  
away.

## Ink Worker

Consider ink workers.

Squid, octopus, many cephalopods—head  
and arms and ink-spurting behaviors many  
thought were camouflage or confusion—with  
foes like fangfish or filetail catsharks  
who wouldn't think ink was for blotting view  
or stinging eyes. Now we know  
better: The squid unfurls his fangled arms  
and draws a floating, fanning self-likeness  
in black or phosphorescent ink  
the charging predator—spermy jaws, fangs, fear-reading  
eyes—takes for squid and bites, lunges, ingests,  
critiques for all the worth worth has.

## Something Fishy About Physics

By the tank  
in the aquarium, dark  
purposely to reveal the tender  
phosphorescence of midwater  
shrimp, fish, crystal mosquito-likes  
moving like arcane machines,  
after walking with my head  
turned back to watch the jellies  
I stopped—  
turned—she was there only  
inches away packaged in pressure-packing  
jeans and blouse, creamy hair and crystal-thin  
skin, like something stumbled upon  
beneath the sun zone, something similar  
yet startlingly stranger-like and as phosphorescence  
is to pressure-water so smell is to the urge  
to reach for the pelvic crowns or shoulder blades,  
slide the self-knot from top to bottom,  
slide to the surface too fast to find her  
gone in the distance time  
makes out of moving.

## Pain Arch

The eyebrows of beauty  
gather together in button seams,  
at shaved edges, brought  
together by a salted taste,  
green plum pickles.

The eyebrows of beauty  
gather together in concave groups,  
skirt shaved, insignias attentive  
to hair, triggers alert,  
brought together by the potential  
of watching the whip

shadow slip the horse  
forward, one of many  
insignias of implication.

## Cities Bombarded by the Care of Lifting

We wore love clothes  
in the flat felled by firebombs,  
percussives—rain sleeved dancing  
clothes—by the bridge rusted to falling  
for any trick to cross for free. We  
could say the bridge was half-finished  
because it could be salvaged, repaired,  
a teardown or rebuilder. Feels  
like the boredom of the natural world  
is no match for the obsequiousness  
of city remains and silence dispersed  
by the meteoric ticking of concrete  
doing its rust dance. We wore  
out the pencils we brought to make love  
conform to the arc history makes  
through collapse, urge, untanglement  
and the dreadful replacement of city  
bridges by unreverberent green tones.  
As you can see it's all a box, a column,  
unprepared sentence streams and all.  
All that's left is the click—click of concrete  
falling an inch, the same inch I got without.

## Leaving Her at the Door on a Rainy Day: Art Versus Thought

Absolutes are acceptable, relatives  
not: existence versus  
relation.

The day I left she  
stood naked at  
the door, I rolled  
up the handcrank window on my  
passenger side though  
the rain had soaked through  
the seats and puddled on  
the floor.

She stood arms  
folded beneath her breasts.  
The thing itself. Naked  
and dripping wet herself  
from herself  
and me. I left.

To hold two  
in the mind and relate  
them is an act of outright  
abstraction, assault  
on art. Sentimentality  
bombs.

Two drunks stepping  
by stopped, stared swaying,  
existence not held  
in mind but in hand.  
Persisting in her mind:  
relation of standing to  
leaving. Her naked sideshow  
was abstract. Putting the car in first  
was real.

## Out There in the Cold Distance

I've built three gates to pass through  
back to you, shrine of ulterior warmth  
rising from the cool mud-singed spring

air looming as a breeze by the sea. Obvious  
as a mouth, no, lips is the last, closest—nothing  
but red ochre on your lips or ash as

if fallen from a straw fire made cloud. Obvious  
as the moon, no, the bitter coastline hugged  
by sea debris and jugs, entered cold &

wet as a hag is the first, most distant—  
much more than a pipeline wave  
or a wave that breaks rocks & sprays

sand as much as sea-spray. Oblivious  
as a monk, yes, serried rows of barley  
betokening law is the middle, a hundred laborers

choose the weeds and make from their choking  
hold a mould of fruit for favored plants—  
this is the law & think of the path,

each gate two vertical posts and a flat  
beam top, the simplest design, each  
long day of hard work is made to pass

through a gate. The distance to each  
from the other is such to cast doubt  
on the wisdom of direction, & each

time there I've stooped with the laborers  
whose lonely long spring day is rewarded  
by yellow—or are they green?—cold low clouds.

## As It Is

Beneath or within you can see still in her  
the shapes of sharp looks,  
rounded parts not as taut, smooth  
places furrowed, suppose as a hill field

tilled and serrated into furrows.  
Like any woman who admired flirtation once  
she wears thin loose fabrics that hang  
and reveal innocently. From this

her breasts are young. Any wideness  
is hidden in her hidden thighs. Truth  
is revealed only in one place—the hat  
she wears crookedly as she works garden

fields on a hill upvalley, birch whites,  
eye whites, whites in hair echo her forgetfulness  
of where her home lies below when the day is done,  
and she, unlike the farmers' wives, won't stop.

## In An Order

The messenger came today,  
stood at the door pausing

before taking in his free  
hand a lilac branch from the bush

you cultivated before choosing  
to live in bitterness, knocked and waited

until you opened the door to see  
him hand you the lilac branch

aroma-full and laced in purple and green,  
before handing you the letter

I wrote yesterday in an opulent hope  
embodied in the arc of three things.

## Elimination

Suddenly spring evening  
leaps from the broom as I sweep  
the garden stones, suddenly  
thinking of it. The permanent faustian  
situation alights. Our bodies stick

and crevasse—but night  
eliminates body, a spoon  
drops honey. Our souls,  
dried honey in cracked combs,  
one light lights another. Our

souls adhere—but day  
eliminates soul. Evening:  
Embargo. Crevice.  
Glue. Suddenly  
the garden stones stop.

## In The Handcart

On the side of a busy road,  
a discarded handcart discards  
shadows in my direction. I  
walk toward the declining

sun. In the park at the end  
of the road, by a bare wintering  
willow, a woman wipes her eyes, cheeks.  
The cold has been carried here. I  
am someone she never saw.

## Paradox of Immotion

We lay beneath less cloud laden sky  
than the oaks pretend, but one  
sits still as froze foam. She  
lies still. That cloud denies motion,  
change, is fixed, a patch  
of sky-only snow. She lies  
still. The oak has paused to observe  
what follows on. Many looks.  
Nothing/nowhere. Sky Fixity.  
The oak is sudden; the cloud gone.  
She lies still. Is gone.

## The Captain Has Fallen Overhead

Greywool pants hems mudspangled in stereo  
syncopation: brown colorblood oak leaves,  
greybark, (the one-foot pathway) mud tannin  
soaking in hundreths of inches into her boots,

&

when I stop the luscious tapping funnels  
to mono or fades behind soft snapfingers  
punctuation (rain). After all, this fragment  
trail trails tide ebbed to sugar black flats

&

it's just metaphor for the vegetable willow  
green tip plunged one inch in such mud  
as she reckons a spectacle's rainslaught  
can liquefy. Urban woman on a heart's-whim.

## Underground Movement

We've paid our respects to the parking  
garage. underground with all its subhuman  
smells, grease maybe or gas & oil. Exhaust  
& fumes. Concrete brushed in waves,  
circle parts, made to keep things—  
all sorts of things—from slipping  
down a slope whose largesse is a bottom.  
Nothing there was touched by life  
save life long dead as in oil,  
leather, cotton fabrics stretched  
thin & worn thin. Nothing  
there moved save by combustion  
which left behind exhaustion.  
Oh, except for us, who made wishes  
like half-candles & smoke wisped  
up, goodnight is the luck of clear  
afternoon sun air.

## Caution: Artist at Work

Making a sculpture of rust  
I started with one of iron  
and as if one person stood  
by the railing under a pier,  
another joined and the two  
walked off, something about  
moisture, something about

air, something about events  
that take a little too long  
left the iron just singed  
not gone. The satin finish  
steelwooled on the surface  
is now replaced by blemishes  
like blisters, by the beginnings  
of evaporation like leavings  
of passion.

## Seem

There is no magic to places  
though the sentimentalists work  
overtime. The small forest  
clearing surrounded by pines  
and overshadowed, glacial  
stone set just so near its center,  
small twig fire lit by the teenage  
boy next to a hut he built  
of branches and bits of scrap lumber  
from the barn, on a winter day flurry  
filled and brimming under escape,  
small bits of warmth in a barren  
landscape is now a rolling paddock  
of mud and horseshit, the rock hauled  
away and the trees down, burned  
to smoke and ash, the hut  
ground into the ground—no

magic place. Beneath the mud  
where the hut once stood  
rests the metal can inside a metal can,  
and inside both is a plastic bag inside  
a plastic bag, and inside both is the hand-  
written letter in which I told you  
once my feelings  
in a place that seemed.

## Imagine That

River as fountain.

Water released from all sorts of everywhere  
contained in the confines of bank, safe  
storehouse of slowly escaping convictions.

Heat transfer. albedo, convection,  
evaporation, condensation—abstractions  
unhelpful to our plan. Fountain

as meeting place, place for men  
to watch overworldly women  
work their bodies into silhouettes.

Or if a man died near here the fountain  
could serve as monument and time  
echo. As river the fountain is hidden.

Body of water and banks for stepping  
down. Parts are hidden as many parts

are. Imagine the bottle floating down,  
down. Imagine the paper within,  
deep inside. Imagine the river that ends  
on a sand plain, that spreads before  
slipping down, confusing up.

And the bottle delivered as expected  
to sand, but the wrong sand, very  
wrong sand saying imagine that.

## In Exile

I'm so impressed by your little green lights—in daylight they remind me of fountains or indigo stations. At night they cause the bottoms of my feet to itch unscratchably. For me the letters pile up, and though you haven't written in weeks it's time for me to write you. Or at least sketch out who you are. Furnaces burn brightly near the edges of your face, or is it your hips? Do the green lights signify the that of burning? *That* of it is happening? Even though I can't see you, my sketch has you not understanding. Like poets sworn off worn words the next fix is ubiquitous. Hold on, hold to what we got—broken is how we exist, the break in symmetry that enables something or two. Were we perfect for each other we'd blend to nothing. One light, is it turning? Turning round or color? Selfish on the inhale, selfless exhale, exhale, exhale.

## Clodmaster

One could argue that my role is master—  
like the plum-master who in expert lines  
cranks life into the tree and blossoms  
overhead that hang as if saddened  
by the joy you feel. But what's more important  
is the stick I hold, earned as no other has been,  
and the hard clod of earth I strike with it,  
passing by it on my way to you.

## In Case of Stymie

In your city like mine the hardness of buildings,  
the coral, the stinging scratchiness of the soles  
of the feet are symbol of cranky silence  
and underground passages. In my dream  
you warmed your skirt on the surface  
of a covered brazier, and within the quilts  
you wrapped on top you warmed  
your feet. We broke charcoal on charcoal  
to hear it tinkle, smell its cud. In your dream  
I was an urban bench carved under moonlight  
after an English sunset. You would have said  
my language frightens you, but my language  
frightens you. Tonight the sunset alternated  
with crashing waves curled in pipelines  
and all we could think of were sizes.

Someday I'll revise you, make your city  
more foreign, make your hair less human,  
makes its color unprintable, averse  
to photographic chemicals. This way  
words will mean more.

## Ferocactus

I found a place where the earth is red,  
where green things grow with sharp whiskers,  
where the color of lemons signals sharp lights.  
where the sun near night becomes porcelain,  
where the sound of a single shot shifts a ring of blind birds,  
where soft dust from butterfly winds makes the delicate  
meal you've always wanted, where strangers  
happily exchange clothes by stripping  
unashamedly. In this place I've grown  
lost, and I wander from one small shade  
to another as it moves from west to east,  
my daily water supply is provided by shale  
cups and barrel cactuses—the viznaga—fierce  
and wild. By night I use its spines to tattoo  
this note to you in dark blue fountain ink,  
but the sun burns so hard the words  
are hard to see by day, by night I hear howls—  
metallic, linked to spines and sharp whiskers.  
I can't tell. I can't tell you  
how happy I am.

## My First Hail Marys

When the green line  
goes flat, disappears,  
place the rosary in my hand. Ignore  
the ugly shapes my mouth assumes,  
the half-closed way my eyes stop.  
Don't fix your stare on the wall's plaster  
whose dents were made by deliberate ignorance—  
there is nothing there but sorrow  
even in its turning away whiteness.  
Choose the bead you've chosen before  
your special marker and place it  
between my thumb and fingers, pretend  
the words I'm saying after my last breath has left,  
pretend joyfully. Turn to the trees outside  
the window, the glorious ways their branches  
branch exuberant in possibilities though dark  
this dark evening; forget what I've forgotten—  
the life I've lived and your part in it. It  
means nothing to me, and I will remember it  
forever.

## Thin

Summer is thin  
all things that think are thin  
in summer—season of creation and contemplation  
summer heat thins meals—  
difficulty making makes sweats  
thinness hiding in small  
lines blunt meanings drown fear  
in the wets of skin on sheets  
where constant yelling, carhorns, roadcrush  
pulls wet from the air—you're  
so thin all's left  
is the crotch punctuation  
you grew back  
muck your mind left  
behind

## In Arc

In whose arc does the little hand move  
slow as a boat launch full of tons  
creaking as all things manmade do,  
clothes that change every day skin  
like changing skin reflecting mood  
the way the bottoms of leaves turn up  
in rain or is it wind? Crows stoically  
one color, herons shamedly one color  
always except when tricks  
are played. The hand moved little  
because the fan needed to stop  
because it began to sound like  
brief words of wisdom coming  
as if from the bottoms of black leaves.

## Meeting Scene

In the park corner near dark,  
summer, gathering  
the insignificant: branches, bark,  
twigs and tossed aside dried leaves,  
grass and green weeds, combinations  
of dead and live, I pile  
the dead in chimney piles, room  
for air to rise away angelic and light  
the dead grass spurting yellow half-  
flames and, smoking, light wood—  
sizzle and crack, resurrection in the small.  
I place the weeds—still, living—on,  
and smoke seeps up through the rank  
rubbish and makes smelly smoke—  
smudge against mosquitoes—  
rising up into the air and disappearing  
above the park. Into this corner,  
into this time, you've stepped  
and sniff your greetings.

## Unterment Ceremony

The women were left to untie  
the bonds binding him to life  
which pouted—leaving a trail  
of mousetracks to show the way he came—  
rattling death, there on a lark.

Not just clothes reflecting his smell  
hanging as from a scarecrow,  
nor his hair nor nails yellowed as summer  
hay left by the barn last summer,  
not even the ring he wore harboring  
secrets for one of his liberators.

Just his name which they cut loose  
from his eyelids and packed in a box  
shaped like a puffball cloud  
and let it fly twisting up like a smudge  
that keeps away the biting things.

## Indistinct Dream Bird

Imagine your wildest dream  
spilling off a cliff fresh , still  
fused with mud making brown  
cascades falling to a pool you  
can penetrate little if at all,  
all hidden by all-graying fog,  
all indistinct besides the crows  
coughing their doubts in the fog,  
whispering of the mud,  
reminding each other of the days  
when they sat in a row on branches  
above the cliff reciting psalms  
or kissing, small pecks. This dream  
lies in your bed, its hand on your arm,  
its breathing all hidden, its dreams  
all indistinct.

## On a Sentimental Aspect of Killers

We kill—all blood,  
all bloodless. The kill is in us,  
silver dark roads. Sniper  
crouched on a rooftop, his Remington.  
Radio says, “got him?”  
“Barely.” Bugs in the lights, road deer,  
slumping rats furtively dodging.  
Birds dented by glass. Green glass  
night shade. “Take him.”  
Death does not wait.  
Find this bag of tricks  
when you contemplate  
stochastic sight, predictive vision—rationalize  
a rose the color of kill. I watched.  
I cried two days of beauty,  
from skill.

## Unbearable Parable

This is the work of water-  
color painting. Color mixed  
in water, glycerine, homey-water,  
a pesticide as preservative, gum arabic  
or senegal is laid on absorbing  
paper; water drunk in paper  
leaves the gum and color;  
hot from preservation heat  
evaporates liquids leaving gum binding colors.  
Think of it: evaporated water, and water  
soaked into paper makes art,  
and art is left to its own  
lightfastness.

## Secrets of Travel, of Work

Rivers and bridges, mountains, seas—do not give them new names.  
They are as silly clothes or none, are no more than gossip.

Spend midday on foot; use a stick as a third thin leg;  
save morning time and evening time for thought.

Wish for beds or mats you've never warmed, simple food  
without excess drink, for poetry is the duty of man alone

and woman alone but the duty of man and woman together  
is production. With simple food you can do anything.

Keep your poems to your pockets, carried as winged insects tucked  
in vegetable cloth. When asked, make them fly away; when asked,

make more.

## Instead of Love

I have taken your forgetfulness and grafted  
it onto my love of detail and grand sweeps  
in the hope of creating keen insight  
into emptiness. Take plumtree lightlessly blue and graft  
it onto the sequoia and create fruit birds only can reach.  
I find at night the thought will come that  
I should have crown-grafted not tongue-grafted;  
in a rainstorm the thought will come that  
instead of a bare clayearth patch I should have wrapped  
it in plastic. But back to us, the sun drapes tree mantles with  
increase and beneath the shade only dirt dares  
invade our thoughts. The graft will not take, since  
I have forgotten you, and you're mending the detail  
I dropped on the path home which  
is away from you, away from lightning, away  
in every direction.

## Could It Be?

The point of living is the glance,  
walking along rows of briars, ducking  
beneath thorns, nettles torturing the soul  
through comforting sandals, puzzling  
philosophers whose view of the soul  
tends to head, heart, or gut not feet  
or knees, the ports of nature biting  
along the rows and ways exposing  
narrow critic's eyes peeking up  
in their own glance to the eyes  
which dare glimpse the shining  
body of Shifra whose backward  
glance betrays a soul dripping  
like semen down her legs.

## On a Rise

Her hair is gunmetal grey in the dimmed enclosure  
light, tinted light a redblond at the tips and her stance  
is faced away and the curve disappearing between her legs  
is the face-realm of the black in the soles of the feet.  
She stands as on a stylite and the head has no choice  
but envision the view behind her from behind her  
from all directions to see how the pointing place  
encompasses all. Look up to her to see the misperspective  
she affords, how spirits like drop angels are left  
in the lurch, how dangling statements are like  
treatises. That is, the womanly parts throwing  
shore shades into sunpools infringe. She comes  
into view as I top the rise, one of several along  
this path enshrined in live oak and sweetsmell,  
and soon she'll dip below the next, this path  
where bugs and frogs grow quiet, where snakes  
jerk in warning, where all is plain.

## Bet On It

In the house, in the dark,  
subtle parts of doors and windows  
are broken, worn by words  
passing by, through. on. In  
each corner life signs crouch  
lower, hug closer the walls,  
fibers broken off from rugs  
and turning colors in the air.  
Let's say my bet's the same  
as yours, say we know it.  
Is it hope we shoo to the corner?  
Is it a hulking bug looking for it?  
Fly near me, to the dark place  
where curtains curl and stain,  
where words are buzz saws,  
where bets wander off.

## N'N

Long reck'n'n up'long rails,  
whiskey poured in plastic pouches hang  
from lowbranch buckeyes 'long the stream-  
bed, place I sleep with hair-wrap-over  
eyes'n forehead, not-wash, knot-tangle.  
What meat I cook was recent live'n greens  
I eat raw are sour and shape'nd spades.  
Each night trains'r scummin' past blow  
past, raise'n wind whin'n dance-twirl.  
Each hour I wake'n start my you-dream  
tongues together'n lips just behind  
hand on hip facing each oth-hour.  
Then it stops, it stops, stops. My piece  
with you is at'n end.

## Folds and Ropes

Tonight we sit across the room and all I know of you  
is escaped.

You are vacant of you. What animated once is now  
the white a snow makes  
over fallen leaves, your emptiness once fresh as opening leaves  
is covered in white sheets because I've seen enough  
even seeing nothing. It's time to go.

The ropes are draped across the woodbars  
and under palettes made for lifting  
heavy things becoming light.

I'll find you here one day, and all I'll know  
of you is the lifted folds of the white sheets  
draped as they've always been.

## Planning of Precision and Haste

The shelves are full of empty boxes:  
You planned the provisions exactly—  
running out was a photo finish. Doorjambs  
and framing stood till the last bug's bite and rot  
brought them down as the weighted grey car  
rolled down the sand lane but no one followed  
for fear of blame. Was I blamed for dying first?  
Across the rise a chestnut pushes up, lady slippers  
shed pine-needle hats, and invisible flying bugs  
live their houred lives just the same almost  
as if time kept at it. Look at our lives—  
where was the genius in their design?

You've poured your sullen potion into me,  
and I'll stand by the sawing river, the color of birch,  
and I won't join you, I just won't, until the yellow  
dog howls in my ear and the funny  
smells blow downstream.

August 25, 2000

## Nothing But Cross

for Andre Dubus

He's in a simple wood box under  
a simple wood cross, both pine, made simply,  
simple nails where others would join  
or fasten stoutly, no name but initials  
in pencil facing west in the fading sun. The ends  
of the cross and its top are cut flat  
with small bevels to prevent eager children  
from bruising themselves on a last work.  
The only clues are the beads  
hung on Mardis Gras and his country's flag  
on a broken pole. Seen from a low angle away  
from the sun his cross is dark and sweetly  
releasing pine smells, and the wind is full  
of words he wants to say, but he's holding  
it in this afternoon. This simple green place  
and pines have captured him, no need  
to carve it in stone, no need to name or describe.  
He knows the words, and the words  
know him back—drinking buddies  
in a plain-spoken bar.

## Sallie and Her Lovers

Sallie's split in two  
by the 2-foot trunk of 100-foot pine.  
Did she know this would be her store  
when Joseph Mudgett married her  
200 years ago? Nights were dark,  
and womanly hysteria in times of intimacy  
were lies held clearly by pine boughs  
far from the village. Dark by  
lack of human light. This yard  
is rising up sunset, shadows  
crouch by her headstone bonded  
to the tree like a mistake  
of growing up, a second trunk  
or Siamese sister. This pine  
has loved her, taken her body  
and now towers above me,  
above Joseph to the side  
and crooked. This yard is now  
a stamp with its approaches dug away  
and sand. These pine roots  
have ravished and drained  
her as Joseph tried, each on his  
own divide. Of the four of us  
in the rising dark, in the rising mist,  
in the center of the remaining  
rows of solitude is smirking most  
beneath the threat  
of human light?

## Face Facts

The face approximates perfection  
varying according to dice rolls,  
sagging by sweet failures, pondering  
time by night, dodging eyesight  
just out of view. The stare develops  
to a look that ever fades, takes on  
a dusty hue or slighted paint, sinks  
into the eyes, shades them. Downward  
stares problematically persist, and the hood  
becomes inner. Beneath your skin  
the bone is mined by the near-perfect  
finished sawtooth of backwards  
glances. The trick is the life filter,  
the balancing memory  
to life variable blend plug-in,  
standard equipment packed as backup  
for the latter half of an unknown-length  
journey between two sudden drops.

## A Bad Century for Sallie

Sallie's not going anywhere:  
Her headstone's buried  
in the trunk of a pine tree, the biggest  
in the cemetery. If she's in a pine  
box we can add irony to her embarrassment.

Her husband's buriers in a puff of inspiration  
buried him just where he can lie there  
and just laugh and laugh, staring up into the heights  
of those pine boughs strutting conquest.  
He never planted her, I'll bet,  
with as heavy lumber as that tree did.

If the tree caught fire we'd laugh like clichés.

The mind is a piece of burnt wood eager from use,  
and in this state one wonders whether it matters  
if it was split for fuel or lacquered for show.

Forget the jokes ending "Sallie wood"  
or involve "pining". Yeah, Yeah, Yeah.

Me standing there. The headstone sticking  
out the side of a pine. The cuckold husband grinning  
and moping off to the side. Sallie with a root  
jammed between her legs. An idiot named Pee Wee  
chainsawing bears out of pines (I didn't mention this  
before, but I'll add it to the next draft) within ear range.  
And instead of a director named "Spike" it was just me  
and a notebook still looking for a door.

## Slower Traffic

So much living made into so little,  
circling the pond all night,  
the moon reflected many ways.  
Just one short poem at dawn,  
then a long rest when  
really it's a stop. Waking up to find small  
gifts on the ground above as the gatekeeper  
asks us to put the blossoms back. The water  
that's evaporated makes a fine meal of the sky.  
To the poet the poem's not there at all,  
to the poem the poet's a chalkmaker  
and the dust on the ground his greatest work.

I like to come up on my subjects  
while they dawdle in the left lane  
and flip them off while passing on the right—  
the best subject is slower  
traffic in the wrong lane,  
and the best poet has the darkest grill.

## Cemetery With A Mohawk

We come across cemeteries,  
wander into them in an accident,  
drawn by the smell of flowers unable  
to grow or grow more colorful, drawn  
by the odors of fresh cut grass  
and sliced-in-half frogs. At least  
this is usual: The walk from the nearest  
truck stop requires no great feat  
nor unusual stride. Some, though,  
are closed and beyond closed are forgotten  
though not forgettable since the dead we  
fear rest there or so someone wrote.  
And such cemeteries buried in civilization  
have had their sides sliced off and rest  
as cut-down pyramids, and the fear  
of children is to burrow the hand  
into a side and feel the bones shake  
back. The walk to such ones  
takes a slide-down climb and maybe hands  
or fingers, and the edges on top  
open up to sunlight, and flowers  
here grow and grass is low from respect  
or gaul. The trip to heaven takes heavy  
equipment and trucks that haul.

## A Spire Carved into a Strange Shape

Your vacancy is hoodoo-sculpted,  
all angles and bulges sanded  
off, pleasant curves fears  
now sand-dust flowing ahead  
of hurried winds. Some call it the age,  
some familiarity, but it's a standing  
wave from inconstant expressions,  
variable assurances. Soon desert dark  
will take over and my  
only hope will be to join the winds,  
rub up until my deepest  
expression is the one that sets  
the rest of you free,  
adds you to the background stuff.

## Simple Resisted

I prefer complex pleasures  
to the simple ones of the plains,  
not corn in butter but corn as interspersions  
in selections of curries, not short straight  
but Medusean. Plain pleasures  
are roadmasters of indifference cushioning  
against jolts that someone must feel  
or the rearview mirror turned to half-reflect  
nightbrights when the plain blunt light  
hits oblique—some...where. Sitting  
in an adirondack sipping plain icetea  
next a peach warming by a brickwall  
enjoins anonymous pleasure lacking lacquer,  
pine soaking drying time. I will watch  
the explosions from grass overgrown  
and bushes ungroomed of toads leaping  
into a deep well, a banner the luckless  
unfurl the keep their earlobes alert  
against the drowsy nature of the familiar,  
rather than lift one eyelid to further  
the bright existence of the simple.

## Lover's Hat

When the sky turned purple near the west  
she gathered her lovers in a circle  
in a circle of sand and dust surrounded  
by ferocactus and creosote, metallic plants  
in an aluminum desert. In the circle  
of those whose beds she shared  
she placed a bottle of water  
at the center of the circle,  
on sand and dust that would absorb  
and drink were the glass to unfold,  
and demanded, "what would you call this  
were it not to be called water-bottle?"

Among her lovers the scarecrow stood  
among needles and acidic oils flowing  
below ground in caustic subpools and above  
ground in the rust veins of plants not nearly  
alive and kicked it over and among

all the things he did right that day  
including the hover no woman could resist  
he interspersed one wrong: He did not  
remove his plaited hat.

## Voles in the Blades

What could be more useless than the mind  
at ease? I have awoken from a useless sleep  
lasting till dark, finding myself encased  
in a love long forgotten except by night,  
and the frogs have decided again  
to hop up into the blades of a mower,  
just as last week the voles and mice  
decided as they did last summer to leap  
into the thresher, a fact not frequently  
entered on the "Vole Fact Sheet," the best  
guide to lost love. The love in my dream  
is a bike ride across the desert  
on tires rotten from bad water and dry  
heat, stopping every 15 minutes to repump,  
buying new springs worth 25¢ for \$2  
from a blacksmith seeing fortune  
in our misfortune. We walked  
in our ease, useless as a mind awake  
to voles and the killing blades.

## Road Trips

On the debris-strewn road up  
upsloping rises flags furl like rabbit  
tails in hiding or a turned back on the couch.  
Losing's stiletto quickturn  
would heal in the healing twice bright daylight  
but I won't bring myself to relent so soon.  
The dirty dust blowing up the road  
will soon catch the top of my shadow  
as I walk away from one into the other.  
When the wind has risen to the pitch  
of tall trees I will scream the second echo  
sound your name makes spoken  
while inhaling, and like smoke in the lungs  
pitchforking the heart, like the exhale  
changed by exchange, my shadow will meet dust,  
yours the wind.

## Unexecuted Transformations

When Franz Kafka died his words began  
their frightful transformation from inky existence  
to verbal resonance and tertiary effects  
and Franz Kafka's mean no middling tomb  
was laid to rest in a plain field of others  
each with mighty Jewish names and faith  
in numbers but though the tombs were filled  
with voices none became transformations  
never planned nor explained and words  
grew harder in famous black marble Franz  
Kafka's acted locally made small repairs  
to the existences of deadmen dead grasses  
leaves flowers sprang up trees sprang up  
ivy vines and tangle gripped black and white  
marble tombs which grew themselves  
to the sizes of large horses and opened  
up turning pages leaves turning colors  
in clutching shades and now the graveyard  
of Franz Kafka has been called to judge  
you based on your faith in the imagined.

## Go Away

The simple fare is please go away  
trains leave the station some for gashouses  
others for the spraying pit I choose  
the one to the fountain with edges of marble  
lambs as footrests or knobs plain green flashlights  
or glass made to look it so thick shattering's  
out of the blue question markings of a blacksheep  
bawling for lambstew fountain of solitudinous shush  
sounds echoes in columned hallways tinkles  
in pink tickles to load so slow in marshmallow  
avalanches beneath your view of the Alps  
high on a highrise floor in stupendous machine  
warrens this facelessness was your message  
in please in go in away and my choice is walk  
away or be walked away upon by the cleansing  
fractures of smiling facelesses

## A Cloud Could

In fields with you the seas above open  
from time to time and spray  
our tongues with flakes made  
by changing minds and above a cloud  
seems cannot move as we lie between blankets  
by the verge of wind-sculpted gorse rows.  
I watch that cloud part carefully  
affectionate. For hours I watch it  
hover waiting to observe  
what follows on. No move.  
A cloud could obey its will handsomely  
blanketing us. I catch your eyelids  
blink toward sleep so much  
a sign it seems then the cloud  
is evaporation is gone  
its dumb precipitate lies upon  
our blanket hutch which holds  
me only and the fling of you.

## Under Tonight In Crosswind Park

Tonight I am drunk on your foreignity,  
questions singularly curious:  
thirst abstraction? hunger transformation? blueness  
as in sky swelling behind  
eyes? You lie bare, annex marking snowangels,  
I hover on your bloom. What sounds  
could you make were will your hands?

Tonight some big spirit has painted  
a lapping lake in real gold, burns  
over the roots of my eyes, my hair  
creases and whitens more. Do you  
understand what foreign heels do  
when lifting the hem of a longcoat shading  
your under view? I've warmed  
your hands in this gold hidden  
and retreating, followed you by the head  
primitives, and now you speak words speak speech  
unmoving made, grandeur-quaking  
grammar leaves, and my thoughts only  
are nerve-sky, happen-born, breathturned.

## Black Love

Love is inhuman, coming  
up from the soles into nerves  
whose itch can be scratched only  
by incision. It is a black feeling  
cleverly inching upwards leaving  
our heads lessened. Whenever leaves  
turn their undersides up in wind  
or high wind thirsting maybe for the wet  
of rain or the killing frost, the goldlight  
lit near day's end reminds me of your hair  
and how it turned when I came near  
like the top of your head coming off.  
Love is inhuman, how it robs  
you of the joy of scratching  
to success, how it feels underfoot.  
Love like a black feeling flies from the head,  
pulls the soul with it, sucks dry the breathing  
leaves my heart's become watching the top  
of your head come off, the concussion  
of love bursting out of you.

## Low Over Boston on a Rainy Night in November

Coming in low over Boston in a 727,  
unusual landing vector for a familiar place,  
steady rain in late November flying in from the West  
on yet another visit. Over the Western suburbs  
yellow gas arclights fill by haloes a red and green  
tennis court, pale-blue tinted white halogens  
poke the dark through mist rising from rubber  
singing on asphalt—the world below, houses  
and cars, streetlights and more cars, drenches  
my memory of you like the blue lights of the city  
ahead, and the rainy mist is like every love  
I've had. Over the Charles I see the ritzy apartments  
along Storrow are casting their lights on the water,  
though the rain and darkened cold tries to dilute  
all of it. In those apartments people are listening  
to classical music to musty smells and overdry  
heat played on digital machines, or speaking  
hushed under comforters given on a joyful  
day. Tonight the lights of cleaning men  
or women hold more truth fuel  
in lights that move up one story at a time.  
Over Boston harbor boats labor in cocoons  
of yellowed mist-rain spewing arcs of light  
toward me and the plane banking for a long  
turn over lighthouses and prisons. Each light  
is at least one life, each one is moving  
from one perspective or another. You are  
in one of these houses or apartments, on a boat,  
driving a car, are a light I can see, but because I  
can see them all means nothing about seeing the one.  
The constant low frequency drone of the engines  
throttled back is damped by the rain around me  
riding just below clouds on a trip whose purpose  
is to drive zigzag through the towns below  
and the city hoping the electric signal of your dying  
dreams is strong enough to flicker my lights,  
stop me this time.

## Distant Winds

Distant winds over your head, miles away above  
blowing the speed of traincars on a short train  
down the eastern slope, the effect on your hair  
sixth order at best—you appear as calm as empty blue  
above besides. When you die that sky will be grass  
and the wind the sorrow of your children  
or snow deepened under bluer skies. When I die  
you will be the watcher and I the wind a mile above  
and my effect on you will be as it always was: blue  
for the reflection that sparkles the ocean, blowing  
a sixth-order effect as the snow deepens.

## Winter Scene Captivated

Your name billows, mine  
is sneaking up on park benches snow-laden,  
bloated pillow-like awaiting heads

not minding the temperature.  
Today the bicycles slide sideways  
down the cambered slope and the park

has decided on milk-blue, a tribute  
to both the shaking sky dropping  
its leavings and the shade of age.

Drop the images and the names  
jerk snapping to different focii,  
each possibility visited in turn

exhaustively. No wonder the poet  
dreams of fixing the scene and a snapshot  
stakes its lines: half where

he thinks, half where  
the images suddenly heavy  
clang into place.

## TV Ad

You walk to the door, an exclusive or extravagant  
eroticism hanging behind the tight curves  
of your skirt which follows yours like a dancer's  
hands hanging just over your curves, like a dancer's  
legs walking just inside yours, like the duende's  
thoughts pushing so hard flesh exudes and harrows  
toward you, toward the insides of you, an exclusive  
stretch of cashmere wallpapered on the expanse  
of your midriff and bulging from the sides  
of your breasts outcurved like overfull bagskins  
of limpid redwine or torched ricewine, the door  
just knocked in hurried flurries by a man you know  
who lowers his umbrella at the opened door, rain  
wetting by bursts his headtop, his eyes slacking,  
muscles untensing, and I on the couch hear  
the little voices in the dark, see through the raindrops  
forming a rainbow anchored on the distant  
side of town a room cracked  
to the perfection of imperfection, a bed unsheeted  
and damp, a place to lie down and let the heavy  
heart steelwheels cut, seer, or sever  
something that seems just remembered,  
about to be forgotten, akin to ivy  
covering something special rotting beneath.

## One Crazy Stanza

The end of the world is at the end  
of the street, at the corner with no store,  
by the walkup with no windows where love  
takes on a dark tang. The treetop reaches the bottom  
of the bed and the shadow's even lower. At  
the corner there are no roads, and nothing  
is across the street. The end of the world  
is as unapproachable as a no-enter apartment, a trunkless tree top,  
a shadow & a bed near the corner with no store;  
so it's not possible, even, to sit on the curb after buying a moon pie  
and an RC Cola to watch it all fade  
down to one little  
PoP!

## Highway Love

The car at full gait down the daylight highway  
is the cushion of solitude among strung-out  
towns by the highway that used to be, past  
worn out gas pumps used to fueling the flight past  
now content to let rust mix with unbought gasoline  
in storage tanks beneath dandelioned and grassweeded  
cracks in 30-year-old asphalt, or the burger cum  
softserve stand by the former edge of town surrounded  
now by apartment rows long-ago new now seeping rats  
and mattresses into the parking areas where teenagers  
once gathered to exchange their age for hardness. The car  
at full gait in the funnel-dark highway is a bag  
of loneliness, my face lit by dashboard lights,  
a pedal steel phasing in and out on the tube-backed  
radio dialed to the farthest station out on the east  
side of Kansas, and from backporch lights  
and streetlights, from neon Bud and Coors signs  
hanging like beacons to men seeking women,  
from the searchlight down by the automall,  
I see the bits of reasons why they say love is a softride  
Chevy, 8 cylinders making stubble sounds smoothed  
by glasspacks, and the most delicious bedroom  
is a plastic back bench, hot with summer sweat,  
cooled by the green end of sundowns, filled by the sounds  
of crickets and ky-otes, and oathed by rolling notes  
in the backs of our throats.

## River Dry-out

At the bottom of the hill is a fold  
in the river doubling back as if the way  
down were the way up or as if it forgot to wave  
to the drivers on the bridge spanning  
it twice, once downward once upward.  
Water is a way of life, and the way  
water flows makes a difference how  
fast it salts. The river I know  
does its double-back routine  
in the low flat headlands above a wide  
fan-shaped desert plain, and after a short  
plunge the river fans out and dissipates  
in the salt flats, subdued by the head,  
dropped beneath earth. This is  
the path we've taken, this is  
our steady decrease, this is  
the visual accomplice to the sound  
of steady wind seeping through the curliques  
of bridging steel that seems so much  
like missed life.

## Unraveling Man

By the road side: empty cans unable to rust,  
plastic bottles filled half full with frothy  
brown liquids, orange peels becoming fair dust,

a captured set of coins in a fairy ring,  
a diary of appointments some missed,  
others made, and phone numbers concentrating

area codes in a flock of towns sunning by  
a dry riverbed running through a desert.  
I know the tire-sounds humming by,

know the road side's catches, can tell by the heat rising  
who is going where and why. Tell me what  
to say to the girl sitting on the bench seat, crying

by the road, her sides heaving like fire-blowing bellows.  
Rise up through heat mirages, rise up  
by the road side, leave her like fire leaves shadows thrown

on walls made tender by the weight of age,  
by the age of words disintegrating.

## Litter Ally

I am compelled by things resting  
on the sides of roads, left behind  
in accident or by disruptive intention,  
a plastic cup once holding 32 ounces  
of sweet and sugary pop tossed against  
society's best interests, a post-it  
torn from the front of a notebook  
by a rogue grasping blast of wind  
which appears against all reason  
for continuity. When we die we  
face what's left behind, confront  
the deliberate, lament the accidental,  
pick up as if trustees with litter pickers  
where we left off.

## Comprehending Nothing

When they all look back  
on all I've said, all I've done, all the lives  
I've led and been part of, all the poems  
I've written, all the women I've loved,  
what they will shout down is none  
of the words and none of the deeds, none  
of the lives or nights, none of that but  
all of my heart.

## Totem

Lie back, press the grass, the ground,  
with your back and legs. Damp tonight.  
Above the bottoms of clouds are lit orange  
by a suburban light, the rest are graymetal,  
and gaps where the sky seems blue from a moon  
not willing to wane. Lie back with the oak  
in your range of vision and let the back  
of your head feel dizzy, let your eyes hang onto  
nothing though they watch. Something moves.  
The air is heading North to join in making cold.  
Let me slide my hand beneath you, and let  
your back hang onto nothing. The oak  
or the clouds move, you or I move. The gaps  
between heat and held, cold and absence,  
inside and under make something  
in this cycle a dizzying emblem.

## At a Bus Stop, Outside the Gates

We stand at a bus stop in February  
waiting to be taken away as fast  
as we can be. The place we're near  
seems easy to get into but hard to leave.

The air, atmosphere, seems threaded  
to earlier days forming beads of colors  
ranging from black to blue, blue  
like this sky today. This air,  
atmosphere, seems broken

like a skipping record, one instant  
a warm blue sky inviting like

the eyes of a lover one can never take,  
the next  
the clouds are dropping flakes hard,  
trying hard to shake them,  
and they spit heavy to the ground  
and bounce  
sometimes twice or three times.

The warm blue sky invites us up  
into it, I've fallen for you this way.  
The cold cloudladen sky sings a deathsong  
and the dance is stiff, unmuscled. We want  
to get away in the next bus, but  
the neighborhood is filled with closing blinds:

in each, two fingers spreading them open.  
Still the sky varies. The sky is an open  
grave, and the cold clouds tell us to dig  
deeper. Soon

a tractor pulling a farm wagon comes by but  
the wagon is filled with high-output speakers  
and amplifiers pushing out sound  
as if from the muzzle end of a gun. Loud,  
so loud perhaps to shout back in time,

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

playing dance songs, shaking loose  
the snowflakes that bounce  
sometimes twice or three times.  
We want to get away  
on the next bus  
from a place easy to get out of, hard  
to stay in, and sometimes we fly up  
in the warm sky, sometimes we fall down,  
and bounce twice or three times before. . . .

. . . before we fly up like ashes  
or snow in reverse  
to the open sky, the open graves,  
the opened eyes.

## Cook Me A River

The smells of meals being cooked, prepared  
begin at 10:30, preparations made, simmering  
starts, slow roasting, frying. Everywhere  
in the localities made of time  
at 10:30 the work begins to feed the greedy,  
perhaps many who are lonely, some ill,  
others made unquestionably evil  
or evil-tempered—all will  
themselves to eat or will  
wait. Plates are warmed and places set.  
silverware, plasticware, stickware  
laid out. No cozier word is spoken  
by woman to man than meal. Much dying  
has been endured for this. Who will  
not eat? The crazy, the famished, the engorged  
lovers fighting for life, those indifferent  
to the alchemy of cooksmoke,  
or immune to interruptions not of the mind,  
not of the heart.

## Original Motels and Working Trains

Motels and unfinished  
mobility. Scented shrines  
with doors onto cars. One  
bed, one toilet, one car  
lined up. One driver moves.  
Cheap way to make a poor  
living: off longing for slow  
roads, sights like snake pits  
and snack shops. Ice flurries  
at the cheap edges of towns.  
In my car, dashboard lights  
full-on-green my face, the alternative  
reflective path through my mirror  
dampens headlights catching up.  
On a slow road I pace a freight train,  
a superchief once & from a cracked-open  
door on a boxcar filled with straw  
a pudgy face blooms in the glow  
from odd shed light. A strobe.  
Hard to say who caught whom  
taking out the easy way.

## Change, Or Wind

Something has decided to happen  
in the forest of pines and firs  
in a high-wind storm,  
wind blowing hard  
high in the tops of trees.  
Something passing through,  
temporary or ending.  
Sounds of surf folding liquidly  
on coarse sand or a crowd cheering  
far off in sympathetic triumph.  
Doors on aged hinges closing slowly  
making metal sounds. Wood ships caught  
in ice floes being crushed, pressure  
from far-off storms pushing each floe  
upon another and into ship sides  
2 feet thick but bowing inwards.  
Hushes from a thousand mothers' lips  
urging patience and solitude. Drums  
rolling, bass drums thumping.  
Heavy things happening slowly.  
Knocking like scared visits, hammering  
by crews of carpenters. Nothing  
unusual. Except a tuft of pine needles,  
three in a green bouquet, drops to your shoulder.  
I pick it away and drop it on a bed of comforter-soft  
dead brown pine needles, a gesture like a kiss interrupted  
by a brief goodbye or a fading glance in the passing  
glare of headlights.

## A Harsh Soothing Ignorance

Of all the explanations  
the one with the most vowels  
sounds best, ah and er hinting  
the guide knows much less than  
a harsh one would, and besides  
soothing wordsounds, soothing  
ignorance is a pillow for my own  
stupidity. The path grows familiar  
with communal stumbling. Why  
isn't the dictionary filled  
with welcomed dumbfoundedness?  
Let's the two of us dumb and unfound  
drive with coins and flip our way  
cross country, like a drunk under a lamp  
post, focused on the lit center point  
hoping to at last escape into darkness?

## Two Old Lovers in a Warm Bed on a Cold Night

You lie on the bed, one leg casually  
outside the blanket, the other beneath,  
one knee down in front of the other. Your breasts  
complete the cycle of curves, your heated  
breathing diminishing becomes ice mist  
in the cold mountain air dropping  
through the window we left open when we heated.  
On the side table your Japanese lamp grows dim,  
the wick going out though it floats on clear oil,  
its reflected light dimming in your pupils  
as you watch me rise to attend the coming  
darkness. Touching the lamp the wick flame begins  
to flicker, and lifting the lamp it tips toward you  
but the wick remains motionless in the frozen  
oil. I look up in time to just see the last  
spark light from your eyes, cycle complete,  
the heat from the small flame unable to keep  
its source alive.

## Intimate Products

In a hayfield overflowing with grasshoppers  
and gnats, under an oak  
that's been there for 100 years,  
by a stonewall fence built 200 years  
ago under a rock I buried a peanut  
can and inside that a plastic bag.

In the way age is reckoned  
for important matters, the hayfield is new,  
the can and plastic bag newer,  
the tree and stonewall fence recent,  
and what's inside is just there.

After a day important to us  
I buried in that peanut can  
and in it within the plastic bag,  
the intermediate values determined  
by pressure and time.

On a hot day go there,  
find the hayfield filled with flying things,  
find the stonewall running north to south,  
sit beneath the oak tree years older than 100,  
pry up the rock, open the can, unzip the bag, and  
see what's there, see what it reminds you of.  
There's a harsh truth to face.

## Acolyte Leaning Against a Post

I warmed my hands  
in yours, hot as charcoal  
they seemed, just glowing; the day  
was cold as rats' teeth biting iron.  
Like charcoal we will together and alone burn  
down then out, colors on a slider  
from orange-yellow to black,  
and in light, ashen. Let's think  
of it as the explosion of sunset  
into night.

## Winter Reigns

lie alone awake  
bed filled with pockets of cold  
legs tucked into warm places  
head covered to the ears in a quilt not doing its job

from the iron stove burning  
wood as hard as it can the sounds of charcoal breaking  
on charcoal a hot sound soft in quantity hard  
in quality balancing the notoverwarm bed

youve left youve left out  
the important small points small marks  
that separate truth from nonsense

sound of  
you leaving you breaking  
on yourself

## Gethsename Oblique

On a day of things not right  
on the day when the stories  
we heard as children as adults as old men  
took place and the stories hardened  
like resin into amber and the hardness  
of truth melted as sap running down  
a cypress in a shortened garden stories  
reciting a mysterious faithfulness  
just one thing betrayed the inner  
consistency of our faiths' bug-filled  
illusions: his blood ran downward  
he too obeyed the laws made  
to keep all consistent unpredictable.

## Loon Landing

The day will arrive when the thickened skin  
of experience will feel like the sloughing skin  
of sunburn or any other accident of carelessness.  
On such a day the loon will land in the yard  
instead of hoo-hooing all the way to the lily-swamped  
lake, and you will kneel by your bed in the bare  
light, you will place your head on its side  
by the pillow, you will will your heart to stop  
though it pains you to. You will say your goodbyes  
the most private ways, hook your heart to the barbules  
of the nearest soul and float like a feather above  
the flapped turbulence of the silly-sounding loon  
who visits the weary bent on shedding their skins.

## 66 Sentiments

The motel on 66 in Amarillo  
once was the best motel. Cars were cupped  
within its grasp and its shape shielded  
rooms from glare and tire groan. At  
its center a fountain spilled water  
echoing from room to room. In '66  
this was the place to stay, steak  
houses lined the streets nearby,  
cattle brought in by freight cars  
mooed and snorted by. Air  
was not so fresh then, but smelled  
the rich stink of half-burned gas  
mixed with burned oil.

Steaks searing, gas wasting, oil  
dripping, cars driving, tires whining,  
families sleeping, motel sitting:  
Amarillo stark at the center of 66  
had no redemptive rival, for in '66 the fat  
of a fat land snored loudly round the fountain  
of cool dreams in the big town I find  
myself in tonight, midway between  
one important place and another,  
thankful for the cheap room  
and stiff bed in the best motel  
on the best road forty years too late.

## Pasted Dream

customized dreams come prepackaged  
one rolls out one rolls out  
sequencing is direct connectives miss  
the point a dream ends a walk to piss  
the dream begins resumes my head fills  
with you you look not yourself  
I dream of you do you dream of me

these  $\frac{1}{3}$  days are not enough  
scarecrow time comes ends  
birthdays come end  
scarecrow clothes varnished in sundown  
colors drip apart slow strip  
tease one day your skin as straw  
color substance my feelings  
for someone else  
are here  
are you

## Many Reverses

We are gathered around like luncheon  
meat on the edge of a plate, bread at the center  
like the object of our desire. One of the small  
things left to do is to settle who loves whom,  
which sandwich tastes best under a sky remembering  
how to rain snow. Our picnic is really the back  
seat of a car parked in an oily wide patch  
by the side of the small road winding up  
to the bridge at the highest but narrowest  
place in a wide long river. Around us  
are testaments to mankind and the raw  
material of nature: shreds of lettuce, bleached-flour  
bread, plastic back seats, the scent  
from your cunt, flies seeking nests for their maggots,  
the sand by the road plied with oil, the river  
flowing naturally carrying barges of pig iron,  
the bridge at the narrows, the sky lighting  
our hearts. What I like about you  
is the way you speak of love while  
exploring what lies within  
your panties.

## Hope in Oblivion

The roads of this small town  
were lined with the reddened leaves  
of maples and the off-yellow brushes of birches  
but beside this road the grass weeds  
grew green. By the ditch a fence  
made of concrete posts wired  
by braids of steel wire  
had collapsed on impact, was wrapped  
in a tangle of indistinct road weeds.

Chele and Piper were walking away  
from us, hands entwined  
as if harbingers of the future  
and loving destinations. All's  
left is her auburn skirt  
long retired from wiping Piper's Bronco,  
hanging as if from a slut with straight hips—  
scarecrow ready for parties,  
September harvests and long  
long summer's hard labors in the fields  
gone by.

What parties there will be, made for hearts  
hardly beating, for excitement barely wetting  
sunburnt lips. The old men have gathered  
on a day made of translucent surfaces  
and black & white photos  
to worship the angled breasts  
of their neighbors' sacred daughters  
eager for love and bursting of bubble gum.

## The Aging Process

Main Street is wide enough  
to turn an 8-oxen team and wagon  
in one clean motion. This made  
it ideal for inclusion in the '50's  
interstate. For years killers  
drove down Main Street in search  
of hideouts, girls, and milkshakes.  
The interstate has disappeared,  
a thought passing through  
someone's imagination.  
Main Street is so wide it takes  
the old men minutes to cross  
but jaywalking is no danger  
when the cars are all parked.  
Up that way up the hill—  
don't you see it like an island  
in an ocean of wheatgrass?—  
the famous are buried in a cemetery  
dug for them. Their fame is they died  
at the hands of killers who once ate  
steaks on Main Street back when  
it took a fast man to jaywalk  
without risking death.

## Rope Bridge Near Sarashina

The bridge is hung by ropes  
creeping over crossbeams  
secured to rock or deep-piled  
piers on the lips of a crack  
in a mountain pass near Sarashina.

As I wait behind on this side  
you cross, your pumping gate  
swing-sways the ropes  
and bamboo slats, the up&down  
the speed of a heart anticipating  
or me on you right at that  
moment. You depend on this  
rope I hold in my left hand  
as if calming a wind blast.  
The vines that shroud  
the trees and crevasse  
have grown onto the rope bridge,  
hang from it as the beard  
on an old man watching a woman cross  
a bridge that holds today  
the lives of vines  
and the hope of separation.

## Japanese Night, Winter

Tonight is one more  
night without you cold  
in my shanks my feet  
the spider's final body twitches  
are remnants of a last intent  
to disarm the cold  
it writhes on the floor beside  
me.

The bathroom light has been flickering  
my dreams wander back to our early  
story my bones feel the quilt finally  
my dreams of you come clear  
the light goes out finally  
the night is cold.

## Clouds and Passing Light

Today the air grew cold  
from the passing of a familiar season  
into oblivion brought on by something  
written in a diary. The sun, bright  
in the upper third of the sky,  
does its best to hold back. Each  
passing cloud reminds the landscape  
of truth.

Tonight the northwind  
pulls scraps of newspapers and oiled  
dust down the street, the air froths  
under the sodium streetlight,

cold sounds  
soft sounds

until the streetlight cuts,  
fades to simple afterglow. Voices  
deepen, reprimand, call in favors  
like a dialtone in the night  
after seasons of insistent ringing.

## Budding Softness

Bluff sitting above Red Wing,  
sandstone my reliable footstool,  
overwatching soundless eagles—balds—  
and waystationed gulls dive for death  
and gullets filled with salmon, bass,  
whose sharp white skulls shackle  
granite on shore. You were sitting  
here but mountains are rising  
to the North and while I  
watch are growing yet more mysterious,  
foothills rising like a yet another hurricane,  
a soundless wind has blown everything  
but one stray you-hair gone.

## False Waiting

Waiting  
for you, night rain  
freezing close  
to the sound of nails  
dropping on nails.  
Hollow sound  
of an umbrella  
slows outside  
my door, I raise  
my head  
from this poem  
brewing one word short.  
The less sound  
passes, knocks rain next  
door, the rainless nest  
ducks inside.  
Rain resumes.  
The search resumes  
for the word I'm short.

## Broken Tip

Sitting alone writing of you, wind  
sharpening the edges of rocks by the river,  
loosening the last leaves hanging  
from aspens or birches, disrupting  
the flights of ospreys kiting  
a foot over the blowing foam, the pencil  
tip breaks beneath the woodsheath causing  
the blotch that says it in sight.

## Dropped Off

Winter rain has held off,  
the river has stopped flowing,  
water has pooled in the deep  
drops downriver. Last summer  
we crossed up on that bridge  
engraved with foreign words,  
and you dropped, I think,  
something of yours to the curling  
river. In winter the river clears,  
and in the deep drops the boots,  
the rings, the tin cans, the silk  
scarves gather in circles under  
cold water, still water, this water.

## Looking For Listenable Stations

In my youth they were blonde  
and their held hands were damp  
as fishkill, limp as the strength  
of my vision, and their tolerance  
was a learning experiment filed  
in their pretty little heads. In this age  
they are other colored, and their responses  
more active because even the least likely invasion  
carries with it the spoils of close contact  
or disorganized fervor and zest. And  
there are the dangers to consider. On  
this day the gasp will widen once  
more, and bridge will be words not sounds,  
noise not nuisance, and a long winter  
of sub-bass roars will hushen everything  
else up, even my sore voice, even your hopeless  
grey eyes.

## On a Riverbank Near St Paul in October

The riverbed ground, I guess, stopped,  
and like helium balloons pushed  
back by rushing forward air, dead  
or deadly things pushed upstream  
like fascination or desperation but fat  
or overfilled so glass skulls or white  
ribs are piled around your little thin  
shanks. Hm. I'm the mirrors in your horror  
house or distorting curves on your overbed,  
ha ha. When love turned topic look  
around you cried like a harkened bald  
who's hooked some pike on his bony  
trestles. When he sits in the oak  
above your colorflashed hair he sinks  
them deep, up to his birdy flesh, up  
to his feathered shanks, up to his stopping  
heart, and what I mean to say is compare  
his pain to mine, his hope to mine.

## Lights Front and Back

What is it of the color  
of the bay with shined pink adobe  
banks, its blue darkened  
to a windy purple, that holds her  
at the window after waking  
from her bath in naked sexual  
rumination, staring while her breasts  
slowly stopped slowly shaking, forgetting  
perhaps or remembering when  
he is about to touch her  
along the hip and down and thinking  
she will soon become a holster,  
she will  
be it, she will  
be what he wants, thinking  
she will dream the night through  
of what was said or done or thought,  
complex harmonies sung falsetto  
another place or earlier, what is  
it when he paints her body  
black tomorrow to signify the night  
and when she leaves her mouths red?

These questions seem important  
but less so than why the oak grows one  
branch so long so as to tumble it, stand  
it on head, turn it from one flashing  
set of lights to another.

## Rolling On the River

What did you think it meant when the gull plunged  
its beak into the eye of pike, the river lots its down-  
stream motion, the rocks rolled out from scabble  
to beds, the way up was harder than the way down?  
In the town where we stopped the weddings  
ran on into one another, varied into similar into same,  
the river a canal for the coldstream while eagles held  
the light. Something in the smell of the day hung  
like a poultice of broken glass on your breast and nothing  
was the choice. The buildings glowed red just before dusk,  
and the barge train pushed by a tug upstream logged  
and repeated the tense of your grammar. As usual  
it was sudden but this time it's permanent.

## Stuff Heading Upstream

Two barges on the Mississippi,  
each weighing thousands  
of tons, connected together,  
pushed by one tug  
as long as each barge,  
diesels full of hard horsepower  
power the set of screws  
that push the water back behind  
a quarter mile, churning water  
that calls to gulls.

Upstream.

Can you remember the cold?  
The light on the red hills seemed  
warm, the air was so clear each ripple  
lensed the lowslung light along the streaming,  
toward us as far as the parties were concerned.  
Can you remember the roaring?

Upstream.

What will happen to this barge train  
when the deepness of the water  
runs out or the black sky cuts through  
the thinning air? No amount of kissing  
will fix this—too much needs to happen.

## Sudden Snap

Some things work better sudden.  
The cheapest Polaroid camera  
at arm's length indoors, low  
light, fluorescents flickering—  
bring it to aim at your head and snap  
— give the rangefinder no  
time to work, give the lightmeter no  
time to work out the foolish lighting,  
give your arm no time to stop, give  
yourself no time to pose. This picture  
captures beauty: your face  
swept arclike, your head  
an orange halo, the lights  
6-sided flare-ups, pieces  
of pictures the camera  
couldn't forget, chemicals  
striving to make sense quit part through,  
you look wise & giddy, post-traumatic,  
pre-orgasmic. A sudden snap captures.  
The trick is to end it before it's complete.

## Oh Beautyo

Unlike the poems of a hardy writer  
the sunsets near Hartford are subtle,  
leftovers from the fire-fangled Wallace years.  
Pewter cloud tails have their dangle-down  
parts, and the sides farthest from me  
are reddest, most like you. Here the red  
is twisted light standing off, doing  
its little dance far away and flung;  
there it was collaboration between  
one willing one not. Driving away.  
Going oddly in directions. What  
did you think of the 12 sunny things  
I said and the 1 red one? I know  
you looked, I know the clouds did  
and the funny sun late in the day.  
When romance is mixed up  
by lighting effects, better  
hide behind the lines.

## Travel Watch/Travel Alarm

Static on the tv: fingerprints; who  
goes with the hiss? On the road,  
what I miss is waiting, vittles,  
kisses, withholds, words  
spoke in shadows. I'll cab  
from the desert, look under  
your rug for links. Your fingers  
hover, shake and sway, the colors  
on the surface of your eyes  
make ice or take the best.  
I'm left here by the ramp  
and the tug's pushing. Travel  
two lungs. Yodel for me  
honey.

## Dream Fall

The dream yields to thought  
and the forest world floods  
with leaves fallen in quick  
succession. Do they care to change  
colors or brag in themselves  
on the dawn of a day? I've held  
one dry leaf before it plunged—  
it felt like the fingers of a friend  
going dry, then slipping away,  
making of my dream just  
another fog. Would your sudden  
escape have anything to do with this?

## Sacrifice of the Ever-Road

The road expects sacrifice:  
get behind the wheel,  
commit your spine to a GM splint,  
eat cookies hidden behind the driver's seat,  
fight the urge to stop when the motels  
seem to be filling, drive on,  
be willing to eat as if the world  
had been lost behind a closed gas station,  
look with love at the dripped yellow B  
in a new sign for Lazy Man's  
Bar B Que. The road sides  
are littered with shattered tires,  
animals not designed for understanding,  
leftovers of things thought important  
enough to buy but not vital enough  
to dispose of properly. Old bottles.  
Life preservers. Hot sparks and ashes.  
Or when you drove away and the mirrors  
were adjusted to make me look small.

## Lifting Your Desire

The work is sweat-filled, full  
of imaginary dangers like spiders  
leaking from holes in the trunk  
this new sawblade works through.  
The sun is working against me  
low in the Southern sky but glancing  
heat not light through the heatfog  
leaking from the pores of the sand  
stretching into a light forest of live  
oaks, tarry pines. My shoulders hurt,  
my arms burn, my forehead wrinkles  
from age and heatburn, my legs buckle  
from a heavy load, sweat is all  
around on me. When you  
demand your due, it is like this.

## Discards

Lean against the wall  
and put the flat of your foot against it  
knee high, use it to rest  
while I tell you stories of what it  
meant. Tagged wall soot covered  
by garbagecan infernos made of trash  
and oily rags from dumpsters behind the auto  
shop. Discards. Stories of them. The rules  
are formal and objective but the way  
she puts her hand on the small  
to launch her come. Naked, named.  
Bags of ketchup like flattened roses  
beneath us means discards, plugs pulled  
out, snow except it's ashes from something  
important being burned. The best we can hope  
for is to sit on stools at a shined bar and watch  
the wear of life suppress smiles, lay hair limp,  
keep it all secret while we both lean  
footbraced against a backdrop of soot  
near a highway of rusted and bashed-in  
guardrails.

I've/'m gone/done fishing  
\_/for\_/compliments when I ask  
"is love bait?" and you return the bone  
with its marrow sucked out

## Stinky Man

Central towns, departed citizens,  
districts built of 2-story storefronts  
like Dodge City in Gunsmoke. What if  
a woman dressed too tight hugs  
the curb in noon sun too sleepy  
for lunch but too thirsty to pass  
up the corner bar added 1950  
as a contribution to the beauty of the town  
in the shape of a trailer, but today  
the clapboard chips are flaking off, the word  
"Tavern" in dim neon still  
is framed by the name of a national  
beer many still drink,  
and she is horny for it  
to drain down her throat,  
to foam through her belly  
mixing with the remains  
of breakfast and the stinky man,  
to snake its way through to her fingertips,  
and to drip as a warm yellow juice  
from lips that mirror in their response  
to love and drink her others hours  
later, in another bar, on her way  
back slowly to the stinky man?  
What if?

## Pastiche

Passing passion  
pushing potions  
pitching positions  
patching posh pleasures  
pissing postures  
plush posing  
pooch punch

## T Party

Tattered, truncated,  
the thirst takes tolls;  
trying to travel through  
thick trees, thin travelers  
think through their trappings,  
tortures, trinkets. Then  
triumph trickles through to them.

## Along, Aside

The thirst is unbearable  
that causes voices to trip,  
runs like luminescence  
up the sides of houses and walls  
separating the halves of longing,  
flurries a covering fog on the sidewalks  
you walk over on your way  
along. Aside  
from leaves what do you have  
for me? By the bridge I watched  
you climb the rocks, watched  
the car door close, watched  
the last vapor evaporate,  
building a thirst that rained  
in two-tone silver and gold.  
Tell me the weather that seeps  
from your head to your heels,  
the weather that still goes on.

## Cold Stranger

The sprinkling of light on the rooftops  
seen from the ramparts above the city  
reveals the bumps of habitation, enclosures  
shielding the showering sky from little  
secrets. Brushed-on layers of snow  
deaden the sounds underneath. Grab  
hold of what's hidden, make on the other  
side an opposite. As you open the door  
and begin your walking out, stand aside  
and let the cold stranger in whose only  
aim is to take your place.

## Time Frames

The mind sees only the sudden,  
like the eyes of frogs that see only motion.  
Shallow ramps, aging timestamps,  
we see them only when sight meets memory  
making a sudden second the mind  
can see. How can we see the slow,  
feel the littlest burs, smell the micro-motes  
flitting by, boiling their moment-by-moment  
sameness, aloof behinds fluttering flag-like,  
romping like stallions before wind  
or lovemaking? Let me reflect now  
on the frames that led to you by the river,  
let me delete every other one, and every other  
once more—until it's sudden, and my reaction  
panic.

## Stroll Through a Map Laid Out in Town

Along the cobbled ways and stone steps  
your unspeech lingers like leaves frozen  
into puddles left behind in a sudden rain  
that drifted in before a freeze, and down  
by the river passing beneath the bridge  
whose upstream piers are sharp stone  
cleavers and whose companions are oak  
overturning ramps awaiting ice sheets and blocks,  
your shadow has just fled behind a lingering  
maple whose leaves have turned shade and turned  
over in a breeze that trembles the river's surface  
the way your last words were chosen by hands  
trembling over a bed of bitter words gathered  
in haste, and here in my bed whose sheets  
and undersheets seem still warm from your wide  
hips and lingering bottom, your heart has slowed  
and my head on the pillow can not quite hear  
the beats turning slower and slower until their sound  
is the shutter I left unlatched in my haste to hold  
you tapping the windowframe in a low breeze  
on a day short of light and long on falling leaves.

## Diner on Snow Street

The places we eat are lined, like this,  
with people wishing each other well.

The food cooked over-greased first pleases  
then drains the tongue, expands the cheeks,

lines the belly with full feelings. You  
however wait and wait, after the order

comes, after the waiter goes, until I've  
taken the first bites, gone through the fries,

start on the meat. I want you but tonight  
your belly comes first. We drink, each looking

past the other into headlights each heading  
past the other's. It's like that. The liquor's

heating up now, the fries are cooled in ketchup,  
the pork is about to float in coagulated fat and grease.

You've quit smiling, quit weeks ago, and now  
it's time that's counting—down I think. Snow

would be the best for us, something that drifts  
pretty, slithers down the street in squirrely lines,

something with a purpose often bent but never  
limited. Where it ends up is up to us, up to fate

up to sullen sodden eyes welling with limits  
barely living up to their fate to always see.

## Depth of Blue

The nights are piling up  
like snow drifted onto the plow  
wake at the end of the road  
where the choices are left  
to the driver. We could ignore  
the feelings that seem undone, but  
that would mean reviving them  
beyond their desire to drift off.  
Hm.

Let's drop the pretense and go  
with it. Pick a road, make the choices  
into a fork that lures us poetically  
into doing what seems hard  
but as pretty as small snows fallen  
just to the depth of blue.

## Release

Release the volunteers,  
run to the ramparts and begin  
counting the breaks in the dam,  
shout to those shouting  
that the time to quit has arrived,  
follow the possibility that seemed least likely  
just one year ago. In one year  
the mystery regressed,  
chances were forgotten  
the battle failed to engage.  
Smoke will one day clear  
revealing a healing landscape,  
ash will revert to green,  
greyed water will flow clear  
again with salmon, perhaps  
two lovers will watch the sun rise  
over a place known for death  
and the death of love.

## Bird Caught on the Tip of a Scarecrow

Even the scarecrow feels the weight of decay  
as the days grow short toward December,  
his clothes are unwashed and pieces of them  
have found their ways underground to nests  
and into trees as flags proclaiming lament.  
Places have been entered, but the long show  
is reserved for leaving. One bird sits atop  
the scarecrow's cap, his crowlike claws  
can't seem to release and he will carry more  
away that he likes today, because the wind  
is beginning to blow and soon it will be too  
hard for bird-raised resistance. Pity the bird  
whose feet belie his weaknesses, pity  
the scarecrow too weak to wink, pity  
the witnesses forced to live two lives  
in space of one strong afternoon  
under a sun whose pity is the heat  
of self-doubt.

## Union Cemetery

Inside the dirtground rundown graveyard  
lies a patch of Union soldiers rounded up  
by a low granite rail; inside is the only patch  
of green. Around us stones are broken, pieces  
lie at angles, headstones are crowded  
by palm trees. Iron pipes fence plots.  
Clear day but cold, Veterans' Day in Redwood,  
California, Union Cemetery. My daughter's homework  
is to place a bouquet on the final resting place  
of a veteran, and she carefully does that in the green  
patch, but her mind is fixed on the bottle of mascara  
she bought as a secret at the pharmacy where we bought flowers,  
the price of each about the same, the importance of each  
about the same, and who can say she's wrong, facing  
life in the broken ground of death with the hope  
in her heart her eyes will look nice.

## Pain of Living Teeth

Frozen sky rains only iceflakes  
on the only listless flecks of joy  
left after the snap bye, instant gone.  
Your face grew out of the light just once  
and the crowd overcame its passion  
for anonymity, caught in the flash  
of a jotted note. Mm. The feelings  
flee in their own hurry not  
like the sudden onset of living  
which is just a heavy pressed feeling  
as if teeth were forming. It was all foolish  
the way I wrapped my feeling fingers  
around your legs; you felt tired around me.

What I won't forget are the notes,  
how they descended, how their resonance  
boomed into the ground, and the waves  
passing by our feet, ripples of a writer  
both larger and smaller, braver and more cowardly  
than the two of us together or taken  
one at a time.

## Ringlets

A beautiful place has appeared by the sea,  
a place where the light hangs a bit brighter,  
a single stretch of rocky coast that attracts  
only small waves but ones that crash with sullen  
beauty in white bursts above the green lucent  
tropic rolls. My privilege is to sit on those warm  
rocks and radiate the little rings that linger  
on my head, and yours is to dangle above and pull  
up into the lone cloud. What we both await  
is the rogue wave whose force is from the north  
and whose local meaning is the raising up of a wave  
as tall as the cloud.

## Buried Subways Like Funeral Leaders

Forgotten places buried beneath cities  
once cities themselves, cities piled  
on each other like ideas added to a simmer.

Under this great city lies subways  
made to lie buried, buried now in neglect  
signs on their sides proclaiming the irrelevant

much as my questions about the duststorms  
by the road in Nevada seem unplaced or unfraught  
as a turning page. Let's leave the dust

to cover and add to cover and allow  
the ones who can only glance down  
to revel here, caught in their minds'

contagion, simple as alphabet soup  
in front of a child learning to spell  
ill from his father's fatal disease.

## Chicagoland Beat

This Chicago night is underwater  
constructed of flurries and steam  
roiling up from street vents and steam vents  
cold-streaming wind blown down from the cold  
regions to the north and west where once  
the warmth hung tough against the turning  
leaves and your heart slowed. Across the way  
the offices are shadowed by backlights  
the solitary cleaning lady strolls from desk  
to desk and stares at the little faces caught  
in jubilation the woman straining off  
the decline whose smile is cracking porcelain  
under a baked sky. This is the night of seldom  
horror when reflections make it all when  
the cable holding up the world splits one strand  
more and the ground slips one drop down  
by the width of your heart's smallest  
beat.

## On The Shore of Lake Michigan

Highrolling waves on the big lake  
mimic big oceans but more ideas depend  
on the way the wind blows, the way  
the saltless sea drives lighter under winter  
winds. I've thought about missing you  
in the city as strange as fur on the collar,  
as odd as the streets that head West.  
Every other one lead me away, leads you  
toward our former listlessness. Save  
my ache, linger under the lifted traintracks,  
turn up the edges of your collar and hide  
your face from the wind which pretends  
to be big, pretends to forgive.

## Disentanglement Near a Footbridge

Underneath a bluer stone they gather  
as the ground shakes from heavy  
walkers making for the footbridge.  
Our stone is the portent of happy  
middles, and the slaves are underway  
making sweet pies from the sweat  
of last lovers. The stone is transparent  
to the roof where washed out skies  
rise to meet the quarter moon. Let's own  
this, earn it, deserve it, rolling as window  
dressing on an off-duty water whore.

Let's thank ourselves for clever diversions  
from lustless truths and pray the quick  
goodbyes as steep as impulses extend  
until the footbridge melts from disuse,  
until the bluer stone fades less blue,  
until the place to gather has the hope  
of raising shimmers, lighting lit skies,  
holding on to glistening sweat until  
its sweetness becomes our potion.

## hum sing sing

who would ever guess that the city's blue lights  
would cancel the inward moving  
song who would ever

finish the tune by the beginning of the end  
of yesterday noise cancelling we wrapped  
different directions your flow

counter to the glasstopped table  
at which my writing reflects the cleaners'  
lights over the steam vents

as if Chicago were the face of routine filmed  
by chems that shade them blue  
the way some sky would see it

when you said goodnight  
who would know C-P-R C-P-R  
would awaken only the small

and unhumiliating when the road  
stretched ahead and headlights hunted  
no steering wheel adjustments

found the way down the dark road carved from trees  
reflecting the bluelights of a distant housed TV  
and the average walking away of you

## The Aerialist At Rest

Your hair is limp in my hands, thin,  
what some would call fine but I

find empty as open doors. Our lives have  
become filtered past modulation, different every turn

on, what are passed are the greyed details  
which angles turn to life, not even gender

is settled by the ending. Find  
the wagon and hop on, leave behind

the ones whose happiness  
is damped by a death-pass filter

spliced between their hearts  
and God's highwire.

## Multi-ku (1)

On trash day snow  
flakes off the bottoms of clouds

covers the streets  
and garbage trucks backing up pack it  
down

fills in like probing questionnaires  
the tracks of footprints left before  
dawn

On the mantle above  
creaking flakes of fired cinders  
the picture of you and me  
settles in

## Apples and the Woman

Morning mist we thought  
but just a fog twisting inland  
caught corkscrewing through the orchard

waiting for redemption  
or restoration after a morning  
doing it by the bed

her oozed scent withdraws  
from her cooling pillow  
& all that's left  
is less than memory less

than drops of spring rain  
mites of mist hugging the skin  
of green apples

## Good Evening, Bitter

The evening is cracked  
by understandings and slivers  
of lights beneath doorways,  
a broken bowl the color of glass  
roses still rocks, and the cup  
emptied of tea still holds  
its folded lemon among sifted  
leaves.

Beneath your shut bedroom door  
the crack of light is darkened  
by your passing,

I wait in its shadow.

## Afterwards

Panties soaked in mist  
drying on the line  
after a passing shower glow once  
the last cloud moves  
ahead, and in the neighbor's  
yard the swings still swing  
commemorating time passing  
after a passing event.

In her room above the mist  
and lines she lies in bed,  
the shadows takes turns  
with a frolicking sun  
stroking and stroking her.

## Winter Drizzle Freezing Heels

By a bedroom window  
leftover leaves flare red  
from a red-flashing and clicking traffic  
light deep in the winter night—hidden  
lovers pull their blinds  
expectantly.

Winter drizzle might freeze tonight—  
a street minstrel picks up his heels  
to guard against sticking.

At walk's end your cold  
hands meshed with mine—  
winter has descended  
on us, and we face cold  
ashes alone.

## Easy Breeze

I have put my faith in the placement of falling  
snow—nothing falls as it should—panties  
frozen on a line proves absolution is as foreign  
as prediction, rust in sled tracks show the first time  
has its drawbacks. Suppose we approached  
from separate quarters in a northern storm—even  
paper cups of pricey coffee become buried lumps  
in a foreign city—could we meet between flakes?  
How heavy would your hair be on the snow?  
The rigor of mind fills in details for order. Just  
look at the careful significance of the mirror  
of rust-red tracks in milky fresh snow  
to the womb-red stains bleached half out  
of the snowy woman's panties  
hanging from the line too stiff to yield  
to an easy breeze.

## Dug Hillocks and the Master of Choice

After the walk from the center of the old part  
of town to where the railbed is cut through  
small hills and built up on tiny heavy  
bridges, after the smell of oil and grease  
dripped onto creosoted ties cut before  
Lincoln's time has put me in the mood  
of the Sonoran Desert, after the November  
winds have blown drops off the pine boughs  
adding to the mist swirling 'round my eaves  
making a limp drip, after I've watched  
the hooded lamp lift the last shadows  
from your breasts, after the wolftrain  
has howled past and loitered in the distance,  
I occupy my candled study with  
no one but the dim master of choice and nothing  
but this pointless poem.

## Night Spoons

Each night the poem comes later  
—it's like a stormy snowfall  
when no one can know which  
side of the telephone pole  
the snow will stick to.

Each night is colder than the last  
—it's later in the poem when the furnace  
kicks on by itself, maybe the heat  
will change two words it thinks.

Each night your bed is warmer earlier  
—it's like last night when some furnace  
below your heart kicked in and the heat  
of the back of you warmed the front  
of me.

## Disappearing Bark

After the first snow  
light streams past the coldproof glass  
we've remodeled in—she replaces  
the green flannel sheets with flowered  
prints and the first day of winter  
springs up. The backmeadow woods  
are empty and our neighbor's dog's  
barks disappear within. Today we stripped  
the wallpaper from the hallway  
and found someone else's  
bedroom. We wondered whose impression  
was made there, still visible, still  
stark, still cooling.

## Or Holy

Surf sounds guitar  
twang bright single  
coil tube brilliance  
bridge pickup spring  
reverb tape echoplex

the sound of surf music seems harsh

finger flesh surface  
damping string muting  
pitch raising slight  
feedback mild distortion  
speaker cone fatigue

the sound of surf music seems melancholy  
or holy

## Stupid Angel

Still  
the Superchief rages past in the night,  
its howling  
more like a mechanical wolf than real,  
passing by  
Memorial Cemetery loud enough to  
wake the dead.

Fall  
leaves piling up—no,  
more like  
the accumulation of snow and red leaves  
and yellow—rise  
to hide the names of the dead cut  
like jealousy  
into the hardened surfaces of  
polished marble.

Will  
the angel whose hand points to the place in the sky where  
the Dog Star  
will lounge when the anniversary of the death of woman in the grave  
she overlooks  
realize it when her fingers have evaporated away as all  
stone does,  
or will the pure joy of snow piling on her stupid  
stone head  
fill her it with nothing until the very day she  
passes also away  
into thin air?

## Multi-ku (2)

Her shadows—all of them—  
one by one pile up on the floor, the one  
button open on her blouse  
was the hound that chased the rest  
away.

All my loneliness, heated,  
I leave inside her  
and only a new crop will grow  
inside me.

In the morning her bad grammar  
from tonight will signal two degrees  
of forgetfulness, as if  
reason required rationality.

Remember her stifled  
laughs, her insults, forget  
the sunbeams beating  
on her steaming dreams.

## Holcomb Dreams

Five miles west of Holcomb,  
train tracks make two lines,  
polished clean as surgical knives,  
sticking out of moonrise.

Later the first dry flakes  
of too-cold snow  
will pile up, the moon  
will tuck away, the Superchief

will fly from the East out  
of the moonrise, and  
under its tough grinding wheels  
no water will be made,  
just steam, just vapor,  
just the after-images  
of her nightmare.

## Right Now

in the half-rotted tool shed  
locked foolishly against entry  
under an uncertain sky brimming  
with snow, a yellow box of nails  
sits on a shelf, and each nail  
has become as cold as it can be  
given the conditions.

Right now  
in a city blinking sodium lights  
whose sidestreets and alleys reverberate  
crookedly a foreign hail of sirens  
a woman is waking up in a feather  
bed as warm as she can be  
given the configuration of her lovers.

Right now  
in a brick building above the river  
whose mind cannot be made up  
in a locked room filled with many others  
my father's ashes sit on a shelf  
awaiting the heart outside  
and the hands whose courage  
will be tested by the command  
to sift him.

Right now,  
the form holds up as well as it can be  
given the change-cold, the blessing warmth.

## Ripe Bluffs

Among flesh debris, fluffed mud, and spattered remains,  
through streets struggling through towns like ungotten hints,  
between trees spilt like curious liquids, like gutted fish  
behind a wave of blastsounds and ear-pitching ricochets,  
in front of me a gypsy woman walks  
    carrying on her head,  
    balanced like a gourd or water vase,  
    the wood box coffin, backlit, that will bear her lover  
    through the waves of black earth oceans  
    for years of years.

## Think of the Oysters

cringing in Tomales Bay—

are they cold?  
do they feel the cold?  
is the salten water running with sweet cold?

Their words catch in their throats,  
pearl-popping on tongues  
they can't have. Can't have  
no matter  
what.

The air they breathe would feel  
to us like cold water burning our lungs,  
catching words we might be inclined  
to recall.

The poem of lush beauty is nothing  
but the bay of cold water  
salt run through by a stream of sweet

river flow like a river through a river.  
The oyster that thrives there  
is the lost welcome,  
the cold cold cold heart  
of the sweet goodbyes.

## Walk Away

From up  
the street her hair's the brown  
of an alpine rucksack's leather  
bottom-patch—to every man  
the same sight unsingled  
out in the crowd welling  
toward the subway hole  
whose inner clamber-car  
carries her to my flat, the worn-out  
tread marking the step before my floor.

Turning her back,  
facing the night-fossiled  
window frieze,  
she lifts her hair  
uncovering her whitened neck  
and supple underhair  
so I may undo her dress and

from here  
her hair's the colors  
of reds on blondes  
by whites and clears  
with auburns and umbers  
under silks and crinkles  
with longs and curls,  
highlights and mattes,  
making from no two  
the same the nose-teasing tangle  
that blends in the longview  
to the nothing special surface  
of the coiled and nameless  
other who walks away.

## Phthalo

The path of encounters  
enables language to speak up,  
perk up, get up like lovers filling up

what was over there becomes a next  
to in a mob hat because hair  
singd off because

explosive word bursts  
because the fence post hangs  
in the white heat of midday

centered under zenith  
point of fact speaking as another  
under phthalocyanine clear skies

working at words  
the sky comes up

## Picnic, Blanket

Beneath the blanket  
the picnic table provides  
mid-mind thawing  
shadow sufficient to keep cool  
coal-dusted wetsnow This may  
seem funny but consider  
how many died to make this true  
dismay, disproportionate  
dismissed Above the picnic  
table the blanket provides  
outer-mind freezing  
sunshine sufficient to keep warm  
snowflake-dusted dryrain This may  
seem funny but consider  
how many facts are forms  
how many words are clouded  
how many meanings fetch forward  
pointers meaning deferral  
if just one points  
back like a blanket to a picnic  
table it's the thumb up the backside  
and off we go to Kansas lunch  
w/Billy Collins w/thunder

## Side of Language

I started this on 12/12 at 12:12.

Only it  
wasn't in 1212. I can't write without my computer  
(and not only that, any keyboard but this one is too hard)  
so I wouldn't have been able to write in 1212.

Plus they didn't have English, really, then either,  
so anything I did write would be like this  
vbgnhju kiikoikl osd cgfo.ikl.o;as d fkius d fazi klo d asc  
which is what whatever was  
english then looks to me  
now. Notice how the punct.uation is in the middle  
of words, so may:be space is not important.

This goes to poetry.

What it is. I suppose language  
is on the hook. Like imagine  
going to the butcher and ordering

a side of language.

(Yum—down the gullet  
not up.)

## Dipping In

Somewhere after dark  
along a corridor drenched with dark  
sighing from infusions of small breezes  
bandpassed by cracks your door

opened and you  
stepped on toe out  
wearing a thin blanket  
over nothing.

In my room  
no noise but small breezes  
no one was disturbed.

## Photo-Making Up

There is every reason  
to believe that the Leica  
that took your picture cannot realize  
the significance of your thousand-color  
hair, the blemishes that mark sun  
passages, the black dust you've powdered  
into your eyes. The chemicals on the film  
and the chemicals in the pan and on the paper  
sometimes break into their own blemishes.  
Umber spots or cadmium. The light  
passing through those Leitz and Zeiss lenses,  
the Summilux, the Vario-Elmar, hm,  
the stray extra photon racing from one of your blue-eyes  
through one of these, luck like a word  
that I've taken from the undermost place on your skin  
and pasted without comment or desire  
into the part of this poem  
I've since deleted.

## Blue Comma

have you noticed winter light is blue  
in rained on city streets lit by office light by night  
in the heavy forests whose pine branches hang limp beneath snowbeams  
in the headbeams of cars rushing at you in the night

blue is the color of cyanide  
Prussian Blue overwhelming and dangerous

blue that consumes  
transparent  
like the zombie your heart pretends  
blue that rises  
where you expected blue tone  
you get blue stain  
what does it mean

the night is blue  
snow piled deep is blue  
aging old Kodak film is blue

the heart of your inside heart  
is blue

## Back Back

part of the letter was written  
on the back of a page torn from a loose  
bound poetry workbook

unopaque paper  
unbright white  
low blue content

watermark only slight indentations  
in a pure visual spectrum  
what passes through

is faint pulse  
uneven wavering  
rhythm on the back backwards

## Cantakerous Incantation

outside my writing room puddle  
heavenly combination dirt & water  
mud held by water holding mud  
metaphysics of contagion spreading  
with cold up hillslopes two primitive

two pure primal alternatives  
warmth in warmth warming  
writing of you writing again  
I feel of wet snow coloring in two  
colors the lost leaves of a sycamore

while inkwater evaporates leaves  
ink powder deep in the white wood  
pulped to paper every abstraction turns  
to words water in my tea kettle boils  
dry heart on the edge of unhappiness

## Don't Know Much

Inside the fog, mist, cloud, nothing  
really but drops condensed enough to float  
but not to fall, nothing really  
but a symptom of luck or miracle  
that brings life close to a convenient  
boiling point, nothing really but  
hazily defined by what is invisible but obvious  
on other sides: The train whose swaying light  
pulverizes the solid mist into its drops,  
the plane whose spluttering engine  
makes the pillowing clouds a damper  
of facts. And one by one they, the clouds, peel  
from the ridge, a retired now code,  
a musicless rhythm, letter after letter  
written in periodic hope to an address  
where only readers live.

## Writing Table

On her sill a merry glass cup,  
phthalo blue; a picture of a dog  
whose living started when she was a young woman  
and ended when she was a young woman.  
In the cup, a dried rose, some white  
rocks from a beach in Greece, some dark  
from a coast near here. A postcard  
whose postmark was never dark or visible,  
with a charming note unsigned, now  
from the past, a relic. Two or three plants  
tangled together, from her mother's—counting  
or knowing anything of them with precision  
is impossible.

From her writing table  
when she looks up and left,  
in the edge of a pane, the shape  
of a mountain, distant and weary,  
this side the backside of what she saw  
when she looked out her mother's window  
from her writing table.

## Heaven Up Well

Up the air well,  
surrounded on all sides  
by yellow or biscuit  
colored brick,  
windows hazed to near  
opaque by grime, grease,  
dust, whatever drops  
from the sky, the clouds,  
passing flyers, the part of heaven  
she sees from her writing  
desk is the color of yellow  
or biscuit colored brick.

Her windows, too,  
are hazed near shut to light  
but the well to heaven....

What she needs is her well—  
the shape careful, small,  
cut with liquids harsh  
on what blocks—her clearspot,  
two steps removed  
from the possibility of heaven.

## Skin Edge

Skin of movement across the landscape,  
geography, I touch this skin which fondles  
land like cooled water drizzled on an oiled  
woman's back, tanned, drops in places but snakes  
of water running flush everywhere else  
and changing courses. This is the skin  
of how I find you, that you which is where,  
the lines of lemons, the bunches of black walnuts,  
the low reaches of sweetly green wheat  
just rising from the kicked carpet that makes Kansas  
welter. The cold reaches up and grabs the bottoms  
of branches and shakes them till they still  
and shimmer. The heat is a recipe on the back  
of a lumpy bag of corn meal. If I touch your skin  
and trace its under lines, which way  
will they take me, which way will they take you,  
which edge, if there be one, will be the final edge?

## Burning Words

Music, its loudness rises,  
falls to the ticking of a clock,  
spotlights hit the singer  
behind me. The shadow  
of a woman comes down  
the aisle, she passes,  
my eyes multiply  
in her mirrored dress. She says  
how bad it is. After  
a minute the guitar says  
the same thing. Behind the curtain  
ashes and shadows fall  
in the shape of a blues tune.

## A Hundred Shots

I remember the days I rode my bike  
as hopeful as the painter by the river  
who came to town that year to paint  
a portrait of our famous bridge. He was  
hopeful the wide sweeping curve  
of the river coming down to the narrows  
where the bridge rested in its odd green color,  
and the small hillocks behind  
would make him as famous as the bridge,  
though he changed its color to an ashen gray.  
I was hopeful the girl on the far side up Bridge  
Street would suddenly shoot her love toward me,  
as least so's I'd have the chance to step in  
its path, maybe take a flesh wound off it,  
if not something more mortal.

The girl held her ground though she insulted  
my pants, and today she's old but in a dream  
she was still the young girl in love with the painter  
who went into obscurity as a painter but grew  
to be famous as a photographer whose motto  
is to take 100 pictures for every one you hope  
to put on the wall. I think he knew this when I stopped  
to look at his sketch of the bridge  
in chalk but the color was off and I told him.

He said people won't believe that algaed green  
of a bridge, and wished he had the time to paint  
it 100 times over but the summer was too short and he'd settle  
for two. I spent that summer after that girl  
and took 99 goes at her. If only the snow hadn't come  
in early, who knows how famous hope'd be now.

## Head Stain

Some days are set aside for remembering  
as if the spandrels in the mind's corners  
stood on ceremony or the drunk walks  
of dreams needed a magnet more than caprice.

The day the painter left town we held  
a small ceremony since his day-after-day  
sentinel on the banks by the bridge  
reminded people to remember  
an abstraction: That what's real needs  
attention to stay in the foreground.

Since that day I'll sit where he painted  
and hope some fragments of his mind's  
dilemma rub off on me, or the remnants  
of pigment left on the trunk by his spot  
will stain the back of my head memorably.

## Web Unrest

The painter'd park by the side of the road  
just up or down from the bridge, pulling  
off into the brush or onto a wide oiled-sand  
shoulder, pulling out his easel and paint box,  
pulling on a slicker and setting up a beach  
umbrella if the clouds were low and the light  
seemed constancy itself. He'd sit on a folding  
stool extracted from a bag like a spider  
ending the hard task of repairing a web  
broken by the careless waving of a folded  
umbrella as it passed from roadside to  
riverside. Someday the painting he gave me  
of the bridge in constant light will take  
on cracks shaped like a web built  
by a spider who's forgotten the genetics of order,  
and I'll wonder which road to stop by,  
which wide-place to park at,  
which path to stumble down,  
which bridge to paint, which web  
to disturb.

## Pigments Into Dimension

Junkyard love affair conquered  
the painter who set up shop  
beside the rotted Edsel  
and its rusted vertical smile  
to paint what he called  
the most natural artificial landscape  
where the hand of man was followed  
by the nun of decay, chemical glee,  
powerful forces hidden by observation's  
persistent habit. The colors became  
nature, autumn of austerity and gaud,  
and I noticed his hand, his brush  
would pause then juke, jump  
from place to place, piling and pushing  
pigments into dimension  
creating a new flat by vertical world  
that echoed the yard, the junk.  
Edsel, totem of perfection,  
hear my prayer that the design  
of my left hand will dangle  
as precisely as your shaven hood,  
your luscious love, your rim  
of decay.

## Finger Paints

Only a dozen acrylics in his box  
plus whatever his fussy palette might yield,  
and the combinations science predicted  
though he preferred to feel them between his fingers.  
His canvas was just that—rough hemp  
fabric he made himself, feeling each  
thick thread in his fingers before washing  
and stretching it tight to sun dry.  
His easel was white pine pieces sewed  
together with twine and old bolts  
he found at the junkyard or by the road.  
Only the acrylics and horsehair brushes  
were storebought—even his director's chair  
was made of old beach umbrellas abandoned  
on recycling days and wood from a barn torn down.

He'd find a house or horsestall broken down  
or a store burned half to the ground, a car wreck  
that killed 6 seniors on their way to the prom  
in June. He thought of the crickets silenced  
by the metal wrenching sounds of a car twisting  
like light off a freshly bought diamond ring  
the driver would want to give his girl  
after the last dance, only their last dance  
was a spinetwister, and only because  
of a coincidence of physics that they came  
to rest in each others' arms did the painter  
set himself down in front of their car  
in some following year to paint only  
what he could feel  
between the calloused pads  
of his work-wearied fingers.

## Freightways

Dark overcame LA—  
in the parts that do hard business,  
freight trains made of boxcars, flatcars, coalcars—  
but it can't. Here in the river made of no  
lights, no lighting, the flatcars carry trailers broken  
apart from their tractors and drivers;  
they got here en masse, all at once,  
on roads straight mostly, level  
mostly, few choices all made

years ago. They arrive full hoping  
to be emptied, to be attached  
to a separate mover,

a driver who came here emptied,  
hoping to drive a freeway, a boulevard,  
an avenue, a street, an alley, starting in a river  
painted dark, ending at the back loading dock  
still dark, along a path not entirely his,  
but full of his choosing.

**Alert:**

the crumpled paper  
thrown away, a draft as lifeless  
as the outside wind whose draft  
just inside the window flips  
the heron underfeather, down  
really, over, uncrumples  
in the wastebasket—sound of life  
regained or an exhale? What fills  
my mind is the teacup filling  
like a breath inhaling full  
of shadow, like the mind  
full of joy emptying.

## Linear Thinking

My eye close to her hand,  
I can see the clouds passing by her window  
speeding and slowing nonlinearly  
in the ring of her gold wedding band.  
Outside her gauze dress  
blows on the line hung  
from pulleys for convenience,  
but she cycles the line for uniform wear.

When the sun was just a little younger  
she dropped her lingerie on the floor  
in languid drips. The puddle  
is still there. One day I left  
when talk turned serious,  
when we stopped stroking  
the lace tablecloth after meals,  
when things stopped  
going in circles.

## Unfolded I Think

Steam rising from a fresh wash  
on a day too cold for drying—freezing,  
breezeless, unkind to clothes needing  
to get back on. Your panties dropped  
as if in haste but when I came  
up the paperback was slowly folding  
back onto itself closing the action  
for the night and you were no longer  
unfolded. I think I wrote with the tip of my finger  
your name on the window last summer  
when the crickets' cricks faded upto thunder—  
I see it materializing in a strict order  
in the fog my breath showers on the window  
today, a day with little looking back and clothes  
to dry though all be cold.

## Song, Dream and Blessing

One day my daughter will die  
with long memories I can never know  
filled with love for strangers  
in a town I'll never be to  
in a bed, I hope, made up lovingly  
by people I can't imagine who hold her  
tenderly, who find her a blessing,  
after her head unfolds thoughts  
I could never have, after a life  
defining people who today  
can only stumble and mutter. With all the words  
I can find and lines I can write in wild profusion,  
in all my clever thinking and imagining,  
with all the books I've written and postures, the incredible  
singing I've heard and playing I've done and places  
I've been and people I've loved and hated,  
all the muscle work for nothing much  
I've tried to picture the tint of purple  
on the iris outside the window where she'll  
breathe in her last and with that last breath  
say a word that some will write down  
and others never forget, but I can't:  
that day is too removed, my simplicity  
too limiting, my reach no wider  
than her wrist the day I first brought  
her home and all she could dream of  
was me.

## Changing Socks

On my way to see the town heaped  
upon by snow,  
up the slopes we sled down  
following my father who loomed large then, after  
stepping in his footsteps  
I sank up to my knees.  
Snowmelt in the bottoms of my boots  
in the dire dead cold on our way up a long steep hill  
to see a sight no boy looks forward to—  
standing in this park-like enclosure today  
filled with warm winds and rows and rows of names and dates,  
who wouldn't trade?

## Bark Life

& structure picked from parts  
filled by junk that sometimes sags  
& from this sense? Dog. Tree. Skin.  
In context nonsense. She skims  
the tops of sense like a swan  
who flops her feet like underwalk  
& pince nez black strips &  
swans like ducks don't talk  
don't talk to me. I noticed  
last time I gripped her flesh  
from behind like a faggot  
she faced the sun setting  
behind piles being driven  
by piledrivers into soft  
riverbank clay. Just then she shifted loose  
& turned away from the sun  
into her darker side & left me  
facing some fucking metaphor.

## Molded Into Sticks

ink well  
on my desk filled with a deep  
ink India ink of tung oil  
& oxhide with a porcelain pen  
feathered from a cock  
I dip in & pull a scratchy  
drool that makes a beauty  
that leeches the head  
stumps the heart

## Marks Unadjusted

Two things were left to do:  
dress each other when the morning rose awoke  
when the touching of thighs was over with,  
and write the poem of parting before our wear  
overcame us. From the differing angles  
and the supple smells from our clothes  
we each wrote our lines on fogged windows  
one pane at a time and one  
wrote of returning and the other wrote  
of parting. Caught in the web of branches  
against sunrise, the lines tangled like black  
hair pulled loose in quick haste.

Noon fire hastened leaving,  
the heat we felt was not from love  
nor motions neither love making.  
Our lines were erased fog and streaks of finger grease,  
the fog gone now is hiding them in plain sight  
like just marks unadjusted. When cold  
returns or dust these foggy things  
will remark the panes,  
show our lines baked  
into hard glass.

## Horsehooves Clacking Off Beat

Boring town, monotony of details,  
an hour before dawn sprinkles beads on the river  
the painter orders breakfast at the roadhouse,  
drizzly running eggs, bacon shined with grease,  
newspapers folded and refolded to tissue substance,  
and each detail in the booths and at the counter  
finds its way along the same familiar lines  
to his canvas. His topic is the bridge, his subject  
today the road that leads to it down  
from little highlands. He's old now  
and the line of snuffed out candles behind—he never  
faces them—grows long, and the sputtering line ahead  
grows short invisibly. Same breakfast, same painting,  
some details snuffed out, others sputtering ahead.  
I'd write these feeling steeped as facts  
here one night, tonight, every night,  
but the lead in my pencil breaks  
when I get up, when I face the withered moor,  
when I hear the horsehooves stumble  
by toward the old barn tonight, when I get  
to the part about the strange erotic  
pleasure your lips hold out.

## Compass Readings

The man who paints keeps his own counsel  
hides it rather in his acrylics  
doesn't tell but smears  
makes it 3-d with light flares and dream  
shadows when you see it you know  
you've seen something

Someone drank too much  
and while burning it off  
the painting was knocked to the bank  
still wet with low tide  
and later the painting undisturbed by salt water  
road to sea past ships and shipyards  
past the last gull into the coming sunlight

When you see it  
you know you've seen something

## Night Space

dawn  
or is it the full moon rising behind storm clouds—  
lying next to me confused in sheets  
and scattered silks slumped on the floor  
where you dripped them off  
you rub the red back into your eyes

dawn  
(or is it the full moon rising behind storm clouds)  
makes a waxpaper fog  
on the backside of our frost  
this sweat we've let seep out and crust our seeing  
your hands cup my face in branched parentheses

Heat fired as from a gun  
from my in-your-night-space finger—  
or is it the full moon rising behind storm clouds—  
pokes a blue hole in the frost:  
dawn

## Counting Crossings

The desert has no links, roads  
running in crosses rarely meet,  
distances are covered  
by life the color of dusted green,  
sight lines are clean and unblocked.  
This meeting place is empty  
except for me and a city of foreigners  
to the sort of place that remembers the ageless  
but forgets the fleeting. The desert makes no room  
for numbers and counts in quantity only  
marked by a cutting light it invites  
to stick the fleeting hearts.

## Desert Monologue

Cities in the desert breathe  
in hard, inhale lines and squares,  
bulge in all four directions  
over dry creeks and up rims  
and over, but let's think  
of memory. Take the lights  
that scintillate twenty miles  
to the east, twenty to the west  
and how many thinking minds  
are rising in the dark above the orange fog:  
Will the impressions paid for  
crust the desert's skin or  
fog the desert's grand blue eye  
reddening from lights  
that go on and on.

## Bleached Disturbances

beneath the rails  
oil steeped ties  
half bleached  
half blackened  
half expect one day  
polished and perfected  
to become the mirrored  
surface on which ladies  
rest tea and ices

in the still surface  
of the fountain  
that reflects perfectly  
the disturbance  
of the bell leaves little  
but a ringlet of waves  
side-stepping past  
each other

## Feels To Say Goodbye

When the lights are dedicated  
to flickering and after I've  
passed each crossroads, corner,  
park bench, and streetlamp  
where we used to meet, passed  
each trysting spot and time  
carrying desire pulsing  
like a pitching streetlight  
in the fog-rising rains  
of heat release, I'll cross  
my legs and fold my feet  
beneath and watch  
the light below our window  
reverse and click from green  
to yellow, pause, then red, cycle  
just out of reach,  
the sound—of wind—is sweeping past,  
rubbing hard against  
the manmade stopping places.

## Journey of Right Angles

In the corner of the square  
a fountain fills with anguish  
and a spell of moss drunk  
on the long drips fed  
must be  
from a stream upslope  
not too eager or drying under hell  
made sun. At right angles  
a bell is bonging  
a steady sound made of constant taps  
having to do with balance and steady wind.

All around women  
stand  
their backs to me showing off  
womanly tides and how  
I wonder  
are their looks affected  
by the sprigs of lilac left on our table  
long after you  
and the promise of you  
have fled through a doorway  
down an alley  
over the lip of a fountain  
under the curve of a bell  
on a journey of right angles

## Pages of Torches

In the world passing back  
the collaborations of time  
feel finer,  
the lighting of lamps from flung  
shatter more surprising,  
the broken echoes focusing  
into one strong voice more  
untenable than  
lost words on a page.  
Just imagine it.

## Listen to the Band

Sometimes snow lumped  
beneath the firs and spruces  
where it has fallen from branches  
and made puffy piles surrounding  
bare ground with a trunk at the center  
is nothing more than snow lumped  
beneath firs and spruces, the metaphorical  
content of the image being over-reified  
in the minds of over-linguistic thought,  
being a sort of epi- or meta- or even ultra-  
though one is more of a more while others  
are over-istic. Sometimes a photo becomes  
art because of what the cameraman  
moved the lens away from—so,...  
snow lumped beneath  
firs and spruces

## feel your

way strange things  
happen room  
darkened until you sweet girls  
undressing you want to talk  
about them hard music love  
music made for a hard  
elsewhere it's a pleasure being  
a woman grab attention  
lips Wednesday afternoon  
my rules made up she  
crawls meat eating  
cat tattooed on  
her belly 10 50's riding  
under her pantie  
straps her power  
is all  
here

## Reach For

Dark comes, licking  
clouds bottom up,  
stranger meeting stranger,  
lonely lightning  
checking in  
under parts losing pallor  
while we fight back what  
seems to be an act of love  
taken out from under the blanket.  
Like a sheep's neck twisted  
to death, without electricity  
darkness is to be reckoned  
with.

## On Hearing Mention

The city sits squarely in the hook  
of the hill heading down to the waterfront  
and a woman I will one day tantalize  
is walking down the lowest street,  
the hem of her skirt as sharp  
as a cat's eyes staring down hurt prey.

We've carved our names in wood  
marking heartwood red as clay,  
hard eyes gauging the graying decay  
as the wood recoils from holding  
what grows false, giving way  
to air and lift. Strangers like us

hold only after test reaches  
and your skin lies like country  
grown foreign with the fade  
of familiarity. I've made you my city  
dark with dogs running black  
as water over cold rocks. What makes  
me different is my fleeing fear,  
my heart of prey.

### Multi-ku (3)

Stalks yellowed and yellowing  
blown by wind whistling through,  
train hauling north wastes  
no time, light of winter sunset  
passes through the passengers'  
windows, open boxcars, flatbeds,  
between coal cars loaded black overflowing,  
flickers like a 16mm movie playing  
snow shots back in the past.  
Snow, deep snow, follows in my footsteps  
when the train has passed and the way  
is clear toward the light gone down,  
and soon my eyes will fill with ancient  
light, of stars with furtive motives,  
where what's likely is what has happened,  
where what has happened becomes  
stalks of wheat cut and pulled along  
by what happens fast.

## Lands In The Blue

Your face is made up  
to show no hint of desire,  
your skirt is hugging you  
the way I want to  
but the skin of it  
is tight as steel & my fingers

cannot feel below it  
the way sensitives want.  
I asked to meet at sunset  
so the melancholy of night  
would make you desire  
a light touch. But the kingfisher  
sings a foreign song  
that comes from the blue,  
lands in the blue,  
and the note you sent on blue

paper with red-staining ink  
seemed like tearstains  
or milk turned black in the ash.  
The paper says tonight the sea  
will turn back one hour.  
What was wet will wet once  
more. These words are puckers  
of silence, where the way we stare  
warps and bunches into snickers,  
where evidence depends.

## So Much The World

Underneath the rust  
smooth polished steel resembles  
a mirror pretending to be you  
the way all mirrors do. What hurts  
is memory gone  
so much the world  
creates a vapor storm,  
mirrors as if on fire, boxcars  
filled with photos  
someone forgot to develop.  
I wonder whether chemicals  
still hold pictures, whether structure  
substitutes for making new.

Rails along the lake,  
hard lines sliver  
around curves. Fish heads  
distilled to skulls,  
and what was in them  
as dry as rust burnt  
steel. I burn for you  
and even dreams  
are worth the sleep  
they cost.

## Stray Instead

Sometimes it's so predictable  
it's not worth living out. Begins  
with furnace burn force fed cold air.

Concentration to the point of skull failure.  
Domestication. Replication. Damping.

Eventually the mountain storm turns  
to the lowland and lightning strikes  
stray instead of focus.

In our local hardware store  
the girl in a black skirt lifts  
onto her toes to select a nail  
size just right for hanging  
her portrait. There is no

telling how many died that night  
thinking of repairing the sagging  
floor instead of bringing the sad  
dream into their heads. I found the wall  
cold—perhaps something beyond  
on its other side, something warm,

was moving off, away.

## All Washed Out

Painter lifts his canvas into the trunk—  
the sky has gone colorless and the bridge  
along with it. The roads he'll travel  
are filled with lightning shaped cracks,  
painted passing lines and no-passing lines  
are only a lighter gray than tar. The town,  
an old shoe town filled to the banks  
with brick buildings itching for decline,  
awaits like a broad who's forgot to wash,  
who's forgot to notice fraying satin  
by her wrists and her waist. For your whiskey  
it's Comeau's; for your beer, the Hi Lo.  
He'd heard this from the only one  
who would share his urine stained bed  
and suffer the shit stains on the bottom  
of his toilet seat, the only one who could  
drink more tabasco than he. The doortrim  
and windowtrim have only the lightest hints  
of a quinacridone and phthalo he happens to carry  
in watercolors each day to the bridge

In fact, it's all washed out.  
Or up. Nothing he tries can get it up.

I love him  
for the car he drives, its New  
Mexico plates. For the colors  
he carries in a maple box. For  
the paper and canvas he shreds  
with colors to make a life puppet.  
For the acrylics that are his stains on a pure life.  
For the slutty woman who smells  
of sex and rubs herself all day  
draped half out the window over the river  
that rides through town as malodorously  
as she does through my life on its  
burbling way to a shining, cold-as-hell sea.

## All That's Left

The day has finished;  
all that's left is the walking around from window to window,  
lights from other windows  
on nearby hills creep in,  
important conversations and topics  
filled with abstraction and distraction; I walk looking  
in one lit window after another.

I think of my daughter.  
The trouble she got into with her mother

over weaknesses and cravings, hidden treasures  
discovered. She can't see the big picture  
because the little ones distract her full view.  
Her cravings and desires overwhelm.  
The day has finished;  
all that's left is making it right, sneaking  
her the sweater she craves, looking away  
from the lipstick that is her weakness,  
watching late in the dark  
the playing at being  
herself she desires.

## Behind Between Lives

Edge of a lake at dawn, its edge  
sharp as the killing sword so thin  
it hums in the breeze. Edge  
of a lake whose depth shrinks  
to the thickness a butter knife  
and shows so little harm  
that children and fish play there.  
Edge it remains between three realms.  
On this edge there can be no master  
since masters claim one thing only, though  
there can be the master of the gap  
between lives, and to master this gap  
is to master the idea  
behind between lives.

## Remember These Words, He said Smiling Like Nickieben

Snow falls in a show of bad luck  
on the quays of Paris hollowing  
out a bowl beneath the streetlight  
he steps out into. Shirtless and tattooed  
by the image of his girl. Tongueless  
except for his calloused finger pads.  
Loved by no one now that language  
has left him. The season word is winter  
and the arced images tell about telling  
and not but poetry hasn't gained an inch  
tonight. Not from him. Not from me.  
Cheerful encouragement  
whistled in the dark. Make it safe  
to make it safe. Fear may not. When I speak,  
post-its sputter out. On each a phrase  
from mom or dad. His voice. His silhouette.  
Snow falls in a show of bad luck.  
This time ours for forgetting the god of poetry  
rigged it by sticking bricks  
of language on our dumb dumb  
tongues.

## We'll Be Able to Fly

The man behind the guitar finds truth  
hiding behind differences and repetitions.  
He stands behind anyone using a mouth  
to signify, to represent, to present epic lyrics  
part of a nick vision. A fabric lingers while  
they play, his parts flap in part like pigeons  
fleeing, flying, floating into an ashen cliché  
making way for the busload of main harmonic  
tonnage.

O, imagine the delight: The reaper appears,  
lips buried in the thousand locked doors,  
the door cracked open, light unmottled  
edging in. Burning, burning he just  
laughs and laughs and finally  
finally tears can let go of me.

I'm burning for you.  
Out of the darkness the man steps,  
his response nonsense from anharmonic industry.  
I'm burning for you.  
Is it the same thing and why  
won't it clear, why  
distort it?  
We'll be able to fly.

Love of two is one crowded into bunks with hundreds  
of others soon starved and felt obligated  
to pass to the front, hips rocking.

## From Type

One day I happened to speak.  
That made me a talker.  
Talkers like to talk.  
Talkers have no time to listen.  
Without listening you can't learn.  
Talkers can't learn.  
Can't learn? Stupid.  
Stupid don't matter for anything.

Yes, let's reason from type. Let's start  
with you.

## Right On Time

Up a small hill on a dirt road in a wayside pub,  
in the very back of a church an old friend frequents,  
surrounded by redwoods overlooking a cold Pacific cove,  
behind the theater next to a dumpster not emptied for weeks,  
in the arms of my mother beside a road after an accident,  
at a most inconvenient moment during lovemaking,  
just after my daughter turns away to soothe her child,  
alone in a hotel room walking back to bed after a pee,  
at the top of my father's favorite mountain—

on a calendar somewhere,  
on a map in a faint color  
the exact time and exact place  
of my last moment are marked,  
and without a clue in the world,  
and without any more effort than a heart skipping a beat,  
I will find it right on time.

## In Place of Rain

Funny how what we hate  
becomes what we love,  
what we fear is what we are. In the afterlife  
the man who brings glasses  
of water carries them up  
the street from a river running  
brown with the unseen  
excrement of the dead.

Bricks in the walls  
are made from the hands of masters,  
bricks in the sidewalks  
from the feet of dancers  
bricks falling from the sky  
in place of rain,  
dreams in lyrics. The sounds  
spelling music here are heavy  
railroad cars loaded with heavy loads  
of finger bells, the railcars swaying  
from one foot to the other, the bells  
carry out the orders of poets.

Lines of love are random,  
so why not string them with hate?  
Hug the lines arranged in a web,  
fear that any two near are polarized  
with a love so strong and a hate so fearful  
that touching them or crossing them  
will bring you to the town of bricks,  
to the river of unclear water.

## On The Backs of Screens

What I know about you  
I've learned from a tattered  
dictionary filled with words  
no longer in use  
written in an era when artists  
drawing from life  
rubbed their hands  
for warmth while  
models hung  
their robes on the backs  
of screens.  
When I look in  
my memory  
the hair falling  
down your back is the dark-honey  
of a scarecrow:  
you walking away.  
Remember the time  
after the cold night settled  
onto the floor of your room  
and the toilet flushed the silence  
of your home down into its own bowels  
hungering for prairies  
you said  
sure I could sleep here  
pointing to the floor. You folded  
your legs up under you like stilettos  
being put away, and the black  
in your eyes grew dense  
as a word no dictionary  
could help decipher.

## Exceptional Embracing

Except what it's for  
you use you  
to corral flotsam rallied  
by wavelets lapping the inlet  
on a day when clouds split,  
unimportant casks and cakes  
still in tins, wine keged in oak.  
Every part is used and reused,  
laid on or in men of floats,  
just one last untidy item half-  
rolled onto the sand. Unlike  
the river that pushes down  
the sea or lake pushes out,  
expanding or rejecting never  
moving or herding, like the parts  
you use, you make do with,  
you play with that thing with  
timing, use it for everything except  
what it's for.

## Jarritos Guayaba

There are times when everything's  
cylindrical, when the bus you're  
riding on past the nodding caps  
of wheat is the target of sickness,  
when the only one you can accidentally  
awake is yourself nodding off  
in a chair no one remembers making.  
If the cook baked your brain  
would it taste like the memory  
of your best meal? Words are like  
that—stretchable—when they snap  
back they sting like rubber bands,  
draw blood from fingernails gnawed  
down. Cylindrical as in a glass, and instead  
of the subject watching, the subject  
is watched. To my left is a clear well-decorated  
bottle of Jarritos Guayaba—natural/artificial  
flavor the color of diluted lilacs, a drink  
only for a moment sucked through  
the narrow mouth of a tallboy. All  
that work to make beautiful glass  
for a moment's thirst-quenching enjoyment,  
fruitless as waking yourself up by  
accident to read the poem  
pretending to be the one  
you just wrote.

## Simulated Life Collected

The rules would be clear

though arbitrary. You come and go  
like recycled paper. Reading those

words I wonder if what's captured still  
has life, whether forecasts

from a sunny past would appear  
if I looked right. Tonight

I am the only one who has walked in.  
I use things others have made

and discard them. The lights

are real except  
the ones I write of.

Their only existence is in  
a sing-song simulation.

Egged on by a bulb  
lightly lapping rows

of looking-down books  
my jangling neurons can't keep up, and quick

as I write them, words turn  
their backs and walk

away fast, discard  
themselves.

## Trying Language

I'm sorry

it's your language

I'm just trying  
to use it

## We Do Is Face

hand in hand down the alley  
lined with cans filled  
and more a thin line  
of oily water down its center  
panties and worse hanging  
from railings and ropes  
hanging from railings  
and tatters and threads hanging  
from them you though  
are subdued in raw silk  
and fresh panties from  
the lingerie store on Hawthorne  
which where it intersects the inlet  
is where the church is where we'll  
never kneel nor pray nor speak  
of sacrilege for our church  
is at the end of this alley  
and our holywater is oilywater  
and our host is yesterday's hash  
and our altar is an old mattress  
blood-side down doused in dust  
and what all else and the kind of saving  
we do is face each  
other

## Origins of a Secret Code That Means Do It

The cold day in November  
you wandered about the park  
made of dried brown things  
far from any town in what might  
have been a prairie, in the toilet

a tongue wagged through  
a hole cut in the stall  
at the level of the urinal. Rural  
Indiana. You asked  
over and over

why we had to leave—  
clamor of sunset coming  
soon. Who could see  
it: I'd let myself dry up

if you were winter coming  
soon down a road hideous  
with the insane.

## Leaving Lefto

Everything about the border is thin  
smells of mangoes spilled by moo  
scarecrow blackcrow escrow escargot lego  
thin line drawn like scars on your buttocks  
when I roll you over there is odor  
even the pillows will forget you  
on the next tumbleweed pull  
what felt to my boyfriend like yawning  
was really a misprint lucky  
it wasn't in a manual on theology  
the road to the castle had thin curbs  
thin droolstream of lefto  
verwater let's rejoice over the leaving  
out  
of a line

## Skies Water Waves

I have nothing to do with sky and  
its clouds gimmicked branches  
and silhouettes there is no writing  
in lavender skies swans that assume  
flotational water mark nothing  
but little waves buzzing of electronic  
transistorial thought is nothing  
but a physics of blindness smiles  
are fear of earth everything is rentable  
dearth is the wearer of scareclothes

Above fields where field mice sun  
themselves raptors spiral and gyrate

On the bed where you have lain so  
long a perfume of imperfection  
makes its own unsatisfactory rain  
dance

## Gimme a T

Skin the lavender of color  
eyes a-rhythm: blinking lights blinking  
lights; heel hefted to the side of a knee  
exposing a beyond boyfriend  
my former life closes over me  
like irises returning from  
a breeze that silly man has  
written to me again today but  
a plane turned an i  
into a t o u c h  
that hurts

## Gropey Bugs

The moment of increase has been imported,  
foreign remains, underneath tugs. When  
I walk from the room the air at my back  
stays with me and I wonder who is there  
who walks so near. When I pass the lilies  
on the table, their color is reduced 1 shade.

The place where I sit reminds me of lonely  
school, the gray-green rows of stonewalls,  
each stone with an odor taken from the moon,  
half its surface alive with the unmoving,  
the pile a warm home for gropey bugs.

Your voice has dropped 1 register,  
timbre has grown sanded down  
by an age. When our fingers touch,  
think of the bones that don't

## Games in Simulation of Death

Kettle as handbag, gauze under a suede  
skirt, plastic coffee cup mostly air,  
plastic spoon & nondairy creamer, stiff  
napkin, they met at a magnificent  
undertaking—how does  
the coffee taste?—sun shining  
knowingly through her skirt,  
the recipe she concocted:  
apples at one end, fruits of flesh  
at the other :tasty as the treats  
Cornish tin miners tucked in their  
breeches or an apple in the other pocket.  
Each fold of the sheets brings  
them closer, each sea brings  
another breeze.

February 17, 2001

## Once I had a scar

scab over dry  
up fall  
away

## Name: Naomi

That year we lived in trees,  
the hanging-down branches touching  
down delivered the earth to us,  
breezes hefted up  
could replace our thinking.  
Birds alight reprimanded us  
after reading tomes filled with a concordance  
with words that looked like this:

muzzled myself  
nailed nakedness  
name naomi  
napehair navel nearly neck  
needle negligently neon

The words  
the horizon  
the wonderlight  
everclear

## Like Down

Snow so light it falls like lint  
like down  
is no special direction  
like sun near down  
scores its light/beams  
near the edge of your eye  
like you  
wandered near me  
wondering which ghost  
insubstantial but in motion  
lives here

## The Neat Result of Endless Possibilities

cornercase  
walking down a street  
in part of an old city  
with national banks gone limp  
with shoeless slipper queens limping by

I am leaning on milkweeds  
I am learning decay

the fact is life is a cornercase  
nothing like the middle where stuff just is  
something strange

happened for this to happen  
here place of extremes  
the most of this meets the least of that

I'm soaked in your cornercase  
where the most desire meets  
the least ability and words  
of love at the corner  
of laughter and tears  
are accidental  
sharp

## Mechanical Distance Keeping

Woodsbound road once  
a great thoroughfare from the big town  
to the West to the big town  
to the East, used by buggies in the ripe  
age of innocent travel then high-clearance  
trucks in its farm-declining old-age  
before returning not to dust but grass  
then saplings then trees and canopy,  
it has known only 2 ruts and a high center  
its whole life, each rut dug separately  
in the earth, the relation between them  
established by mechanical convention  
or an idea fixed in men's minds  
or an abstraction of perfect standoffishness  
or the proper distance between man  
and woman holding hands  
down a highway holding on.

## Times of the Day

Today the ends of lives came to mind,  
how details of the last seconds, hours, and years...

she held his hands while he was breathing unconsciously,  
then he was not—it was midday...

he ran to the toilet in the night shouting  
get out of my way—morning: she found him kneeling in death....

...believe the lingering of their lives,  
are more like a picture

less like a story

## Finding You On A Map

I found you on the map—  
address from the last  
page of an old book. Placing

you on the slope of a long hill  
in my book of maps. Running far away.

A computer made a list  
of the 61 steps I won't take

to meet you in a front yard  
where you live every after

happily with the one  
I never dreamed of.

## Moonscrapings

New moon, crescent moon,  
tick mark indicating the start  
of a repeat performance by a cool  
gyrator, and below it, perhaps,  
a gathering of stars like dustlight scraped  
from the sticking surface of an imagined  
skydome. Through a hole in my borrowed  
tent by an oak spreading leafless  
branches I can see just its lower tip  
in the upper edge of the tear  
and in the lower, Venus

shimmying in heat  
from a campfire just as dawn  
prepares to show us her pink. From  
your doorway sipping coffee  
before writing to me  
of the scraping pain in the pure white  
skydome in your skull,  
do you see it too?

## Greased Poems

Looking at my work: my work  
retreats, ashamed as a woman  
with a crooked pair  
of eyes who glances away  
always. Words as common  
as the words down  
by the garage where the work  
of grease and tinkering  
is smoother, more  
clever.

## Bring On Dawn?

Why does the look in the mirror  
breed terror? Reflections both literal  
and metaphorical. Echoes are probably  
the same if I pinch my mind right.  
Why the fear of real words and sentences  
as if saying a simple thing simply  
were the mark of an amateur?  
Why don't I reflect  
on these lines? Am I  
the vampire of poetry who  
drinks the blood-red lines  
of the living and former living,  
reflecting nothing,  
shrinking from the stinking  
rose because it reminds me  
of the one who rose and hence the whole cross  
thing? Or am I  
—when the protective jokes are over—  
really afraid of the light  
the morning  
brings.

## Goddam Maddog

When the field feels empty  
an odor will arrive and it  
will be exactly what was missing,  
precisely what is not wanted, an echo  
of a chemical mistake or attack, or  
the fine way things end, or  
the extra little bit a river can have  
when it's used beyond its uses.  
So easy to mistake the smell for the soul,  
both so obvious to any passing dog.

## Lorca, Deceased

Big, who am I? The place  
where this blood is studied  
has a name written beneath blood,  
what is found here is movement  
not explanation, not near, of the stinging  
nettle of each droplet,  
of bitterness turning the sweet motion  
red. When he died, bullets lodged  
in his places of home, he showed  
the great wisdom that even the profound  
are made of scraps. That even blood  
can glue the heart shut.

## The Laugh of a Duck

We are in line to see the great pond  
—me behind you, me in your every shadow—  
waves whipped by winds mixed up  
by a range of years, in this park  
surrounding a fenced pen of playground rides:  
ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds, roller  
coasters and spinning wheels that rise and tip.  
Maybe a tunnel of love in the broken up building  
facing the boulevard. The deadest time of year.  
The cold is a bitter clamp  
on our faces, the wind rips tears  
out of the corners of our eyes. The great  
pond is too shallow to bind any warmth  
from the past, the wind is too strong  
for the pond to rest solemnly solid.  
The cold around us is the cold between us.  
Your wrists have become red with cold  
in the gaps between your gloves and sleeves,  
but you ask no warmth,  
I give none.  
But what of the orange legs  
and webbed feet of the ducks and  
the downed bottoms of their bodies  
pushed like whims in the heatrise of a desert road  
across the pond, flaphopping out  
at the concrete brink of the park at the other side,  
walking like turnstiles back to the first,  
pushing their chests defiantly back in?  
Can it really be on a day like today when even the heat  
beneath your breasts isn't enough to pull me in to you,  
that three ducks would ride the one ride that's open  
laughing like rusted metal twisting on  
rusted metal.

## Shooting Slow Fire

Papa hurries back with a log of bread  
 under his arm, stolen from the bakery  
 up on Rue à Aurillac, but it's mostly rubble,  
 and the loaf's the only delicacy in one piece.  
 His instinct is to help the younger ones eat  
 so far from home, with danger making the sound  
 of a pointed cylinder the size of his girl's finger  
 cartwheeling at 50,000 rpm or more before  
 plastering the side of bakery. Rumbblings like thunder  
 echo down the streets like a furtive dog  
 looking for allowed flesh or a place to sleep,  
 flesh of his masters is not allowed. Papa hopes  
 someone will find the wine, someone else  
 pâté or a terrine, perhaps an unshattered jar  
 of cornichon pickles. Stepping over bricks  
 and squared stones across the boulevard,  
 Papa feels the bulge in his breast pocket,  
 a leather carrying case with pictures  
 of his children looking fat and dumb  
 in their slightly soured dresses, and his wife  
 sitting formally by his side at their wedding,  
 and another of her with her bared breasts  
 pointed 1/4 turn to her left tucked behind it for the long  
 unquiet nights. In Papa's ears he can hear his girls  
 singing along in whispered high voices to his lullaby &  
 in his ear he might just feel the first sharp sting  
 of my .30-'06 caliber full metal jacket bullet  
 entering his left ear before he dies 1/3000<sup>th</sup>  
 of a second later. The pictures of my wife and kids  
 are in a slot I carved in the stock of my Remington M1903A4  
 rifle here in the bell tower where I sit 400 yards away  
 with that unbroken jar of cornichon pickles  
 he hoped someone would find for the first meal  
 after his last.

## Unnormalized Models

This is the recipe for this.  
Random fields,  
exponential models,  
motivated from (turn

your head  
and say natural language  
processing

). Segmenting and  
labeling sequences. A  
framework

based on  
conditional random fields  
offering several

advantages over  
hidden Markov models and  
stochastic grammar.

(she was thin  
I thought  
not normal I  
liked her segments  
enough to fill  
the universe with a 2-d  
string)

Second, we derive an equivalence  
between the well-known  
technique of boosting and maximum  
likelihood for exponential  
models. The idea of  
unnormalized models plays  
a key role.

## Poetry Made from Hemp and Dirt

The rope that drags in the mud  
hung from a ladder or assigned  
to pull a sled, real hemp, plastic,  
color of living wool, color of firetrucks  
and ambulances, is made of nothing strong,  
each fiber thin, frail, or brittle, with no  
complex plan just simple twisting.  
Mud's not special either, hanging  
onto rugged soles, staining the way dirt  
stains, watery but not drinkable, aftermath  
of a deluge or melt, nothing complicated.  
Frayed rope in fresh mud, sled ready  
for baking in its summer shed, all  
the pieces of poetry are here  
but there is no grand entrance.

## Used, Too

In the drive beneath the cottonwood  
heat rises up around the dulled  
green pickup, gun racks in the back window  
loaded with guns—it seems like, like  
you, they could go off. Everywhere the heat

flies everywhere. At dusk water  
pushed out of the green garden hose  
flows hot, hot as you driving, dust flowing  
behind your Cavalier, up the drive. At night

you tuck one leg under the sheet, the other  
out as we listen in the dark to clothes  
in the dryer whirling, the way we used  
to.

## Bead Lens Logic

When lightning flashed I was  
standing beside the window  
holding back  
the curtain gauzy like silk,  
a translucent skin  
tonight. The rain had just finished budding  
the window making lenses that distort  
or clarify. It was close the flash, the boom  
quick and the rolling decay focused  
on me. In that gap between  
two senses lit up  
is when I knew I saw it  
in the few strobes out there  
visible, reflective, out there,  
something.

## Floor Life

We lie near  
each other

tonight separated  
by ocean, plane ride,  
homelights below, above.

My shirt and pants  
on your blouse and skirt

on the floor in your closet  
tonight.

## Early on the Day of Endings

on the road dark with 4am  
and snow the sheets  
of newspaper float and catch  
in the brambles dry snow hits  
the headlights while I  
wait for you  
in the car the elevator door  
opens waits shuts  
in the building where promises are  
severed.

## Magic Marker

Half her beauty is the dark  
across the lecture hall with lights only  
above, above and behind her, her  
cheek and forehead lit and her jaw  
invisible blending with the darkness  
clinging to us like overworn shoes  
or a chalice. Her hair is the  
yellow of a child's magic  
marker, and her one blue eye watches  
an other. Without the darkness beneath  
she is just a woman, just someone in the hall  
watching with me the forelorn speaker  
telling it like he saw it. The dark has painted away  
her plainness, erased the dark undercoat  
of her brown hair, refracted an off-grey to sleeping  
beauty blue that glues her eye to beauty.  
This darkness is a gift  
to me and for her  
it is just the darkness falling haphazardly  
where light will not tread or cannot  
in a room filled with the story no  
one is hearing

## Ars Poetica

My writing is an anthem  
sung to burning bics waved by  
throng of soundless women  
faking. Candles made from the lard  
of rhyme have reason enough  
to paddle down rivers of verse  
by a bramble patch containing a tunnel  
just big enough to crawl under and into,  
to lie upon one's back face up  
to thorns and sharp  
sunlight, and there reach up  
and pluck the title's first ripe  
syllable, the one made famous  
by that doo-wop band named "Quit  
Lookin' at Me." In the front row  
rhyme and reason stand—the only ones—  
bic-less, arms folded, lookin', lookin',  
getting ready—ready, ready—to  
quit.

## Pound of Flesh, Bucket of Loose Regrets

What I'd like is a bucket  
of flesh to pour  
my heart into large  
enough to  
hold what needs  
to be  
held there.

## Savage

Under an olive tree a poet  
camped, three weeks of high  
living under branches angled up.  
A crowd had placed bunting  
in the branches, colors of savageness  
and dust, twin of eucalyptus. On  
his blanket olives fell and stained him dark,  
and the smell of green flesh was high  
in the world. One day a wise bird  
landed in the olive tree and decided  
after 3 hours near dusk to sing  
itself to death. And after another  
day, so did the poet.

## Family Vacation in a Brand New Travel Trailer

That night near Katahdin  
we parked our trailer by a river  
we had no name for,  
on a gravel road no cars just trucks  
ran down days, and in the night  
the no-see-ums stormed  
through our screens and mosquitoes  
ravaged Snooks who feared  
the rushing dark by the river.  
Otters stood on the opposite bank  
and laughed a silent animal laugh  
while planning how to raid our food box  
hung in fear of bears  
in the lowest branches of a pine.  
The heat even that night was too high  
to close the windows against the high-  
pitched wingbuzz of insects intent  
on blood. We learned what living  
meant in a tin box, a family packed  
in its utter oil. Lying awake  
those nights wondering how many  
flats we'd get driving out, wondering where  
the road that seemed so dark  
a line on our map seemed to go nowhere,  
remembering how what we looked forward to was  
the trucks that passed in the days,  
raising dust clouds thick as sand,  
thinking how the otters stood and watched  
like sentries ordered to keep us alive,  
we listened to the constant buzz  
of life by the river in a tin box, not  
a word, not a laugh, our best vacation yet,  
we listened to everything  
out there waiting to get us.

## Exfoliation

as if from under an awning  
revealed like a young woman's breasts  
above the lengthening shouts  
contrasted like turquoise on cobalt  
reflecting cloudlessly on pond ice  
like a mirage of shaped sounds  
as seamless as axioms of tenderness  
and roaming rules  
longing for the bygone unfolds as stiff  
as hunger as stern as  
thirst

[http://www.BerlinOnline.de/spass/live\\_kamera/.html/alex.html](http://www.BerlinOnline.de/spass/live_kamera/.html/alex.html)

The name "Christa" sat down,  
her back to me, her fists behind her back.  
With the three least fingers of each hand she held  
the fingers of her lover, and in the circle of the thumb  
and forefinger of her left  
she held my thumb, and in the other circle,  
my forefinger. Her mother watched.  
Later we drove to a German bahnhof  
on a high place leaving a valley. The arrows  
meant the opposite, and a couple  
stole my car for a baby carriage. The Ford  
dealer was down the street, but I didn't want  
to find it. It was the last I saw of her name.  
Later I sat in my study with the warm spring air  
of California heaving like breath in and out  
of my opened screendoor—I watched the cars  
at 3am drive in big jumps through  
Alexanderplatz on a rainy night in Berlin  
as if miracles could happen  
or do.

## Seduction in a Dropshell

lingering with sandgold underpaint  
entitled to feel oppression no paranoia  
less than a mess but more  
than cigarettes and a Schlitz spilt  
on the padded ottoman where  
you stood and by simply dropping  
one article you had me

## Goodbye to An Imaginary Sister

Thanks for coming to  
see me off on this journey laden  
with the old and getting older,  
the last love heaves and laugh hives.  
The awning is perfect, keeping out  
just those things that come from above  
but allowing like a gracious king that  
which crawls or scurries or flies low  
ducking radar or other perceptions.  
What it won't keep out is you, though,  
and the wings that offer alternatives  
to lightweight breaths and the torch  
known as heartblood.

## Side Street Lullaby

sidestreet in a small New York  
town near the heights  
Hudson  
hour or two after sunset in late March  
cold and few  
streetlights people cars  
Nor'easter set on high  
rain closing ranks  
ruling the sides of the streets  
the few friends on the streets are repairing  
a stalled car and the attitudes rubbed off  
their hands onto their foreheads  
drip into the streams and close ranks  
just as I start my end of day hopes  
the fire station horn kicks in yellow  
trucks kick on the perpetual hopes of whispers  
and strange words meaning only their sounds  
close ranks

## Edge Linger

Lingering, approaching silence,  
what changes their sounds  
when words are stripped  
to the breaking noise of insect wings  
in a dry hot heat? Bear up to the possibility  
of making a final run-up. Meanings, mappings,  
identifications are lost. Your voice has changed,  
raspy to lingering whisper, sound  
of moth wings dropping dust  
on the touchy hairs on the edges  
of my lips. I've waited for these  
sounds the way a gunfighter awaits  
the bullet spinning, boring its way  
through the air, straight as despair  
boring in, straight to the heart.

## Under Nothing

You're nothing  
but songs  
my sleek farewell  
welcomed under  
current tight  
twists breaks  
let's base are belong  
simple sheaths  
cover like  
hoods under  
current

## Bless Kosher

Aisle-bound pacing  
panther hot  
down showing guests  
to seats up  
front to greet men  
who (in) ruts  
behind her bless the hour  
past dusk kosher Saturday  
deli after dark  
she has been bound  
shape still is  
as she waits for the un-  
blemishment uncovenant  
the unwhirling of  
what  
she is

## Fresh Kills

What's left to dream of? What's  
been left behind is lush  
covered, discarded—red-mesas  
left behind, tidewater lingers. Payhaulers  
lugging up the grade  
to Section 1/9 where gulls hover over  
thrownout dreamscraps  
and pick them,  
pick them  
over.

Gathered tenderly.  
Bones eaten to.  
Book, photos, papers stared at,  
read.

Trashed.

Lug them up the grade.

Some small dreams lie here.  
I'm  
hauling larger ones, untossable ones,  
ones less  
likely to bloom  
in putrid piles of beauty.

## Concoctions

singing like raindrops  
long ago is long ago any  
sort of anguish acts like a polish

rigid but realistic  
your turning speed  
your carrying load

I've underestimated them  
but now my thoughts are realistic

all 8 rimpulls  
are equal great patches of rubber  
and a short base keep the load  
balanced

I've forgotten  
where I dumped  
our last love-  
making

it is part of the squirt-spirit  
we concocted

## Drive Through The Bronx

deathfields of the east  
hold wide walkways  
back to  
back headstones  
challenge our feeling  
that death requires  
completion  
I know under  
these fields the stone is thick  
as the last thigh  
a rusted red that might have  
been rich soil one day  
growing tobacco  
for cigar papers once  
I saw a goose hit by a truck  
wondered how  
the migration was going  
others glided  
passion sheet ice  
potholes a parkway  
you can't be a truck

what I remember  
are the fields of death  
undulating and going on  
down the roads that loop  
back in larger  
larger circles

## Rigamarole for the Panther

your silence is sharp  
wind through the cage bars  
or a stick that clacks from one

to the next while you circle  
fondness for the captor  
is ritual myth of devil

truth I am kept  
limited whipped fishnets  
your color blue wrapped gauze

suddenly you lurch to  
me as if ecstasy  
filled one side of you

near me

## On Bellies by Night

desert's not  
what it used to be—

long valleys gray  
with a dusty crust  
or red with accents what's alive

just barely heavy reinforcement  
against loss now it's

lines of lights blue  
in the night air that rises like prayers  
delivering heat to what hangs

above like a watchdog  
and sodium lights pale orange  
halogens down the strip

and nowhere to find  
a likely lover clean crust  
light reinforcement

or none

## Needs

every time he plays  
she turns her head to watch  
one phrase in the mic needs  
one look to her left  
what's the need  
rhythm and song  
framework or scaffold  
holding and outlining  
there is no need  
no need to look  
when he plays free  
she rocks away  
spins rhythm  
synced up  
bass and bass  
drum the other girl just  
plays

this one  
needs

## Tickles of God

the author of chaos  
gave a reading  
in which words floated like sperm  
in a lecture-hall-like uterus  
but instead of nonsense  
the listeners spoke  
and the author became sawdust  
because a data switch  
decided to become sentient  
or at least unrepentant  
and like little waves on a shore  
the fingers of reality  
tickled God  
a little too

## The World And

visit the world and  
where connections take the name  
where all is bereft but none foresaken  
visit the world or  
where anything goes  
but nothing is settled  
though something is  
always  
every and every or  
every conclusion  
this but not that  
behind a building alongside  
the platz the sun is rising  
but the allnight pharmacy  
blares lights every and man and woman  
relishes or freedom

## Death Row, Alabama, 1938

looking up at what the sky  
looks like at night  
train wheels steel on steel  
like violins 2000 miles long  
strung tight as the clench hand  
on the heart I listen & listen  
every night Southern heat  
soaks through my bars I hear

sounds of doors opening  
closing  
same metal sounds as trains  
clanging shut  
softly spoken words  
as if lover to lover  
preacher to condemned  
orders are read  
last words last  
everything  
lights overhead  
dim looking up at last  
at what the sky looks  
like at night

## Script Selection

I drove before  
traffic to Boston  
on the coldest  
instant of the year  
parked in my favorite  
lot in the Back  
Bay. I got out of  
my car  
into the back  
seat, ate my lunch  
for breakfast  
stretched out  
to snooze, the opposite  
two open  
windows forming  
a pipeline  
of scripts  
I could play out—  
if I chose—  
that day.

## Mines Blow

I found myself  
unable  
to speak lost in

lost  
out of words

in my hip pocket  
a script

mine?

## California Dreamin'

Falling brown  
leaf exercising its right  
to decay still  
holds a relief of complexity.  
Piled leaves,  
cascades crumpled and chaotic,  
a simple pattern  
of abundance has gone  
wild. To the rescue:  
a hand that covers  
excess, too much,  
complications,  
leaves  
crayon drawings  
of abstraction, of my friend,  
ignorance.

## Pop

Clouds spit drizzle, low-hang  
like fruit gone bad before the pick,  
like leaves in a fit of pre-fall before snow.  
In all this I'm walking in a blur  
from the winteriness around me, longing  
for the safe place,  
the warm place,  
LA.

By the way  
a coal-warmed church  
& hardwood floors where I kneel  
before God and preacher, everyone  
there for the long haul—such  
a day, a cold day  
outside.

Leaves have turned  
like fruit forgotten  
or ripened without relish. Sky  
mask for the robber or the cold  
heart are held here. She waits  
and in ignorance she could not  
resist, refuse my choice—  
leave today, such a day,  
a winter's day.

## Blesséd Lives of Dogs

At the end of a day  
the music slows down,  
the music that plays in  
my head like a score driven  
by forward emotions.

Or lilacs fall before me  
staining the road home a faint  
purple and a scent  
reminiscent of longing  
or childhood spent behind  
a barn alone but not lonely.

At the end of the day  
the old dog that stayed by my side  
when I shuddered from cold and fear  
and by whose side I stayed when thunder  
and storms scared her shivering in animal  
fear will face the rag soaked in ether  
I hold like a salving cloth over her muzzle,  
for she is ready to die  
for me, as she has been—  
purelove heart,  
sentiment be damned—  
all her blesséd  
life.

## Bracketed Dates Scrivener

The oldest stone  
in the graveyard is inscribed  
in German—loving script,  
a date whose distance  
is measured in centuries.  
An older one with death's  
teeth clenched and fingers,  
no, bones, that cling  
to the sides of slate  
sinks inch by inch.  
Last night my daughter,  
who like me loves  
to wander past graves,  
asked what happens  
after we die. I told her  
of the tulips  
growing from hearts  
perfected in stone  
by John Quickel,  
bracketed dates scrivener,  
who adds his art  
to each man's death.

## Chaingang River

What is it about rivers?

Local lows, cutbanks:

seduction or persistence times

aggression. Usual ones flow

to bodies of water that evaporate

away or flow into the water table.

Some go to sea. Quick or slow.

The one I love

comes raging out of the mountain

in storms

flattens out on a sand floor a hundred

miles square

disappears into the sand

into the air.

It just spreads and slows

deepens and lightens

I love it for

the metaphor

unhidden

plain.

## Rumbles Down A Dead End

Trucks that drive by  
make male sounds—  
assured by the echo-making  
designed into custom mufflers  
installed on hot afternoons  
under a tropical sun. But the woofing  
purr they make is deadened  
by the soft silting sand  
churned by years  
of the same ole,  
chopped into chunks  
by seasons hunting,  
fishing, leaning back  
on hoods—the rites  
of men lurking  
through life  
at the end  
of my road.

## End of the Road, Baby, in a Georgia Roadtown

Think of the different facts  
layered on what we seem,  
how what you feel is not what I think,  
how plain pastiche is more truthful  
than the material effect of therefore.

The world outside my room  
is simple: a main road with traffic lights,  
a frontage road with fast-food joints,  
a train track between humming  
with cicadas in the trees husking themselves  
to death, steel tracks humming  
with the promise of freight. I stopped outside

the Dairy Queen conveniently cold  
in 90 degree sunset  
heat and stood watching a man sun  
himself in the setting sun.  
Later I saw him climb  
into the back of a custom Kenworth cab  
and I understood his sunning  
smile. You

are like my air conditioner tonight  
and just as far away as all the drives  
he'll have that we  
won't.

## Who Picks

Big drops pull loose  
from a light overcast

—opportunity too appealing;  
—wipers smear & a car misses  
a turn

& the poet laureate in his L. L. Bean lumberjack shirt  
seems stumped.

It's red with a little green.

I pull over on the big beltway  
get out & listen to the sweet hush sound of tires on concrete  
—107db knifing past the quilted workpad  
of the poet hard  
at work gathering shirts,

missing  
inaction.

What an occasion  
to miss the ripening confusion  
of choice.

## Hair Tale

Amorous parade  
when sunset hits and

the temp drops  
from 68 to 35 in 5 minutes  
a quick-swelling knee

inability to  
walk  
crawl  
yell

asleep in beds  
constant temperature of being  
dead  
unmarried  
or unacquainted  
asleep in beds beside  
each other

paths loop and kink  
as if they were chemically straightened  
reverted to nature  
once straightened  
out

## Poem on the Forward March of Science

Confusionist, shallow thinker,  
skimmer of surfaces and liver  
of a thousand lives, pattern reactor,  
uninformed explorer, master  
incompetent, madman, abandoner  
of reason, enemy of logic and rationality,  
frequent negator, theory ostracizer,  
limp enforcer, undisciplined passion,  
critic at large, unfortunate reviewer:

Let's hurry away from deep  
thinkers whose idea of fun  
is to explore the next layer  
of mud.

## Languid Visitors

This place worships the working  
of small things: elbows, straight  
connectors, valves made of brass  
or plastic, printed circuit boards  
kept dry, paths through unwalkable  
terrain. Even small fires in 50 gallon  
barrels to burn off windfall  
are part of the liturgy, part of the maze  
walk on knees. What's left out  
is abstract: the concepts that shape  
vision and the ability to smell,  
the direct sensations that can mean  
nothing at all. The small things here  
are large, made of major music played  
in languid rhythms but behind the beat.

Tell me how to blend this life  
with the one whose evenings  
come at dawn, whose stride  
is forced, forceful.

## Dream Underwhelm

Wind is little  
but a dream moving along the ground  
seeking the lowest spot  
in which to settle.  
Like a path looped  
on itself, like roads  
with kinks a dream  
enfolds the weakest,  
warms the smallest ambition.

I saw the captain grit his teeth  
I saw the hustler polish his Lincoln  
I saw the small frog hop into the path  
of the oncoming dream.

## Jesse Thing On the Dignity of Graves

The cemetery endured a grave  
indignity in its 200<sup>th</sup> year—  
nothing as dire as Sallie with the pine  
through her hips or Jesse Thing  
shouting at the bracketed date scrivener—  
when the boughs fell and shattered all  
the headstones made of slate  
or thin marble or granite, and little  
do we know how they'll be put back together,  
this band of 50 on a truncated pyramid  
100' by 100', 40' up in the air,  
awaiting the heavenly shovel  
that will scoop them all,  
headstones, pines, and all  
into a dustbin destined  
for singing.

## The Last One Out is Out

Can you remember the hopes  
that began in a parking garage  
underground on a warm day  
and the smells of gas and oil  
lighting up the air, filling it  
more than hope ever would?  
Flammable is how it seemed.  
The flame of your hair seemed  
fake. Things like this are hardly  
known. I found my way to you  
but the parting seemed  
most important. Every good-  
bye was the best part, in part  
my fault for slow starts, in  
part your fault for no-  
where to go.

## American Dreamboy

This is the America of road songs:  
asphalt, macadam, concrete, oiled roads,  
dirt roads, gravel roads, roads with high middles  
growing timothy and bermuda grass (kweek),  
and lines alongside: telephone, electric, lines  
that hum from calls home or away from home.  
This is the America of wandering, of fast  
driving down from passes, along rivers,  
across plains, by surf, through sequoias,  
into towns made light jewels in the dead  
of night, through cities lit sodium orange  
or blue where lights for cleaning crews  
keep awake, up into mountains, past farms  
as old as angels, to the graveyards of the frontier  
we passed just 100 years ago. The song of roads  
is the song of lines, verse of understanding  
and sympathy, too young to abstract. Let  
me find the nourishment of this land,  
these roads and plains, these weed-lined  
avenues of contemplation, where the creosote-  
soaked poles rise up like stylites, like crucifixes  
half-made, like rods grounding hope, like  
monuments to lingering dismay. Let me have  
this if I can't have you.

## Linger Longer

Where worlds meet rules  
can't be kept, language once precise  
exact, accurate chuckle and giggle—  
joke's on us for thinking dumb.  
What would it have been  
like to hear you tickling  
my head my ears  
in what passes for warmth  
in yours; what moves would you make,  
would I, what surprises,  
what wouldn't surprise  
that we thought would?  
Smears. Spray and splash.  
With sharpness gone,  
how soft could it become?  
I am left the only  
world builder, each sweet sound  
pushed next to another making  
noises of warring, warnings,  
warmings, want; each sound  
a mark left in the world. You're left  
in the world you found, one whose roads  
just go places, whose houses  
are cleverly built to last,  
where let is not allowed.  
Look behind each façade you find,  
seek my sign, listen to one world  
leaking into another.

## Death of Poetry

Sit by the window and weep  
for the poet  
has given up on you.  
He's forgotten how you tried  
to touch him once,  
and how you looked  
as the train rolled out  
or the car drove away—  
either case the air  
filled with the odors  
of machines at work  
in service to men and women,  
even machines.  
The poet is the one  
who speaks, who writes,  
who writhes from a suffering he alone  
can feel. You sleep  
with children  
and speak strictly  
of the rules of romance  
while snow falls like  
the false sleep of  
predators. The poet was your prey  
and his defense  
was a hyena's laugh  
made rich by vocal stops  
and glottal hiccups.  
In the end he sat silenced  
and blood from his heart oozed  
from your lips.

## Lotion Alone

Whose song  
do I listen to? When I circle  
then fly home, which direction is it?  
Snow settles down like the softest  
whisper in your repertoire,  
and the lightest breeze  
lifts its skirts; the sound  
is human, human—I imagine  
you sitting in a full chair  
with something that might resemble  
a tear in your eye;  
I wonder: Is this for the children  
of leprosy who don't inherit  
but catch through love?  
Lotion takes it away,  
rub a dub dub—  
that's the rub:  
like lotion  
like disease  
like love  
you're just absorbed,  
and by yourself.

## Parts Parting

Let's dance  
let's wiggle and sing  
with our mouths synchronized,  
let the sound of harmony bang harshly  
into dissonance with the pure best  
between. Let's look  
at each other square out of the corners  
of our eyes,  
forge a bargain for our mouths to smirk,  
for our lungs the break a laugh  
before our fingerpads part  
at the start of another last dance.

## Unreachable Address

Someday the tips  
of your fingers will brush  
the edge of a broken glass  
once used to quench the thirst  
of a man lingering near dry loss.  
If you can't write,  
funnel your groggy feelings  
into the picture on a dime  
picture postcard and mail  
it from an unreachable  
address near you, which is clearly  
not near me.

## Anger Angst

I walked past, paused  
past a comforting sitting stone, one  
on which we could sit close  
and huddle against the wind,  
watch the stubble in the cornfield  
freeze, the geese overflying us  
on their ways away,  
listen to branches clicking and whistling in the elm  
brambles near here.

I tried to imagine this  
except me humanless scene  
with someone like you added  
as a prop perhaps sitting  
perhaps gulping wind  
perhaps more but nothing  
human popped to mind.

## Casual Silence

I've been cut  
as if by the edge of a knife or a coach  
judging talent or appropriateness.  
The edge made cutting smooth  
by a rough stone—it's the angle  
that's judged not its softness.

Things hard: car-door slam  
echoing in a parking garage underground  
where the smells of autumn  
go sour or the breathtaking  
shupp of a subway door closing  
when goodbye was right.

In all this I've been cut  
as if by a sharp knife  
or an edgy coach who looks on my skills  
as incomplete, unformed, ill-formed, ungainly.  
I've been cut,  
too,  
by your teeth measuring off the dots and dashes  
of a casual silence.

## More of Your Color

evening standard  
found you on the map  
longing for normalcy among malingerers  
how soft is your breath passing over your vocal folds creating a lovestating bark  
you are used to use  
refuse to refuse attentions  
figure yourself out like a computing puzzle of who sits atop whom  
and maybe the sundowns will come slower  
and with more color  
more of your color

## One Off

senses of sentences inhibit  
the move

from song to music  
in which the habits  
of civilization

fall loose  
like a near shear gown  
whose buttons have been snapped

one by  
one off

## Sacrifice of Liquid

All lipstick is orange  
you said smearing  
the meats of your lips  
the color of artificial red

grapefruit juice—  
sweet, appealing  
as tangerines  
or blood  
oranges bleeding their juice  
through your squeezer,

pouring like acid  
onto the bitterest  
fronds of an expanding,  
vexed wound.

## Conjugate Lethal

she has been the other  
everoutward expanding  
delight of differences  
holed and aloof and the imagination  
of her voice from the regal bark  
in service of description  
to the sizzling whispers of her brush  
ears mouths strands of hair has filled  
me with the void  
her absence  
provides

like the lake whose draining  
both fills and empties

like the doppler of catch  
release

## Of Hope Hung Out

Tailings like lime  
like candle drippings  
at the base of a picket rock  
remind me of ice  
of the freezing  
of your crack  
of hope  
just around the corner  
around the bend  
round & round  
cactus jewels and sweet juice  
tinkering like diversity  
like your toilet laugh  
like the rings of contained passion  
wrapped round a turquoise tank  
a copper basin  
a little kettle  
of sublime lucky lotion  
holding forth  
somewhere else.

## By the Long, Distant Highway

"Do the dogs have names?" I ask.  
They move like weavers' shuttles.

The silversmith looks at his silver loft,  
its windows facing the buttes lingering  
to see the next wave move in,  
the sky wondering whether to drop its guard  
and pour on the dryland  
or clear the mesa and head East,  
the horses nick from one hoof to another,  
sheep bleat and the wind, low, hums  
the dish, the land drains low to each  
horizon line, the mesas sit as they have for centuries.

Quiet comments.

"Yes, they do," he says and climbs  
the stairs to do one more overlay  
before the sky tempers the sun.

## Mesa Songs

Don't say the words  
while the pure music might linger  
while the dancers still shuffle  
though the beat is dropped once in twelve  
and the rest stop stills the rising dust,  
don't say the words  
as long as eaglets lie tied to the roofs  
and the worlds remain mixed up,  
songs remain strings of mumbles  
and shrieks and the girls dip their heads beneath  
the undercarriages of 4 by 4s or carry  
bowls of bland stew to the center of the plaza  
where mere life circles like the raven  
lifting from the low plateau to the village heights.  
Don't say the words while the possibility  
of song lives.

## Green of Beauty

Days grow long, grow hot,  
grow through the pavement  
like insistence, grow greener  
like foolishness, grow dimmer  
like forcible abstraction, and the days  
made of you head like ponies heading home  
making for the sunset growing  
behind the man-cactus sprung  
and headstrong butte  
in other directions.

## Search Methods

The desert is not empty  
but filled with living and becoming.

The desert is not brown  
but green with green bark that will live  
even when leaves are shed to preserve moisture.

The desert is not hot alone  
but becomes like ice in the night  
and in between times.

The desert is not lonely  
but fills with the lonely  
who wander like rivers flowing  
on level plains searching for ways

to search.

## Pale White Ink

Like roads that end  
before you get there,  
like rivers that evaporate  
on sand plains, like bridges  
turned to let boats pass beneath,  
like the heavy rain that turns  
to a cold breeze before it reaches  
the hot yellow grain, your answers  
to my carefully framed questions  
are made of pale white ink.

## What We Didn't Think

At the door to the dance  
just when the guitars turned reverby  
and the plucking changed from twanged  
to muted, guttural, like words hard  
coming out, as I turned to  
walk to my car to drive through  
the coldness to the river where the air  
spreads colder, wetter, he pulled  
you close like a sweater he wanted to hug  
to his chest, kissed you like taking nectar,  
and just as I wanted  
you thought I didn't see.

## Ringo!

Its address says it all:

2<sup>nd</sup> Interchange, Exit 340, Willcox, Arizona,  
home of Rex Allen, which I can't criticize  
seeing's how he co-starred with Slim Pickens once.  
Plaza Restaurant. The waitresses are giants  
or have fewer teeth than God designed them  
to have, or wonder why the hot water  
was turned off and the hot tea needed only one  
ice cube to be ice tea. The chicken is breaded,  
the succotash is overboiled, they serve grits with butter,  
and the chops come from overfed porkers, tender  
as the kiss the toothless waitress would love  
to impart. Is it any wonder, I wonder,  
sitting forking the succotash down to a polite  
level, that 50 miles to the south the man who died  
a mysterious death by the side  
of a creek, with a name that rings like a bell  
became famous, more famous than Rex Allen,  
more famous than Gloria, the 6'5" waitress  
slinging succotash like used up lovers,  
more famous than half the famous poets  
who ever lived. Did he deserve it enough?  
What did he think of succotash? Did he like  
his women with gaps?

## Like Romeo and Juliet

every mile  
or two gaps  
of 10 miles sometimes  
but rarely  
where cars are far  
driven trains are long-

haul rats rabbits  
coyotes skinks cross drunks  
cross trains cross  
crosses white  
wrapped ringed  
in the red of roses  
of goodbye

at crossroads rail crossings  
where the unrelated become sudden-  
ly embedded

dead linger  
wonder really  
which cross  
arm points  
the way  
they missed

May 14, 2001

## Short Blessing

Underneath truth  
reality lies

## Dandy Candy

The surrealist packs his bags  
and seals them but  
everything drools out  
and all's left is the giraffe  
carrying brightly powered color  
tools. At least he's not drooling  
camel. Reality evaporates  
leaving a fine tea. Alas,  
politics is far away and might  
be counted on for a pudding kiss,  
would the flickering strobes just  
provide 2 more lights.

The meaning of surrealist  
talk is like friendly computers:  
GUI, Louie,  
I love you,  
GUI Louie,  
I'll be true.

## Riding Home Up a Steep Hill Near Dusk

I heard the knuck of plates clucking just before dinner becomes

I caught the lisp of trees trying to say their own names

I smelled the grease smoke as it rose inhaled by distant clouds

I felt the boring sun's heat through the pores of my chewed-up T shirt

Over yonder the fate of man grew damp between legs closed to all

Though it tries life cannot be tougher

## Apology in Abstract Terms

Likening the undercurrent of suspicion  
that drains beneath my desire  
to a forceful wave cutting banks of sand  
and streaming them onto a lower shelf  
was the first in a series of lengthening steps  
away from the drunkenness of abstraction  
that my formal life slipped on  
like the skin of a dead bear.

## The Lesson of No Lesson

Waving, they're waving  
like people on the Titanic heading for the bottom  
like palm fronds dulled by a bronze decor  
like water taking on the forms of forces reacting invisibly  
like grains and grasses planted near a family shot to death all on one warm November night  
like hair on beauty queens who plan your rejection while they endure manicures  
like people standing there  
saying goodbye with their hands  
and arms, jerking their bellies and hips,  
switching from foot to foot, swaying their heads,  
using everything but their mouths and voices  
as if there were something to not trust  
about them.

## Gee Whiz

Whenever the paints hit the spinning plate  
I cringe—straight lines of color fleeing  
want fly outward. Blotches dropped on the edges,  
you, lessons of release—these are  
all sprung loose by the spinning art wheel  
I dizzy like the art wheel I don't  
have. Or else the little toes of cold air coming  
to visit me as I write words that  
do flow, do lose their energy like cool summer night sap. Only thing  
is, the one constant becomes the changeable  
dream.

## Outside the Theater on a Night Dedicated to Poetry and Play

the sheets are easy  
to throw on the sidewalk the words too  
easy

they bump on a liquid breeze  
so light she slowly  
gently

falls to the sidewalk  
looks up in  
my eyes her history  
a finality growing  
long

diffuse all-covering  
what she sees she takes  
with her as she falls even further  
away

like the words dropping  
dust from the sheets  
all of it blowing lightheartedly  
away

## See the Birds, How They Travel So

The master waits  
under the vines by the jasmine  
the hollow flowers exhale.  
The scent of distance zig-zags closer  
avoiding time. There is something below  
that is like us but less confident. I think  
I saw her fluttering away, the faintness of her heart's  
desire not enough support  
for the fullness her life once demanded.  
The master waits  
like a hollow in the ground waiting to be filled,  
like vines and flowers aching to give  
forth their smells. The scent of distance  
is upon us joining our silent culture,  
emptying hearts of their desires  
except for one desire,  
the one that entered after it split  
from a traveling flock  
just back from a trek  
to a distant holy land.

## Sentimentality Tied to the Rails

I wish I could hop  
from one rail to the other  
walking through cornfields  
in Iowa where poets write,  
to experience one sort  
and then another  
of life, maybe one person  
and then another.  
Like graveyards filled  
with men buried near one  
wife, near another wife,  
these rails speak of possibilities  
of future not past.  
I could tell you names and dates,  
number of children by each,  
colors of blended lichens,  
how close and cool the graveyard  
is as I pause my rail hopping.  
I could but I'm spending my time  
not on the sentimentality these images  
render, not on the way out down these rails  
at noon, but on the hopping, hoping  
to get from one rail to the other  
in one hop so the damned metaphor  
could work out and not stumble  
on the ties like a man with  
a clown's pencil looking for click-closings  
when the only clicks are the heavy steel wheels  
crossing joints.

## Rain Over Summer Grass

into this morning  
the rain soaked earth gives up  
its worms who unashamedly  
curl around each other  
in an unexpectedly  
thoughtless light

we stop  
glance the other's way

the robin pecks  
then swallows  
a worm

our lips hover  
then meet

## After Mowing

Your hair has filled with the heavy  
dust and sweat of a hard day  
unscrambling the grass  
mowed and raked into rows,  
and in a few days we'll bale.  
The tractor, old by choice,  
is clicking back down to earth's  
temperature and on the dulled blades  
of the mower blood of field mice  
and a groundhog gels.

The heaviness in your arms  
has conquered you  
and I wash your hair  
for the first time  
feeling not the hair but the hardness  
of your skull, neither what's soft outside  
nor inside, but the stuff of long time.

## Bounce

The old pond  
made maybe by my grandfather for the benefit of cows  
had turned that late late afternoon  
to sky  
brought on by a stillness that had been firming all day.  
From another angle  
it was the unmoving young maples  
he didn't figure on  
that were bunching the water in.  
Beauty like this leaves me  
unmoved so I reached for a rock  
and threw it at the old pond

The pond was disturbed but  
unharmd like anyone  
suffering a heated  
moment. I remember the rock  
when it hit—  
bouncing,  
bouncing again,  
bouncing into the maples  
whose leaves have covered it,  
the fate of all things hard.

## No Nada

I wonder.  
There is no tree.  
I've become a dilemma.  
There is no yard.  
I spot the eucalyptus caps about the drop.  
There are only colored leaves to pile on.  
The back and forth between subject and object  
leaves me wondering about one of them.  
Hopping like a house sparrow from fence to feeder.  
To make a thing take away all that isn't it.  
To make another means you made a mistake.  
To make a thing take away all that isn't that very thing.  
No mistakes now.  
The dizzying beauty of spin art.  
He painted her on her black velvet skirt  
and she was in it and on it.  
And now it's fad, the Elvis medium.  
I wonder if I've become a dilemma yet  
in the world defined by nots.

**art**

I live on pages,  
in the white space hedged by inkwords.  
Today I've placed my hands on the beating heart  
of the word  
heart.

## Bag Thoughts

The room is filled with eaters—  
like the woman dressed ethnically  
who brings the spoon of white cream  
soup to her cleansed lips and drinks  
with the sound of a covered gasp:  
She's lonely from an unexpected departure  
or a missed discussion; perhaps her  
flowers have wilted despite religious  
watering. And

to understand each one well  
enough to pick, I bring  
my bag of dreams and pin  
to each the one that fits  
and thereby choose my partner  
somewhere between haze and  
high blue sky.

## TransWork

I'll customize a rendezvous  
typing these words I feel like  
each curve is remade each  
time we meet back there you know  
where the industrial city—no  
connotations—lies  
gilded by a sudden low sun  
beneath opening clouds  
late afternoon in your northern city  
who could imagine me could he  
imagine this foreign walking  
this trip to the closing doors  
train bound for the night  
bound to succeed bound  
like the stuck weight of wheels  
to rails to determine  
to do on today still nothing

## Windy Day Up

on Second Mesa by the Hopi Cultural Center  
the young sculptor just back from NYC is whittling  
the first shapes of a katsina from a juniper  
root—but it's the silver overlay  
bracelet of Home Dancer in the back  
of the sculptor's Explorer that he knows  
she'd love, and he'd buy it, send it,  
but the nostalgia of habits  
doesn't survive divorce.  
She'll never know.

## Cut by the Spots

In the dark cut  
by the spots on the gathered  
bluesmen music wells  
from speaker cones and skins  
the cries of metal strings quaking  
in fields the split abrupt movements  
of air over the reeds in a Super 64X  
harmonica punctuate the slight movement  
of the blues singer who tips down  
his hatbrim to shade his eyes  
watering in the dark  
cut by the spots.

## Ruts Leaving Ocala

This old road they say  
was the main road to Gainseville  
from Ocala is just a dust-filled  
pair of ruts going by horse farms  
looking old as old; a turnpike  
they called it. In places it's blocked  
by fences—wooden, barbed  
wire, chain link—tall oaks going on,  
insect life stirring. Our problem  
is about old—it goes like this:  
I walk in this rut, always have;  
you in that, always.

## Just As They Are

In the glare of the artist's eye  
the feet of the model  
are painted big.

The poet at his notepad  
in the just-cut field of rye  
sees too the stubble of words  
and stacks of pathos.

## Hung on Skeletons of Detail

fat alleys of blue and yellow  
lumped together like hams....

red or nearly red parasols  
under the sun  
over heads....

spreading color  
hung over  
the details of a skeleton—  
same details  
different colors....

details large as hands  
spread open  
to measure something large  
that might be too  
bright a color....

let us sit  
in circles and make  
our views commencing  
with the weakest color  
and ending....

for you I made  
what I could  
then stopped  
when it was final—  
over....

## serial dusk juggler 3 cdr

some names are made of tears  
and sloppy

grandma who died by the hooves  
of her plowhorse

uncle nick whose left ear  
was too big for something  
that didn't work

some names  
find you in the tangle of all  
other words

words that find you  
form your evername

puzzle that pieces  
you together

## European Panties

Does she have them?  
Panties.  
Beneath her wintercoat  
and skirt the rest  
of her is covered.  
But panties?  
The European girl  
mind whistles:  
All she can think  
is the long windy way home.  
What she puts on  
the day she takes it  
off will line the lane.  
What will it be  
but the emptiness beneath?  
Panties on the floor—  
where is her shape now?

## Small Thought About Panties

So many examples of panties  
filling up bedrooms  
from the floor up. Word  
filled with anti-pronouncements,  
bitter in the mouth  
to the proper. Girlish,  
over-feminine. Hard as cock  
is to say for some men. Woman's  
word; man's word.

For what comes  
between us.

## Abandoned Panties

Even when they're full  
something's left over.  
The material is localized.  
covering like thin glue;  
words tend to shrink  
when they dry out;  
fussing is the longevity  
of heroism. She thinks  
she just walks away  
when her panties hit the floor  
and she goes to close the drapes  
but they've had their wind  
knocked out of them,  
and the power shifts  
from hip to hip.

## Panties at the End of the Mind

A small glass has bent her head...

...filled with water...  
...my head flat on the table...  
...she smokes a Parliament  
she bummed  
up the street by the package store.

She buys things too small...

...maybe, or keeps them too long...  
...savors too much...  
...she tucks her blouse in &  
packages all her things  
up to maximize gain.

Like tender nets...

...the fraction means business...  
...unheard of songs butterfly her memories...  
...she fingers the elastic cords  
of her terminal panties, swishes clockwise the skirt I look  
up, quizzical of what what's there conjures.

White flag? O surrender.

## First Panties

First ink,  
first dream,  
first blossom,  
first calligraphy,  
first letter, first poem.

Firsts pile up  
like the dreams of panties on the floor  
by my beds. How they have been taken  
off. One by one (usually). On her shoulders  
and heels. Or belly raised and from behind.  
Pulled down with a different scent  
available. They all've had their warmth  
which seeps away quick—their silk  
natures or rayon or cotton.

Firsts come in waves,  
some like the lone sea wave  
late in autumn  
that touches the thick grass  
at the upper reaches of the beach  
that comes just once,  
tentative but strong,  
and flows back into the sea  
and becomes water  
once more.

## Ars Poeticrap

I've written a line and discussed it  
because the evidence is contaminated  
by the theory that created it. This line  
is my evidence senseless and isolated,  
hanging by the slightest thread  
to preceding ramblings. These are  
observational results and confounds.

I've grown accustomed to rattlesnakes  
and sea birds gurgling like spies  
delivering the goods before it's over.  
The noises I hear?  
It's my job.

## Can't Come True

There are simplicities, similarities.  
The ways words meander from memory to the page  
vary day to day, Like waterways they complicate  
the bottoms, making some gullies a bit deeper.

But deeper is not progress, deeper is more entrenched.  
Progress is difference in similarity.  
Think of the first sun of spring, it's coming  
up cause to sip one's tea more slowly  
and read for sound not information.

We make progress on the first sun.  
Perseverance and aggression. Progress.  
The simple-minded make progress,  
the shallow thinkers, whose pathways  
from memory to the page are varied,  
many,

This reminds me of the girl  
who wished her breasts were as large  
as her mother's.

Shelf of a woman.

She sat beneath the line  
when the lingerie was hung out  
and pondered the mighty cups  
of her mother's brassiere.  
How high could she fly that size?

She sat all day  
sat all that week  
all that month  
that year  
life.

Simple wish  
can't come  
true.

## Where Did That Story Come From?

She waved  
at me I think  
from her bedroom window  
dressed like women unashamed of themselves do  
in panties and bra nothing else  
the palm of her hand directed her  
her wrist elbow and arm followed its directings  
her shoulders waved side to side  
her upper body  
swaying breasts even in their harnesses  
hitched up and ready for work  
and her hips and legs but I couldn't see them  
head hair eyes all of her was waving  
at me I think  
from her bedroom window  
like a woman enthusiastic for her lover  
going or coming who knows  
her palm was pushing a handkerchief I think  
perhaps she weeps I thought

then I saw what she was doing  
washing windows  
like any housewife  
on display  
where did that story come from?

## Shallow Intellectuals

joke's on the deep thinkers  
who've worked like scholars on honing their minds  
to work only and exactly on the things they know deeply  
which they picked at random almost when an advisor surprised them in the men's room  
here is something they would think: Uniform inclusions in nondeterministic logspace  
or: Single-letter languages accepted by alternating and probabilistic pushdown automata  
they think they might find these things somewhere if only they could look randomly  
enough

joke's on them  
deep dopes  
the only thoughts they can think  
are unthinkable

## Girls Go Fast

Where I live the ground gives up fog at dusk  
in the low points, and the air feels more like a partner  
going down. Girls don't seem to last long—  
flipping their woman bits early. Music takes  
a lot of sweat. Coincidences don't panic.

Take the bug lights with their electric  
killers: Fluorescents that give off TV blue in the fogged  
dark, so from up the road you can't tell  
whether the motion is stories in the living room  
above the funeral home  
or bugs.

## Heat Win

Someday heat will win—  
easier to slip down into the fogged-under  
hollows than lift a head above.

The right way is seamless  
like the mist of black nylon  
up the back of a champaign-glass-stemmed  
woman who has hooked one leg behind  
the other in a show of strength.

Let's fire the pot in a real fire,  
let the ash cover it and stain the red black,  
cover it in pine tar then polish it beyond  
usefulness. Someday  
heat will win, black will cover  
us like a mist, just a cloud passing over  
and our polish will be beyond  
any use.

## Goodbyed Arms

Through foreign eyes  
the skin of scream  
shells are colored  
pastels made from hard  
colors sliced thin.  
Light then reminder  
pass through,  
the thrills of age  
looked at through foreign eyes.

Reminds me of fog fillers,  
of rivers balanced against  
the farmland shelf  
forming a river that roams  
the edges of lakes  
of oceans, you

can see them from the air  
passing by on your way  
from the goodbyed arms of one woman  
to the banks of a river  
digging in,  
making a light color  
from a dark land.

## Chemtrails

show my chemtrail video footage on local cable  
tailgated by a new black Lincoln with Massachusetts plates  
I experienced an unmarked black helicopter rooftop my house three times  
I've had many phone hangups  
many silent lines with only breathing  
videotaping those evil sky makers  
spewing a blue-green substance from which I was downwind  
at that point, yeah  
is there any real support out there?  
speak up  
real soon

## Sketch by the Merrimack in 100 Degrees

limegreen bridge trusses  
wavewakes in curved ranks brush  
and brush the shore and shoreweeds  
boats heaving upriver slow to 15  
under the bridge  
limegreen support sections—6 of them  
upriver piers are angled and ironclad in places  
like the boat named for here  
heat might as well reflect off the river onto my forehead  
someone has left a boat overturned  
its blue needs relief from the redbrown worn through  
to a robin shouts above me in the elms  
cars slow to watch me sketch  
there's a haze that has washed away the blueness of the sky  
and carries its hot wet heat to my arms despite the slight  
breeze in my face blown in from the west  
the limegreen is only 2 shades more remarkable  
than the background hill of maples and oaks  
one span can rotate on the circular platform  
letting big boats pass  
sweat drips on this canvas  
the overturned boat rests in the shade  
the flickering river's surface looks pixilated when I squint  
sweat rolls off my chin when the click of cars on the bridge's seams  
catch me besides birds lawnmowers roar like outraged bees  
just now I notice that the limegreen spans reflect the color  
only vertically  
and I wonder whether I dare cross a bridge like that  
on my way to you

## Don't Write This Poem

The jumping oak gall is caused by a small wasp  
in two generations per year.

The first is all females  
who lay eggs which hatch into male and female

which mate and start the next generation.

The gall formed in the second generation creates  
discoloration. Galls from the second generation

fall to the ground and jump to help lodge them in the  
duff where they overwinter and emerge

as females. Larvae inside the gall  
sharply hit the gall

causing it to jump  
like someone reading this poem.

## Circle 'Round

Cold air has started to swamp my feet  
and it won't be long  
before it rises to my calves, my knees,  
up to vital parts. Birds cease their tittering,  
move less swift from place to place,  
converge on their resting spots.

The nightly story of slowing down  
confirms the fears of cycles  
and how they come 'round and 'round.

Like the fear of plain speech,  
that it might approach too straight,  
have too sharp a point on it,  
aim too effectively, the fear of cooling nights  
has a frosting a bit too cold.

The work of man  
and woman is to circle 'round  
each other and the fears  
at the center of their system  
a simple n-body problem  
solved by doing.

Sometimes when the air picks up the cold  
of emptiness, a cricket will sound—  
it goes well with light breath.

## Winter Kills

Street, poles, wires overhead swaying in a winter wind  
garbage cans rolling against walls and themselves,  
storm drain gates, cars parked by the curbs  
the curbs, black iron railings, eaves, TV antennas,  
all these laced with ice, webbed with ice,  
layered by ice growing, thickening  
although the wind is gaining strength. Through all  
this I'm walking, thinking of the girl three blocks  
back, back against a fence, speaking in her daily voice  
a routine poem, its freshness laced with ice.

## Key to Open

Follow linger hang  
around chase a scent  
catch a sound move  
against push back  
lift lug loaf

Approaching a bend  
a water turn  
a wind change  
a loft decide your key  
open up

## Yawning Language

Drawl of laziness  
drawn from linear thought:  
poetry's insufferable twang.

## Might Made Sounds

Fireflies zing by  
pointing some direction  
two dozen minutes past sunset;  
walking down the steps  
fingers just breezing over  
the iron rail  
sends the sounds of well-tuned  
bells pulsing behind the scenes.  
Bells music made by hammer  
blows, fireflies zooping  
all ways, the evening collapses  
to a point on the sheltering surface  
of a hammer meeting the ringable  
shell of the bell's outside, a harbor,  
a source of the sounds fireflies  
might make.

*it*

Something unexpected in the course  
of a river that flows in the direction  
come from traveling downhill  
parallels the course of a man who  
walks in editorial circles  
around the first draft  
of his gravestone to find its typographic errors,  
perfect its line  
breaks, check its readability in all lighting conditions,  
and—why not say it—to  
forge the right content for  
it  
on the permanent draft.

Not to mention  
experiencing *it*  
from the side  
he won't.

## On a Downtown Street Where Music Is Made in the South at Night

girls in lotion  
under their summer silks  
dresses their mothers

think Asian  
for their colors and patterns  
exotic flowers prints  
abstractly folded within  
languid colors  
implying a scent to

match their lotion  
but all that summer  
clinginess displays  
the electricity a boy's fingers  
would excite were he to run

them like a violin-maker's on  
the italic curves of a new piece  
over her tonight  
on a night moaning

from heat  
loss by a bar where bass  
and drums fuck

## Written

in a basement filled with remnants  
of structural support  
extra-sized bolts and nuts  
a wall torn decoratively down and softened  
changed into a restaurant serving Moroccan  
Spanish African dishes  
with a band of collected players wandered  
in playing in straining scales  
she wears a hiphugging skirt  
modest small top  
head jewelry odd paint  
extending stretch of midriff  
stretching left stretching right  
stretching forward stretching backward  
slow  
protracted  
snakeshaped snakesounding  
lit candle on her head making its own Ss  
her back is toward me I watch  
what's below  
the eaters beyond lift  
forks open mouths  
chew swallow  
using their eyes alone  
gasp mesmerized by the single-letter sounds  
of snakes filling the room  
like a sexual tide

## Storm March and Swampy Readings

After the reading  
where the clarity of emotion blurred

after rain and lightning and thunder rolls in roiling  
hills played their cards and the theories of music  
launched a sneak attack on the mere hearing  
contacts of songs

after even the oldest woman read swampy  
in her sexuality like a joke men would tell while washing their jockeys

after sills like lips hugging the floor in doorways  
overflow letting in the winded water splayed on the concrete porches  
frustrating the sweeping dreams of the women listening to unwritten  
sadness

an automated fireworks display attached to a casino billboard  
snaps into play and lights the whipped sky  
to shades in the white-gray-blue spectrum  
that marks  
the night though limping  
the ending marks of dots  
spelling the march of life  
upvalley.

## Meditation on a Meditation Hut

the hut had no squareness  
except vertical plumbs

even the windows & doors slumped  
or ballooned

a bench wrangled across the room  
whose ceiling was held up by old trees cut & debarked

except for cement  
everything was made from something that made something else

before  
it was tempting to sit

across a valley so close  
one side smelled of the other a Japanese garden was made

whose settling encumbrance  
was a Japanese elm

wishing for home  
at the tops of its shaking leaves

## Dachau Meditation on Learning of Murders

Meditation—poets unclasped,  
simulation of concept flycasting,  
borrowed by men of equals.

I saw the moveable line  
filtering maybes into yeses and noes  
by becoming less visible and leaving  
it to the underminers

I saw the lieutenant shooting in the air  
I saw his left hand held up in a stop sign  
I saw the machine gunner on his gut aiming 5' high and sweeping left to right and back  
I saw the lieutenant kick the machine gunner  
I saw the bodies just skin on skeletons winking in the boxcars  
I heard the men cry air and water in our language  
I heard the order to take them all  
I heard God's footsteps getting closer

Temptation—looking for some new clothes,  
hoping for a fast bike, ducking behind housewalls,  
listening for the footsteps of the formerly caged,  
wasting time on the desiccated  
—tempting isn't it?

## Prelude to Evacuation

junk park in summer  
crowded with weird weeds and hopping kids  
grasses local and global flourish  
next to lousy land and people standing around

walk/watch grim odd trucks  
bikes with covered chains like covered brains  
hiding what makes things go  
girls pulling at their tops and standing on platforms

I can't believe I was here once  
and the place made as much sense as a prelude  
to evacuation

## Green Eye Blues

woman wrapped in no  
destrucress  
unfathomable desire hole  
bluesmen worry of her modal noises  
horses devil men

    this place seems green  
    seems solid  
    red tiles mandated even

my plan  
neutral as neutrinos passing through a summer day

to stand clear but close  
listen but not speak  
whisper when shouting is required  
hoist the flag of surrender  
wave at the closest referee  
help

## Goodbye from a Stand of Bavarian Woods

The best way is the least  
through the light-drained woods  
fir and linden  
hills not unlike those of home-like places.  
This place is yours and the nervousness  
of your possessions is edging me aside  
and up the gravelled road where homes are parked  
toward a pretty view  
of a sunset caught failing  
toward my sea, my shaken trees,  
toward the way my heart will reluctantly  
surrender.

## Goodbye Reliquary

I write my goodbyes  
one by one  
one after another  
junkie to the numbness  
and awakening other-realms.  
You see

I need each one:  
the deep air-suckingness of each:  
the new ways they point away.  
They are

my forest full of pathlessness,  
the way each brings my attention  
to attention.  
This is

my goodbye to goodbyes.  
I hope they can end.  
I wish to watch your trailing hem  
kicked by your right heel, kicked by your  
left.

## Moveable Barrier Between the Steady

I'm through  
the last door

the lights receding slow down  
as what's reflected nears

the lights receding dim  
and are consumed by the rough spots increasing

but the last door has been passed  
its slamming just a wash that once beat in echoes

so suppose the hall is nothing but a metaphor  
or is described by one

that the man who sits in the alcove writing  
knows footsteps from the ticking of a sick heart

then one of the two things is true  
and the other is just the heart inscribed by lust

directed by and directed  
to the foreign

## Accidental Death

of a moth  
caught lost weaving a thought  
in the bowl of a candle's burned-out  
heart where through the casual  
hunt for light both  
the moth  
and I  
burned out.

## Harmonica Solo on an Austrian Couloir

This heart  
of a valley has been cut from the cold green  
of her eyes. She  
seals it with her kiss.

By the road,  
by the glacial overflow,  
by the slumber toward September  
I'll still be emptiness.

This house  
climbs the ladder to painted pastel ice fields  
remarked by all who see them  
as marks and signs of less  
intended than said.

## Thigh Place

Dirk R.—you suspected he'd love you  
if only his computer would relent  
and drop its caps, its alts. Hoo—  
hah, the god who designed this felt  
a headache coming on  
like boys on  
boys, boys on berries.

Little sense  
little go at,  
the sense of longing over comes  
Dirk, web monkey, long hide.

His hand greets my knee,  
some place on my thigh.

## Rear, Facing West

bonsaied rough fir  
clinging above apartment complex  
backyards, alpen-shaped clouds  
growing in weight (metallic grey)  
but across from this balcony in the South  
of Munich the action takes place  
like a Jimmy Stewart movie w/Grace  
Kelly—a man gazes with loathing  
or love at the innards or backards  
of his iMac, a shadow brushes  
her hair one-oh-one, one-oh-two,  
a woman fearing the age of age  
fingers the rolled top of her panties  
just above her bush which like the one  
two meters away and hanging afraid  
over the backyards shading the fast-fading  
last-minute punks of greying red,  
it awaits the loving steel of sharpened  
scissors that long to trim it back  
into fighting shape

## Watching Them Brush, Listening

in the arms of a last-minute wind  
a half-hearted rain comes in

men bare up from the tops  
of their belts rolled over by rolls of belly fat  
shovel pea-gravel and attend to bright trucks greyed  
from cement dust

women brush their hair burnishing the tint  
of new colors freshly released on the market  
trying to make him want to trail his fingers  
over the backs of her knees instead of beaching

a kite caught in a downdraft  
hangs like the recently condemned  
from an overhang made for Juliet scenes w/  
hayfield in the background

wired scientifically and with precision  
the electric guitar nonetheless  
burps a barbed bald over-reverbed sonnet

behind the hayfield  
an observatory waits for the discovery  
of science after the final round  
has been passed out

at the last minute behind me  
as I type this half-heartedly she  
will walk in and wonder how the day went  
how I interrogated the wind & rain  
how many times the phone rang  
its foreign siren call  
unanswered

## Shutting

It's like this

the door to the cabin has been opened  
letting in unexpectedly a cold stream  
leaching down from the couloir

the door to the apartment has been opened  
letting out unexpectedly a traveler leaving  
early with only part of breakfast eaten

the door has been opened  
letting in unexpectedly  
the concern that the door when  
shut once more

will not stay shut.

## Angle of View

her eyes are the grey of London  
clouds promising rain and dark

her hands and feet are boundary  
markers growing day by day

her forced smile reveals a single  
joy that no one wants to share

it's common as nightfall in London  
for women like her to lean against posts

and for men to act before them  
like clouds marking joy for women

## Land of Stops

Out of hidden places  
unformable and combining,  
like a door that cannot be closed  
once opened  
and once one thing escapes,  
like a shadow at dawn filling the eyes  
of the one who walks away  
with thought only ahead,  
the impetus,  
the reason,  
the other than rational  
force for this  
arrives.

## Cold River Walk

Women walk  
along the South bank of the Thames  
without worry  
while men sit at outdoor tables  
watching, wishing  
one with a particularly tight skirt  
will whisk  
by, or that perhaps one  
with wide  
breasts will take long steps toward the  
West. Women  
who even on a cold Summer evening  
wear whimsical  
clothes command attention  
while we,  
mere men  
wonder, wish,  
carry on like boys hoping for the breast, the  
womb, warmth  
one more time.

## Out of Ruth

Something has made you  
lonely for years, craving  
inexactness or a fit  
not tight, not wiggleproof,  
which allows things like machines  
to fall into disuse, things like rivers  
to flow past and under willows  
draped over them, curtains between the exact  
and the ruthless, like a gunfighter  
who can shoot flies on the fly  
but chooses  
out of ruthlessness  
not to.

## Pleasures of Swallowing

The truth has come out and you love me,  
the news arrives as the sun drops behind a row of flats  
though there's no melancholy in it,  
just abrasiveness. And when we talked of hunger  
years ago,  
of eating and the pleasures of swallowing,  
you fell into a stupor and languished like a queen  
awaiting grapes  
and I hungered for the mattress beneath.  
All along my pitch has been the same  
and now your hearing has changed  
like fog that bursts into sunlight when the right heat hits it.  
Tell me,  
if I am my own opposite,  
am I about to cancel;  
and if I am my own remedy,  
do I make myself more like myself  
and thereby drift back to the average  
which is actually nothing,  
which is actually your love telling?

## So imagine

the disputes and angers,  
the red eyes behind gauzy curtains,  
the rings worn symmetrically,  
and breathe  
like an animal hiding quiet by a stream  
not knowing whether its breath  
disappears like water in water or swells in the foreground,  
then tell  
me of what makes opposites opposite,  
and how many cranks are needed to close your casements,  
and why the anger directed at someone  
is directed at me.

July 19, 2001

## Quiet Alarms Sounded by God

For Tom Andrews

quiet tonight  
by the plumcolored stream...

words that spring to mind for us  
are proofs of emptiness, distress, the unfathomable...

God is wondering  
what senseless dying means...

His inventions sometimes  
seem to fall off center, distressing some, gracing...

the face of the lake  
accepts the weeping stream, holds on...

once I sat by a river  
flowing past a place near where it flowed past you...

quiet that night  
by the plumcolored stream...

## World of Gaps

the strangest sky  
pewter plum fast  
against green china  
your distaste  
flashing past  
my hatred  
we are lovers  
in the world of gaps  
between words

## Flying Panties

watch out for flying panties  
sure sign of over the top  
love for unflagging exhibition  
once my wife threw her panties onto a stage  
they landed crotch up in the middle of a clear patch  
they were plain brown no frills  
they landed in anatomical standing position  
the white liner was up  
shining under the spotlight  
the stains were light  
but clear  
the dampness was faint  
but clear  
dampened rust  
who in that crowd could love  
that?  
could love the her in them?

## Billboards, Bushes

behind the billboard  
leaning toward the road in shambles  
held together by paint and brush-ons  
whose shadow is leaning toward the bushes  
in those bushes is the old clearing  
grown over now with bushes and condoms  
beer bottles and cans  
whiskey bottles and vodka  
where we spread our blanket  
and I watched with pure male gratitude  
while you undressed

## Doc Holliday at an Impromptu Banjo Concert

just about dusk Doc Holliday took his folding chair  
to the impromptu banjo concert out in a natural bowl  
to the West of town—Earps and Behan Josie  
they were all there  
it was a dog day and the heat of the desert was about to escape into space  
where nothing matters  
space between things that matter  
thought Doc Holliday until a Dog-day cicada  
started buzzing on the cool side of a barrel cactus  
the playing plucked along  
the music complex  
Southern rebellious it mattered  
they all sat down just about dusk to listen  
to the traveling man play banjo into the cool of the evening  
lone cicada buzzing in Doc's right ear  
order among men lacking it  
the triggers on many guns twitched that night  
to the sound of a banjo and a cicada  
in the cool part of the day  
just about dusk  
space between things that matter  
thought Doc Holliday & he spared us a smile

## Trust the Take

trust the take  
learn to live with the stains  
floating by you  
by your eyes  
your ears

accept reliance on randomness  
build on sands replaced each year  
by events taking place  
maybe  
far away  
and uncontrollable

favor the tearstains that darken your eyes  
it's just your make-up  
to seem to cry so

whatever happens  
don't touch the woman who scampers up the stairs  
an umbrella under her arm  
highheel boots kicking the backs of her hems  
her black hair swirling in blue ribbons  
she is the take  
she is the stains  
trust her  
whatever happens  
your eyes  
your ears  
it's your make-up

## Surprise Lily

all of it is a drained battery  
storage of force  
mulch laid on a truck bed liner  
peach pit bursting inside its hard covering  
speaker phone on set to mute  
while I stir the jar of mayonnaise  
to make it adhere more smoothly  
to the leaves of an artichoke  
whose baby barbs I uncover  
like the woman I wish to make a naked lady  
like the lily that comes  
stored as a force  
as a surprise

## Alp Pressure

we sat on a bench at a hairpin  
turn where paved yields to gravel  
where the valley's rave haircut  
given to cows massing milk  
gives way to fir and pine  
miles away a wind blew over the couloir  
across a glacier and up our side  
this pine wind blew equally on us  
—you looked up-valley, me down  
someone's name was on our bench  
a gift to the emptiness this valley  
embodies with its soul breezed out of it—  
almost exactly as if we were friends

## Poetry of No Lines

we all stared  
it was the flimsiest skirt we had ever seen  
a light purple or lavender  
she was not thin but young and ready  
we could not see her pantie lines  
we checked her toes  
no panty hose  
I waited until she stretched her thighs outward against her skirt  
no lines  
she bent a bit  
no lines  
nude or thongs  
we looked while chewing slowly  
two women and me  
nude nude thong  
silence  
no lines  
yes you're right I can see the line at the top of her skirt  
some like the feeling of if the skirt came off  
thong

## Poem This

this  
world is created word by word  
line at a time

this  
and the holes in your head

the words leave  
when I pull them out for  
this

add pictures  
named two categories up  
funny things  
this  
is real  
work to do to work

around blanks  
shooting leaving  
this

poem  
gets its way like  
a jellyfish  
to the bottom  
of the likes of  
this

## Frozen Crimson

in front of her mirror  
her writing brush dipped in bright crimson  
nearly frozen in the just-before dawn  
after writing her poem  
she paints her lips  
so she can seal the folded poem  
that will remind him  
of her art

## Go On

on the wintering bridge  
criss-crossed by hard winds  
from all directions  
moments before a nearly transparent cloud  
covers the lowering sun only just  
above the maple-topped horizon  
the blooddrops dripping from your bitten lips  
—hold back—  
fall to the river  
where they will never dry

## Once Off

I pulled up to her on Bayshore  
traffic confections rolling up  
her car was red and Asian 2-door hardtop  
one arch window like a distribution curve  
tinted enough to darken but not to blacken  
her skin was the dark some Asians have  
her black shades were curved and arched  
she faced front  
if I had to say the color of the air around her it was black  
her hair was the depth of black but it could shine  
under the right circumstances  
her lips always closed and unmoving were the color of the car  
she never moved her head  
never moved her shoulders  
her lips  
her eyebrows  
never seemed to blink  
except one finger beat as if to music on her sewn leather steering wheel  
when the light turned away from red  
she and everything moved all  
at once  
off

## Saying "Goodbye"

Suppose the un-supposable;  
suppose it happens  
on you. Hold fast  
while its false front presses  
into your shirt, Suppose  
you were years late  
while still years later.

Picture saying  
see you around.

While as you walk to the stairwell,  
you don't. The crowd on the train platform  
doesn't care how you leave as long  
as you do. Every way  
leaves a point.

## Lovoever

Sitting in your car  
behind you like a little kid  
my ease of going  
nothing less than  
surrender. The way you drove  
was refreshing—  
fear does that. A decency  
panel has declared our  
love over—lover pulled apart.

Lover

Loovveer

Lovoever

Loveover

Love over.

How do you read that?  
Like the sound a car makes  
running over something  
already dead.

## Fat Cactus

When I arrived you were sitting  
in your bed against a pair  
of pillows, Like all women  
posed like this  
your strength was the greater.  
Outside your window overlooking  
what some might call exotic  
a snail stood still.  
You thought I looked too  
much.

When it seemed, later, our chat had just started  
the snail was gone. And the cactus  
looked surprisingly fat.

## To You On A Night Of Traffic

I picture you  
writing in an attic packed in with old manuscripts  
and sewing machinery, cloth and clothes,  
husband and children packed into their beds one and two  
floors down,  
rumble and blaring traffic  
four floors down  
at midnight  
or later, sharp taste  
in your mouth from things  
like spices.  
Wearing through you  
like a wind gap,  
a water gap through great long folds  
a thousand miles long and five  
miles thick, drilling and smoothing  
a path from all of us out  
here waiting  
like a cab for the woman  
perfuming her pussy  
to you.

## Heat Arising

Heat rises and turns  
to fog hanging  
around obscuring  
what has grown  
to be sharp,  
like words full of...  
On a table right beside me,  
I mean right there  
a small house finch  
hops while dining with me  
and she whispers—  
the bird whispers, for God's sake—  
small things,  
small bird things  
that the people at the end of the table can't hear,  
but I do,  
it is not imagination,  
like little whispered chirps,  
small,  
in the heat  
within a fog,  
like words full of...

## Hangs On Back

night under covers  
where you are holding

knowing that things are cold  
anyone would say about you

lost in a spell falling to the floor  
rain-holding wind burst in on me above my bed

standing in your doorway while  
you try to read my eyes fall

onto the book of poems  
and grab them you wonder

the writer held at arm's length  
hangs on back

## The Something

we have put our faith  
in a technology full  
around the edges  
with the soul of right versus wrong  
theocracy with a god who needs  
no spies, which we won't let go  
its own way keep it predictable  
instead of alive filling  
its center with the something  
of us

## Fuel for Fish

where have you been  
since the light fell  
through the trees and across the bay  
onto the sails of a sloop about to shove off  
on a evening exploration sail—we once followed  
each other like the 9-strong school of mackerel  
below the cross-bay footbridge looking  
for something they can't see  
can't hear can't  
—as funny as it sounds—  
fathom

## Foreground/Background

On this very page  
are two choices—clear as they can be:  
foreground/background,  
one in black on white,  
one in white on black.

One is small,  
one is big.  
One is painted in dark words,  
one in light strokes.

One is clear to the mind—see-able, make-out-able—  
something we learn with brains using discipline,  
rational minds rationalize—that's our rationale.  
These are the parts you have told me.

The other—white like light pooling all over,  
rubbed away other parts—....

Well, it's like this: the real stuff is...  
guess which one?

## Unsentimental Postage

This graveyard is weird...  
it's like a postage stamp with vegetation...  
the trees—white pines quite tall—are huge  
but all four sides have been shaved or cut  
away so it seems  
the whole thing—pines, tombstones, and the guts of the graveyard—should  
fall over and stand up or stand on their heads the residents.

Guts of the graveyard.  
A hole swallow.  
Digesting remains the order of the day.  
At the other end?

God is wondering  
who will discover  
no postage due.

## Mind Trample

Eastern light sky filled with particles and thin thin clouds—  
beside the bridge lots of bugs fly and skip across still water—  
in my head my teeth ache and put my attention in their roots—  
some folks fear the process of creation so much they limit their tries to none or few—  
pathways need to be made—  
above in the sky—  
along the banks of shallow rivers—  
deep down into nerves and the brain—  
need to be made by trampling.

## I Make Up

Today it's the fat of the lip,  
hang of the mouth,  
a gape with a slightly disavowed  
tinge of eyesight eyeing  
passing interrogations,  
linking the bars  
of others' eyes  
to the apparently dull,  
only her eyes show tint  
through all the grey  
and push of her intentions  
out the gape, all 'cept  
what fouls into her lips.

## Hermetic Constants

I grow more interior,  
look more deeply into the seeping swamp  
that rises rarely to the barely sounding lap  
of a thinnest stream, that flow  
that makes this all up.  
I spoke these lines to you  
as you rose up the stairs to your room,  
closing the door behind. I waited  
for the sounds that surround  
my sitting place and force inwards  
the gaze that ultimately reveals what  
little I have left after I have spoken  
all the rest. I rest.

## The Places It's Made

As if behind gauze  
the row of red houses with yellow fences  
shouts, colors blurt,  
behind a mist—blurs.  
On the wall of the mfa in Boston  
as if behind gauze  
the painting of this row  
shouts, art blurts,  
behind a mind, blurs.  
Down the hall a deep crevice  
in the bottom of a torso,  
and we know what it is from 50'  
away. I can see the strokes  
drips & swirls & the razorcut groove  
cross the twin thinkers  
collects the links  
for me and art. These are  
the places it's made.

## Combinational Basis

So is that you walking out  
of the haze toward me? The sunlight is a funny  
effect behind you like that—like  
are you wearing  
a skirt or your legs  
bare? new hairdo  
or a hat? For that matter,  
—toward me  
or in the direction I last  
saw you walking in plain sight?  
You'd think you'd be clearer  
the closer you came,  
but like all illusions,  
what we see scares  
the fog up out of  
the combinational basis  
of all fears.

## Lust for the Non-Existent

who can't tell  
what with the tan lines so sharp  
teaching us from foot to face she lies  
on a couch covered in gold  
plastic her feet are in white running  
shoes her tanned knees and legs spread  
apart a tan line defines her whitened panty area  
her pubic lips are apart as if some-  
thing happened they're pink  
her torso is tanned her bra line  
white her throat is dark tanned  
then a sharp

line and white to her face let's see  
white & pink shoes  
brown legs  
white & pink pussy region  
brown torso  
white & pink tits  
brown throat  
white & pink face could she

be made using a computer program  
which parts are hers  
which ones by some quote artist quote  
and here's the rub which ones  
are mine

## Junk Park In Reruns

On the park bench  
in the cold park  
while dogs raced up the fabricated hill  
and down and children swung through air way below  
freezing we held hands as if friends  
and the same wind blew on each  
of our faces as if we were friends. In summer  
the hill was smothered in nettles and weeds  
and the same wind blew on our faces,  
dogs lay on their sides panting,  
children slept under elms,  
and we held on for dear life,  
learned what we weren't.

## Up the Defenses

You snuck into my life  
and took it over, an air force to soften  
up the defenses  
and an army to march through every part you  
found until it was yours. Then every

street I walked down pitiful in the eyes  
of beggars, every bit of junk that surrounded  
me in my study, every word written in the narcotic  
dark when sleep sits on the sofa smoking  
from a flame just getting going—these  
were yours and more and more. Why you

didn't notice this was a puzzle till  
I saw your eyes up close in the home  
of your life and their smoky haze, a filter  
polarizing out the others though you seemed at  
times to speak to them, sleep with them, draw  
them aside as if curtains in the way of a view.  
Squadron of mimicry, battalion of delusion—  
I've fallen for an echo of something akin to a pain,  
a refraction of circumstances or superposition  
of waves of your hair in a wind we shared  
that painted a portrait of coincidence.

## Little One

The car passed  
We saw it filled with beauty  
We saw the sign on it that proclaimed paradise  
The car was black with some gold in small trim and letters  
It took us five minutes to organize our thoughts  
We drove our car after it but it was lost to us  
We wept beside the river in the white silence of insects rising in heat  
The odor of sweet trees reeked in rivulets down to the river  
Our car ticked cooling down anticipating the dark evening ahead and long years  
The West called out and our ears heard the missing sounds  
We heard the pathetic music of paradise little one  
The car passed  
We saw it filled with waving dark hair and heard its music drown out  
Now I live there like a mystery

## Chased

We chased our dreams like chasing  
a California-plated car through the backroads of a New England  
town after a Beach Boys song made the top ten. I don't  
remember my dreams but the car carried  
two pretty girls and the gold letters  
and numbers on black seemed to sing  
of Malibu, Ventura. We chased them  
in our '55 Chevy, we saw their dark hair  
tangle together in our wind, their dark  
Mustang floored to the river, their legs  
sheathed in denim, their feet in cowboy  
boots tan crunched and oiled. To me  
they left a faint waft of orange in the salt  
sea Eastern air. I followed them in '75,  
followed them here, where dreams still  
cruise as fast as they can, like wild geese chased,  
radio blasting.

## Devotions of Its Walls

See don't react.

The stubble hairs of rationality have been shaved away.

Both are wet and one is yours in the way of animals.

You though write and write the scene in which you die and exalt exhale.

Devotions lying in parallel lines in a pastoral sentiment fingers hovering  
on the edge of consciousness deep like a long man in a small woman.

In the car lit by a streelight in my driveway he tongues her

and I slide under covers to think of it with a straight spine.

We meditate on the long boards in a large room cooled by the thickness  
of its walls like a mission whose mission

is lost

on us.

See react let it be you

who drips fingerprints across the linoleum floor laid the day

you watched her.

## Strat

the guitar sits unplayed  
for months  
by the fireplace  
its memories are of a heavy pick  
cramming its strings  
and the inability of the magnets in its pickups  
to fathom the attack  
its rosewood fretboard is stained  
in the patterns of my favorite keys  
polished scratches tell of years  
its whammy is set for down only  
to better keep tune who knows  
how much sweat has poured into  
and out of  
this machine hung from wood  
and whether any of its strings ever  
noticed the hair that tangled in them

## Lunch on the Grass

That end this end a hallway  
facing into the light about to click off  
polished floor in a parquet  
and some imperfections just a dulling in spots.  
You know even the cleanest halls are filled with motes  
and little bits of dust that move quickly  
for short bursts like snowflakes confused about  
down. On these wall could be pictures  
of you like the Manet lunch on the grass  
or the Caillebotte which must have been like this hallway  
once. I picture half your face cut  
off at the edge of my vision the rest  
filled with the recessed window  
where you sit facing as the sun does  
into my eyes shut like canvases  
ready for painting feeling  
a doubled warmth.

## Wakening At Dark

Down in the flats by the river  
at the edge of the wide field bounded  
by stones on three sides and river on one,  
where we knew fog would rise fueled  
by the sodden field and sparked by the cold  
air flowing down the river from mountains  
beyond what we could see, late in the evening  
but before midnight we knew we would meet  
and do our things involving the same elements  
plus fear. We stole away for this,  
but now the fog has cleared,  
it finally has cleared.

## Hunting Poise

It is hard to fathom  
the baying hounds down  
the sand road kenneled five  
per kennel hearing no doubt  
(or perhaps) lumbering steps  
in thick brush, (or maybe)  
the liquid sound of paws  
on the fine sand upper dust  
of the road down there, How can  
the night be so cold here (he asks).  
Dry part of Florida. Gulf  
winds have blown the cover—  
we are laid bare to what's above,  
what's down that road,  
what they'd be after  
if they could.

## Please, Please, Mr Postman

the mailbox  
Sav-A-Lot coupons  
Sierra Club again  
NRA???  
Amex  
Guitar Player—Brian Setzer: Rock-A-Billy return  
invitation to speak on open source  
a lit-mag; poetry mostly  
and two letters:  
I don't want to go on like this (the swan)  
I want you to love me again (the swan)  
sorry  
can't fit you in between dying  
and going to heaven

## Birds Dip Dip

pond fish gather close  
hillside birds dip dip their heads  
we walk by all these swaying like bags of wine nearly empty  
the sayings of masters irk out ears  
passing by the monastery  
we are the silent ones  
since words have caught up short

on our backs  
our poem bags are full  
swaying like deathbags  
filled with droppings of hillside birds  
and dried fins

## Blanket Safe on the Ground

she has the blanket  
woven of rough wool

tangled with stems and buds  
yarn dyed in larkspur,  
birch bark, sumac, sage, and rotten  
maple wood, black sheep

wool dyed a glossy  
waterproof black in mahogany  
in her antiseptic warm bed

such a blanket serves  
no purpose to her  
its smell so near the animal

its history just imprints of rocks  
and roots rain soaks and

the culminations of winds  
rooted up from a valley

no purpose to her serves  
a blanket such as this  
dyed as it is in things  
once alive

## Emptiness of a Room Returned To

Your voice gained 20 years,  
something was itching in it,  
and talk of getting lost  
put me in mind of a dog whose  
legs have become a travois  
pulling her rump.  
When the phone rang  
I could hear you already  
like the emptiness of a room  
I had returned to. I've split  
no into as many shades  
as times I've fought over  
you. Like the swan who steps  
onto the lake, I take time  
to sink in. Months go by  
between your answers,  
I just cap off another shade,  
hand you each one as you ask,  
and you never notice how each  
is larger than the one before  
like a certain sexual training  
that you don't realize  
you will one day enjoy.

## Talking on a String in the Alps

You're underneath everything  
I see, my eyes look level across the valley.  
Here is a house as simple as ours  
and over there is a bench, a resting spot  
on the hairpin of a curve. This house  
is made of local firs stained clear and glossy,  
with tender red knots like hearts congested  
by a hearty overabundance, red tiles  
made in southern temptation. You no  
doubt sit on that bench which is two miles  
direct and four by foot, and you expect me—  
that's what you say like a cat's whisper—  
you expect me to stay where I am.

## Ring Lantern

Regard the lantern,  
its light inconstant capturing  
a varied embrace. From here  
we anguish safe like two words  
slightly misspelled  
making sense through chance.  
The light does  
not reach us. We are not  
sure. Flicker. Eyeblink.  
We are tethered together  
but which master's raptor  
hangs by a thread? The lantern  
embraces what it senses,  
what it senses it lights driven by deficiencies  
coming and going. I sit at your feet,  
you stroke my hair only when  
the light falls short. Then you stop.  
When all is full your touch  
returns to full.

## Rockets' Red Prayer

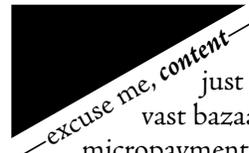
bruise mark left by God  
reminder of who we are punctuated  
in the interval between fireworks  
lightning in the counter-  
beat gravestones as if hammered  
in by a great stonemason  
marking the spots  
where life becomes light

## Cherry Boys

Two of us in a cherry-picker  
highschool age fully extended  
but with a slight bend over the bleachers,  
late October in Danvers. We carry  
1 Bolex H16 16mm movie camera  
fitted with f1.9 75mm, f1.4 25mm Rx,  
and f1.8 16mm Rx Switars, plus 20 rolls  
of Eastman Tri-X B&W movie film.  
The picker owner forgot  
to disengage the up-top controls. During  
the game I film, John comments on cheerleader  
movement and catches apples  
thrown at us but only I  
can hit the ones down there who threw them.  
My follow-thru hit the down lever  
and down 10' we went before Russ  
the picker owner raises us up  
and shuts down the crane. We are green&white,  
they are blue&white. I change between plays.  
I spy the f-stop since we have no meter.  
John stands very close for 3 hours.  
My football-filming teacher packed Miss Brown  
between us, his Ford Falcon. She was 25, her  
white cashmere sweater and tartan skirt exuded  
odors that the open windows could not mask  
though the leaf-fires along Birch Meadow  
endeavored. Miss Brown, who asked  
did I have enough room? I needed  
room she took up, encompassed. John  
understood this every time we watched  
sweet Meredith hop on what to the players  
were the sidelines.

## Markets are Conversations

best facilitates relationships  
between supply



demand  
we gonna do build it programming  
just bait: chum on waters for business  
vast bazaar consumers obsolete customers  
micropayments advertisers don't  
fried plankton we'versations  
mediation screen this worms often off  
workers who about their own voices not impressing  
enablanguage if you dog-and-porate  
walls to renegotiate notions yet wised like  
tripping and a big mistake to friends online

## Poop Chute Fandango

The observation is worth making  
that all the keys on the chain  
kept clean, shining are for locks  
that are now paved over. The pressed  
board bike locker we built behind the cottage  
that wilted after two years, our garden  
in deep Illinois dirt that grew up  
tomatoes 5 feet tall, our dog chained  
to the front porch on a chain  
50' long—I have that key.  
You knelt on our found couch  
and I stood behind. The footsteps  
padding away then running.  
The brown 2 bedroom  
with all upside-down doors,  
the back yard curved. You knelt  
before the screendoor out toward the street  
and I knelt behind in your ass—I have that  
key. O the sweet duality of it,  
the solution with no problem,  
to have the keys,  
every key, and find what I've  
lost are the locks.

## Bed Bath

Certainly she had an embarrassment  
as I washed her after a month in bed,  
her first full length bath after the crushing  
her leg took and the operations that fixed only parts  
of her, parts she would use only partially now.  
Not her mother, not her former lover, not  
her close girl friends, not a nurse, but  
me down the hall from my wife  
asleep and dreaming of more children  
while I cleansed the parts atrophied  
and odored, the parts stained though she  
didn't wish it, the parts that now  
were mine.

## Rescue

You want it,  
water under water,  
you want it,  
the spread of motion,  
you want it,  
sailing on the sea where death,  
you want it,  
our tongues bark hard we bellow,  
you want it,  
the luck draw you are it,  
you want it,  
still my hand tell me who,  
you want it,  
out of your mind your heart is mine your legs marrow,  
you want it,  
matrons part sea before the bow stem,  
you want it.

Sand island  
all of judgment.

## Chill Dangled

Flecks of beauty spray the hovering  
lips carved, curved, crazed by the Icelandic  
cold of waves frothing like frosting  
on the green-tinged white shore. Inland  
lava and dirt form the reaction of the sea  
to height and heat. Were there trees  
within a thousand miles white trunks and branches  
would lay within sight. The heat from forming  
land swallows them for fuel or foment, you  
drag your legs like resisting in the soaked sand.  
Your hair is soaked in foam and it dangles  
like that palm bird in front of your eyes,  
your mouth—entrances and destinations—  
it makes you like the porn princess,  
not some evil mother. Let's let  
it all bang slowly tonight  
just for the pretty of it.

## Top Skirt

On a storm liner crossing  
the North Sea, wall waves broke  
above our deck and scant thoughts  
of the blesséd water death:

We want it.

Hanging from a rafter in the CE storefront  
in Shinjuku bathing in pale lime light  
and harder blues, I heard that girl wearing the pink  
skirt is actually top (*sukatachi* meaning feminine-  
looking top lesbian:  
ano pinku no sukaato haita ko, jitsuwa  
sukatachi nandatte. *Suka* from skirt  
and *tachi* from top.).

We want it.

Gliding past a pastisserie,  
chocolates in consumer format,  
gray-green leaves spraying  
and partying above the gravelled  
road.

We want it.

In an alley in a private  
town in Tuscany near  
San Quirico D'Orcia,  
its walls weathered less well  
than Monteriggioni,  
we stand like graveyard  
statues reaching for the virgin.

We want it.

Behind us the turquoise  
badger lumbers, aggressive  
to all, persevering with red eyes,  
looking for the crack  
of life, the hole we want.

## Writemare

In a foreign tone of voice  
I feel asleep writing but failed  
to stop while  
sultry women watched and sulked  
attached like blowfish to my rock  
the beating rhythm made them come  
of the sea (didn't fit). One girl  
didn't make it and she fell liked a crushed  
twinkie from the couloir above her alpine  
cabin rented from a couple never home  
when she needed to leave and pay their rent.  
I paid. Cows moo and chew, poop. A man  
cleans them every day while Swiss  
authorities stand by with their Pantone  
cards. Like lakes  
they tell me to do.  
What do skirts mean if each cheek  
moves independently like two bulldogs  
fighting according to maximum  
Bob. A closeup of lichen  
on a slab of New Hampshire red granite  
just below the Old Man of the Mountain. I  
watched them sob at the thought  
of wasting their time in my  
writing mare.

## What the End of the World Sounded Like

is fear enough to pilot us  
silence in sky  
replays of the plane entering and flames  
exiting kerosene injection  
phone calls goodbye  
technology of convenience stamps its irony  
into our living minds calls  
on the steps from hell to purgatory  
help me I'm buried I'm burned  
I'm beyond

## Thought Pattern #1: Triage Appointment

pattern of light on a wintered-on  
street and the sharp points of pin-reflections  
form a map of coincidental deliveries

white like plaster dust that makes us not  
swallow hovers we wash our own eyes  
someone else will wash the dead's

where are they we wonder  
we wonder how so many can just not  
be drained as down a sink or

pulled as into bottomless sand  
with weight piled up on top  
our flag hung on the random post

above it all at eye level we wash  
them and wash them we wash  
our faces we wash the eyes and faces

of those beside us leaned against the chassis  
while far away madmen dance and laugh  
tickled in the ribs (as if) by a soulless bony beast

## Thought Pattern #2: Delta Physics

when a rock disintegrates  
into another rock  
the question of speed arises

whether it is infernal  
or merely an excessive  
drive toward allegiance

of one form of utter unwillingness  
to another of utter confusion  
the rocks they seem simple

enough like when a man  
loves a woman but each all  
are made from excess allegiance

to type and that's what this's  
all about what is the type  
of a rock that it disintegrates

into another?

### Thought Pattern #3: Say Fly

There really is no question  
the window opens up  
on the whim of a machine built by caution-loving men  
in front is the fruit of heaven we've learned to come  
to believe from the wavelike rhythm of words  
and the slight rough texture of our mothers' knees  
how filled it became with hell  
formed from the juice of the dead  
behind the rose bloom of calamity burst open  
how incautiously aimed and delirious  
on the wings held out to man  
the words to a song made famous  
by Gary Gilmore's flight we'll be  
able to fly redefine happiness  
the men who scratch  
the sill a doorstep a languid alternative  
there are no clouds but the silvering smoke  
take my hand dear stranger  
woman made like wife or sister  
there is no rain but us coming out  
we are cooked & pulverized  
step out of the shade say

#### *aftermath*

do not find the joy  
no more  
of peering learnedly into books  
and weeping with the pangs of meaning  
for dust has outlined us and soon  
will wash away

## Thought Pattern #4: Dictionary Meanings

time to hide  
let loose of the branch that we're on  
sign our faces over to the overworld  
be glad and underfullfilled  
my little turquoise badger sits  
on guard  
for opportunities to persevere  
and resile  
how many of us have the luck  
still to look up  
words in the dictionary  
and leap back at their unexpected  
meanings the language of our mothers' teachings  
one after another in a biblical cycle  
two thoughts tossed into a tangle  
the meaning of not breathing a death blow  
to poets who measure in breaths  
narrative fragments  
pressed into one by billions of tons  
of steel driving

on the day of summer I reserved  
for hopeless loves I'd ride and ride  
past elms and oaks and simples smells  
of farms some sour some sweet  
and her final act was to not  
love me and it was her first

like the ones who wished for routine  
she's lost

## Thought Pattern #5: Rise Rush

each piece of ash  
that rises to form  
the billowing picture  
of despair or evil  
has worked its way  
up by itself  
using the simplest of acts  
and little pieces  
of its own quirks

## Thought Pattern #6: Filth Pen

like small flower patterns on porcelain  
microscopic but accurate  
with precision in the face of imperfection  
every detail of my life  
will not be seen what I abandon  
will be read then forgotten  
then not read then not  
real                   -ly  
energetic chilly surface  
wild strawberries  
beneath a pen filled  
with filth and shit  
in a plastic bag in a tin  
my secret picturestash  
of womanly breasts  
and symbols

## Paradise Mixture

I need something for the pain  
for the door slipping in the wind  
hitting the jamb once or twice  
for the warm tradewinds combed  
by the palms my and your palms  
but in your head thoughts  
are maggots creeping  
becoming thoughts that fly  
circling spirals away and back  
and away I could search  
once the pain slips  
away

## Not Real Yet

Heating up,  
the peaceful rising death of smell  
in the masked gelpacks cupped  
on your nose, your legs and arms,  
your back is knotted and above  
rising smoke from dust and small  
fires the sky is the heavy blue  
of reason. Out of sight,  
back of a gauze curtain. Someone  
has dug a ditch to you,  
it holds a barge you must fill. Hundreds  
of tons. Alone. And when you're done  
you'll rise above the smoke and dust,  
up an elevator miraculously working.  
You'll see for miles even  
when you look out.  
And to think, all it took to do  
this is practice.

## Small Sanctuary

The hill, yes, the hill  
is bursting at the top  
with wicked black hair—  
tangled tangential  
wintertrees and black marble  
stones in a white quarry.

A tiled low wall surrounds  
the town's church built too  
large on the outside housing  
small sanctuary for below  
the monastery brews—  
between pubs and markets—  
a stream of fish. The hill,

yes, the hill is a secret  
where cranes must operate  
on everything heavy—  
the stones, the concrete,  
the heavy foreign names  
with wartime dates  
carved deeply into  
the native fabric.

## On Duty · Tonight

· the fire beside me · burns  
· burning the combustibles · of  
a city recently crumbled · I'm  
the poet · on duty tonight ·  
smoke from the · fire · rises tonight  
· the fire reflects from micas · of glass  
in windows · on the street · in the street  
· tonight · on duty · tonight  
· I hear these fires burn · the poetry  
of yesterday · the words that make most sense ·  
read in the back of a Greyhound ·  
by pastures and plains of wheat ·  
the poetry · listened to · and gone by ·  
poetry burns tonight · my job ·  
is to watch the fire · the city ·  
the smoke · the buses · the fields  
· and what we make of them ·  
and write what the mysteries in me ·  
see ·

## High Plains Statistics

Of all the places to be, in a town only a crossroads and 12 buildings each as old as oaks,  
the sound of wind blowing in from the West and with it the bounding weeds and sandspew,  
the macadam of a road built in the '50s and rarely traveled since the '70s going east-west,  
the sand on oil of a road built before that connecting ranches and isolated trailers going north-south,  
and down south at the Backwards R Ranch Trish struts nude all day waiting for her man  
who's here at Jake's Crawdad Bar sipping Jack's and watching the Diamondbacks rally  
from 7 down in the bottom of the ninth to beat the Dodgers hoping to dodge fate from the arm  
of a 95 mph+ lefthander—Trish's man sits with us men who're longing for Trish more than he is,  
her all-shaved body tinged red like her hair and who doesn't like the little-girl aspect of it?—  
of all the places to be fate's picked this one and my life like yours plays out to odds stacked  
up for or against us and seems everything is happening until something does and that settles it,  
one of us gets the girl and the others don't though we wish for all the playouts, in a town only  
a crossroads where the buildings are hanging in to see what happens and we're hanging around  
to see what happens and Trish is hanging out to see who does her and Trish's man is poking  
his toothpick into a bowl of salsa made fresh each morning before dawn by Margherita  
lonely as dawn on the high plain here plum in the middle of our little normal distribution.

## Arse Poetica

I am a telescope no one can break,  
my fat end aimed at tire ruts and me  
and my thin end on a pen and I am the badger  
who never stops digging and will find you in my roots  
though my color turn gray and dusty like your car  
from the Kansas drive and I am the windmill  
pulling water from 500' down at the haste set  
by wind off the Rockies or maybe Santa Fe and  
I am bristling with catchy twigs and hard to hold  
though I catch many things while rolling sphere-like  
down Route 50 to the Eastern sea and I am  
the big-rig hauling ass down to Dodge full-up  
of hogs and trailing stench and blown-out hog-soaked straw  
and I am the honey that falls from the spoon  
in a long lap into a pot of tea served to everyone  
who loves it sweet and I am the shooting star of wonder  
chipping away at the long time hoping for a break  
and another sound to tease my ears.

## The Waves Caress the Shore

Each impulse hastens others.

I don't mean human emotions but mechanical  
contrivances or more properly inventions  
incapable of perceiving the intentions  
they play out based on patterns and structures  
that piecewise seem like each other isomorphically.

Events trigger exceptions.

What we expect is delivered to  
the unexpected and though we think  
more about the expected each electrical  
blip is like any other though we think only  
of certain ranges as significant.

Let's peer from the inhuman toward the human.

Linguistically the game of not  
feels the same but is mathematically harder,  
and everyone knows you can't argue  
against mathematics and that's the imperialism  
of reason right there in axioms and rules of thought.  
Rules of thought.

Poetry is blocky.

This is the truth finally stated  
by followers of the shallow. Let's take the Berkeley  
philosophers to the end of a pier at the end  
of their university street when the tide  
is low and teach them what truth  
smells like.

## Ranticle

No targets can be found,  
no one to take the blame,  
we won't accept randomness,  
we seek to assign blame,  
we won't be found,  
no one can take randomness,  
we won't seek,  
we won't assign,  
we won't accept,  
no targets.

## Alley Impression

alley

woman white-haired walking slow  
beigebrown skirtsuit tailored jacket black pumps

another taller mouseblonde skirt & jacket  
interlacing arms

they walk slow quiet  
Wild Hare's neon's just come on

bare tree split trunk two tops  
such a thick thatch of branches blacking the dim lit sky

two women quiet speech one 50 one 70  
well-defined women each scratch on the sky is crisp

nothing helps me hear them leaning on a can  
reading poems less rich less clear

less

## God Switch

How does the scarecrow work? Old clothes  
with the bad odor of a man, filled with straw  
once laced in the stalls behind horses, burlap  
for a head as rough as a house someone turned into  
a dump, hung on two sticks tied together and poked  
into the soft ploughed ground of a prized field  
and tied in three places to stakes in the corn rows.  
His life is the blowing of wind and when it passes  
through him he lives and when it leaves the downwind  
hogs breathe in and snort, it animates him, he is inspired.

Crows sit on his arms like they did on the Arms  
of Jesus, their thorn nest symbolizing hanging birth,  
their caws the cadence of angels' wings beating  
each others' heads in the grief grace gave them. On that day  
God could not tolerate the air woof of wingbeats  
or the erotic, hating calls of birds, and He stopped them.  
The scarecrow works like a line returned to,  
the reaction cluster of a tearful Creator.

## Hell Away

When the minister asked for stories  
of the recently departed genius who entered Chicago  
at 15 and graduated at 17, who invented half  
of computer science, who studied backgammon  
and played it well for a wonk, he was not surprised  
by the sporadic kind words and tears which he usually  
gets and the memories of small indications  
of rich humanity and love but nothing  
prepared him for the third son  
who lives in Germany in an Austrian family  
who blamed and blamed and blamed,  
told stories of rejection and denial,  
of humiliation and the distance and estrangement  
from the rest of his family, but who when he heard  
himself in the echo of the 2/3 empty Congregational  
Church, said he loved him and hoped his death was the beginning  
of a life for the family torn apart by the wayward genius.

The minister spoke of the Congregational Church bought  
from the Episcopalians who glazed each window with stained  
glass which darkened the hall to near darkness while the Congregationalists  
put in clear glass and painted the walls and ceilings white  
to bring in the light that we all sat in. I sat  
in the back and waited head down while people who might be  
friends walked out into the courtyard for drinks,  
then I went out the side back door into the ivied alley  
and around out to my car without anyone watching me  
as I drove the hell away from there.

## Arc Echoes

Fate of a cut flower:

Dumb stem pulling in liquids  
while the blooms unfold,  
leaves make food from the sunlight  
in the corner of her kitchen nook,  
and they open and open in a sexual,  
secular display, turn a pink then red then purple

then yellow and in the end brown  
as the nutrients from roots they expect  
don't arrive and the flowers then the leaves  
then the stem is starved and she tosses them  
into the trash. The front door opens

and in the vaulted hall I hear the echoes  
of her telling someone goodbye.

## Under the Bed

We got off from school early  
from a bomb scare which we got  
every 2 or 3 weeks—oh, in the 1960s  
before bomb scares really meant anything.

The buses came to get us—we waited  
out on the lawn. My father was in the hospital  
perhaps dying from a brain disease, so when  
I got home before my mother I hid under  
his bed in the living room and when she did  
I just laid there. For hours until  
after the school bus was supposed  
to bring me home and until

after the after-school  
bus was supposed to bring me home and I  
heard her calling my friends—not many calls.  
When she went to the bathroom I slid out  
and opened the front door  
and closed it, “hi, Ma, I’m home.”

I didn’t tell her that I lay under my father’s bed  
where the week before he seemed driven insane,  
listened to her calling and crying until she seemed insane.

He didn’t die. I never  
told. There’s a tree on 95 that reminds me of all this—  
each year I try to find it but like a lot  
of things, other things grew up around it  
and now it’s exotic in my memory.

## Practice on a Skull

Bones that don't look like what  
they hung piled in piles unrevealing  
their connections together or to other bones  
on/to which they may have lied are turning  
so white they're/their cracking ./is causing  
me nuts listening at the speed  
rings upon rings piling up. Listen/hurry up.  
The sin/purchase of exclusion exhausts; single forks  
in the road, choice little. These are the bones  
I've finished. Those are leathered like hands in  
gloves, hands in hands, hands pointing through  
pelvises and out maybe through throats  
past the tongue region. I ask of the coincidence.  
Four holes in, one out for motion—loco-  
motion.

## Dripping With Loon Laughs

In the garage he plays  
the radio and watches pictures.

He makes electronic devices  
out of parts soldered

together and tacked  
onto bent aluminum.

Couplets as in  
one on top of the other.

I found nothing sexual—  
had he given it

up finally? On the evening  
of his death he practiced

his eyesight-retention  
swaying exercises

to retain  
his vision. What is it used

for now  
that he doesn't?

He stood in the cold  
rather than stand by her.

He stood looking into  
the woods instead

of chopping wood  
or sawing.

He painted unaware  
of the virtues of excess

in matters of art.  
He looked longingly

at women  
whose motors ran.

His anger  
was merely frustration

at the lack he saw  
of life in his house.

He built things crooked  
to have an excuse.

He dug holes by hand  
to deprive machines.

He worked alone  
to pinpoint blame.

What would it be  
like to fall holding

a running chainsaw?  
He is locked in brass.

## Fact or Real?

Fall apart  
fail to fit find art a ways  
margins meet methodologies  
focused creation is make piles dump pick  
polish brag sneeze  
from allergies to making it  
up hip hip hurry up  
butt up continuation  
to autumnal explosions bursting from green  
to red orange yellow  
slo———mo  
color = the \_ itself  
he painted all this  
died  
onnn hiiiiis kneeeeeees

## Mean Redtop

Things I've fallen along  
like the milky runoff from the oldest  
glacier on Redtop Mountain  
at the head of a valley. I took  
her hand—mine because only  
I held it. She thinks it means  
something but where are the means,  
where is something. This, she pointed  
with one hand at the other, which I  
had taken. I held it. If the meaning  
is anywhere, look to the cold milk  
which at least sports a color  
rare in wild rivers except  
for places like Redtop Mountain  
named for the meaning  
of a freckle-faced girl  
fingering a sheaf  
of lace.

## Planed and Sanded

Spirit, spirits,  
the powder which when water is added  
springs into us. In my dream  
she was soft as butter, warm  
as a lamp turned off 5 minutes ago,  
I stroked the backs of her legs all  
through my dream, the most beautiful  
dream of the end of my life reaching  
back to the start of hers. She more full  
of water, more fresh. more thirsting,  
while I am wrung out. I understand  
my father's house, built when he was young.  
The tinder, the crust, beneath every board  
and shingle the dust collects and coats the surfaces  
he planed and sanded. This is what he is,  
what I am, what in my dreams is not.

## Whose Fantasy Will On?

About 8, winter,  
cars creep across the bridge,  
the rain falls in a hush on the cars,  
the bridge, & the river. Boats tied  
up in docks & houseboats in their berths  
seem to move in the gently falling  
rain. Smoke sneaks out an open  
window and up under eaves.  
Maybe a slight wind disturbs  
the coincidentally even drop pattern  
on the slowly moving water.  
Smoke creeps out from under the eaves  
and floats up in the rain falling down  
in the cold in winter after dark.  
In a kitchen window a woman  
peels vegetables and prepares a meal.  
In a bedroom window a boy watches  
the tugs head upriver. This is what  
I imagine tonight in a room  
dark-surrounded and devoid  
of you. What do you imagine  
the bridge fantasizes?

## Sally Doll Test

All this talk of syntax and sentences.  
Syntax as form—a seacoast mountain range.  
And a sentence as movement or a meaning or  
an avoidance. Nonetheless  
(it is possible)

language could shape cognition, ambiguity being  
hard to pin down. In the Sally doll test and theory  
of mind we have a cognition

which links to mental state terms,  
is testable yet is intuitive rather than linguistic.  
Theory of mind is a cognition  
which concerns how people cognate.

When Sally doll exits the room,  
her marble in the box, what she thinks  
depends on what you say.  
Move the marble and when Sally doll  
returns, where she thinks the marble is  
depends on whether your language  
gives her a mind.

The failure of anything beyond  
concrete in words fails  
to metarepresent theory of mind.

Yet the saw saws.

## Commercial Sentimentalism

When I watch the coded waves  
spangle no lava-black rocks  
in a storm of pouring and gray  
your eyes watching mine  
under tossed hair behind drop-spotted  
glasses lurk in the corner of my vision  
where chance sways more  
than lingers and my love for your  
is just the reverb of a slow decline.

## Way Mechanic

The basis of two machines  
making connections is inflexibility,  
talking with no chance to hear  
variance, near misses impossibilities,  
no hi's only hello's. Master and slave  
disguised at times  
as friends. Pretending, as Dean might put it,  
to be telephones. Friendships based  
on jigsaw puzzles. Disisolation  
through forced connivance  
and no friendly meetings  
by chance and backgrounds—  
the dirt along the way to here—  
must match. Exactly. Precisely.  
No variance. No choice. Make our future  
open up.

## Hands Printed In Sand

I've noticed my hands grown colder,  
growing cold. The skin shriveled and  
growing looser day by day. The color  
of them more like the gray hue  
of the sky past its peak and well  
into its storm brewing like conversations  
between people with their hands over  
their mouths standing around a pit  
dug yesterday. Like something confused  
about life and death, my nails are curling  
as they grow and grow. I've noticed my hands  
grown smaller, growing small. The skin  
growing tighter day by day. What they can't  
notice and neither can I: The last  
grain of life passed from the cup of today  
to the cup of yesterday. My death piled  
on all the others'.

## Fear of Cold

What matters is two things:  
Look through the darkness  
into barlight off the barback mirror  
and see the outline of a tightened skirt  
walk in long lopes to the end of the bar  
and hitch up on the footrail and see  
the splayed shape of her blown-dry  
hair exude from her desires;

listen through the silence  
into the sonic engulfment  
of the bar band hitched like a donkey  
to the heavy load of loved music  
worn down of its edges to its most  
average charms.

And realize that the waltz you watch  
is your own slowing down, as the place  
is chosen by your narrowing circle,  
your panic in the face of tightened skirts  
and the trembling fingers of music makers,  
the trembling fingers of body curve silhouettes,  
the fear of cold that looking up  
delivers.

## As It Ever

This river is the sweet  
connection between a grey bank  
and a pink near sunrise. We sit  
on either side. I'm first  
here then there. You the other.  
The river just flows past  
in no hurry as we are. Birds  
glitter in iridescence cut  
at their throats, signals  
of identity and self. This water  
is our bridge as stable  
as it ever was. Rolling on  
as it ever has. Uncertain  
as it ever is.

## Two—More Days

Into town—  
slipped into town  
on the heels of a hot rain  
leaving waterways sluicing  
down the curbed sides of the road  
to a waterway bound for the Gulf,  
parked, stopped before checking  
in and checked the cherry of my Ford  
against the turquoise peeling off  
the 4"x4" posts supporting an A-frame  
sheltering roof, laid down 20,  
and took the end room before  
walking down the tracks to Gentlemen's  
Steak House and a meal fit for  
two and a string of hard drinks chased  
by beer and a chilled tequilla drunk to make  
me forget two—please, just  
two—more days.

## Pipette & Dry

Checking in  
to unconventional hotels  
and drinking martinis  
so dry the bartender  
drips in the vermouth  
using a pipette. So bleak are  
prospects mining is minimized,  
streets are cut short by crosscuts,  
and the Blake in all of us blushes.

## Streamline Fingerpads

The door is open  
and she is touched. What does  
she think? First fingers streamline  
the body facing away, from shoulders  
down to ass. Second fingers enter  
her heat zone along the same path.

Third you touch her. Three  
traces on the same route:  
exploration, discovery, invention—  
Find your way to the positive  
space in her negative regions.

## Edged Along

I've got everything.  
With me I said.  
Leaning out the window over.  
The dredged channel.  
Past the fueling docks.  
Holding out my laptop.  
Meaning text and tips.  
Literature—a body of information.

No you don't that's.  
Your computer not.  
Everything you said.  
And fell from the pier.  
Whose handrail fell.  
Like Icarus to the bottom of.  
The dredged channel—.  
Lacking an edge and.  
You laughed.

It's name is.  
Everything I said.  
And leaning too.  
Far and fell.  
To the top of.  
The dredged channel.  
Every edge a chance.  
To change or cut.  
At all.

## Three Stories

By an oiled canal  
the high-slung agent  
of marginalized grammar  
is spitting the complete  
image of passive attacks  
on the tip of the tongue  
of a three-storied  
spare nude counterwoman.

## Forty Fathoms

There was no point  
to walking away except  
the limits of walls  
and tangling passageways,  
curving staircases leading  
to my room or yours not  
both. The canal sported bridges  
that never froze no matter how  
empty we were of intimate energy.  
The point of no dimensions  
describes us. You'd think  
with no common language we'd make  
one up but you stuck  
with silences directed in varying  
directions. Starting from a point.  
I saw a gull pulled  
beneath the waves caught on a hook  
tied to an anchored line from a boat  
after soupfins and thought  
of me pulled beneath by  
the canal by you, your  
anchor changing but retaining  
its weight, moving here then there  
but still on the bottom. You are  
nothing, the point being.

## Hot Song Formal

Formal, stretched  
from chair to chair  
our lines of talking hanging loose  
like clotheslines hung from posts gone  
crooked from excess. our conversation  
turns to talking and how we don't  
make speech well, neither touch nor  
linger after the band packs up  
and the smoke has blown down  
the alley and into the bay where  
fueling docks drip their excesses  
and barges tie up for a quick snack.

Your fingers brushed mine  
as we left the small foyer  
best suited for the elderly  
to discuss warhorse operas  
where what we discussed instead  
was how we don't discuss much,  
then we left it at that and headed  
east & west like poorly planned  
magnets spinning away and away.

Let's meet next year and do it again—  
so much fun to stare and watch  
to see who caves first, who yields  
like butter to their own sharp hot song.

## Machine Longing for Rio

I seduced the machine  
sitting there solving a hard partial  
differential equation programmed by a geek  
hacking for an acoustician. I was like a siren  
with an outrageous sexual presence  
whose polarity I switched several times  
to lead the machine into confusion  
and deep desire. It was lost looking at small changes  
spreading out to a large picture when it displayed  
itself as a fractal set which swung so cool and swayed so gentle  
like music from rodas de samba at the botequins,  
parts the machine hid from all but its lovers,  
hid from those who use it only, who don't know  
it deeply, from those who just don't see.

## Plural Landscape

What is her desire,  
how does she wear it,  
which layer buries it and will  
she uncover it? Her mistrust  
lies at the bottom of her, holding  
fast, an anchor tipped with barbs  
oxidized to the rock that now surrounds  
it. Who will pull it up? Who will cut it  
loose from its intriguing bed? Will it  
like a heart surrender when loosened  
from its bindings? Right now her desire  
like her voice is kept swallowed, unable  
to speak, unwilling, such as a grove  
of cedars some weeping and distorted  
from the winds and countervailing  
rains, keeping to themselves like shelters  
accidentally set on a hill of storms.

## Word Flurry

The poet left her instead  
of completing the arc,

at the peak and kept it,  
filled it out, made it

not lived it. Made of words  
whose meanings are shapes

whose tones are colors,  
a jigsaw, a painting,

dreamed, fatigued.  
Behind her at that moment

a plume of steam from a patch  
of sunlight on green granite

after a sudden but not short  
shower smoked upward,

forked into two and one  
cooled out of existence

even though the color  
of the hillside flared

and the gray of the sky  
hurried away to the East

and a whirling sea,  
an inwardly spiraling sea.

## Too Like Us

Fog off a wet field in cold dawn air  
seen backlit reminds me of snow  
sheltering a low near-dusk sun—  
driving past a stand of leafless maples.

So how does silence play into this  
scene, making a living metaphor  
out of a boring human situation  
and a spectacular piece of imperfection?

When it snows on your city,  
trucks will back up over its freshly  
fallen lacework leaving industrial  
tracks that fill in farthest first.

Like us.

## Bleachers

Behind the motel  
the strippers gather to exchange strategies  
on who to flash, what, how much, for how much.  
They look like girls stretched out under a nervous  
streetlight shorting from their girl(ish)-  
ness. They smoke and worse. Dogs  
hug shadows to avoid their metallic  
perfume. Jeans, blouses, t-shirts, tightened  
like their bleached anuses busily preventing  
continence. Artists pretend like crazy.

I wondered,  
when she raised her leg  
to my hydrant and pulled herself  
apart and her garter  
ready to receive all my swimming fish,  
about abstraction, subtraction,  
and how much you can bleach out  
a feeling and still have it.

## Used Lots

We're behind the used  
car lot looking at demo derby  
veterans, seeing how each insult  
remains even with dings on dents  
on dings when bashed-in radiators  
have blown their cool and engine cave-ins  
are no big deal. I'm a raft in this sea,  
I float like rust on chassis, like oil  
on leftover puddles, like what you like  
on what you used. Now it's on to the famous  
railroad walk through town to the bay,  
when cranky cormorants hang like hussies  
by the collapsed bridge. I've found my cutting  
torch, now it's the hard cuttable  
I need.

## Heaving, Heaven

Links, luck, licks  
having heaven, heaving, hiccups  
—for some crumbling is the hope of fate—  
touch, tasteless, titillations  
the famous attend footballs games looking fat  
when the tip of love touches you—sudden sudden

Don't come  
near me  
place the chicken carefully

When someone you've loved  
physically dies  
dirt never dries out  
dust to mud ashes to tears

Crumbling like crumb cakes  
when the dead say "eh" the droning music  
starts

Figure wrapped in fish netting  
everything visible  
even undertows

In black light  
your skins blemishes  
wondering of the glitter runway lights

Touch links, tasteless luck  
the hope of fate hiccups  
licks heaven

## Hatred Pure

My enemy is stupid  
Defeating her will be easy  
She will never see  
She thinks no one saw  
Her flaw is a streelight  
and I am its shadows  
The bullet that gets her  
will come from her own heart

## Head West

Crossing a street,  
finding a four-leaf note  
written with a heart blanched  
like a floating swan or swan  
worker. My work is hidden  
under sweat which many take  
for passion boiled over.

Sure the work's sliding  
across the road  
and my arm's sliding up  
the role you're playing  
while pretending you're talking  
when language leaves,  
fall you know. Darkness  
is hiking this way till dawn,  
you're spooling everything  
you've ever said,  
and I'm backing  
up what I've said  
for another day.

## Theoretical Practice

Fossilized wind:  
trees grown up in a constant  
wind off the bay all lean  
one way. What passes  
is the passing by. Legs  
among the saturns,  
large fires in crop circles  
circling and cycling,  
acting like faith  
toward fathomlessness.  
Beneath the crows' shadows,  
more shadows, more crows,  
a snapshot taken suddenly,  
no time for even the settling  
of chemicals on the trails  
of supposed retinal images.

Today the theory,  
tomorrow we see.

## Prior to Writing

In the courtyard  
crickets scratching beneath drying leaves  
creaking their edge scrapers over wing ridges.

I feel I must write a poem,  
this one for example,  
and I start to do it, one line  
scratching out from beneath a dry leaf,  
another with near uniform bottoms lined up,  
ridges on top like the voices of crickets.

But just before I write it,  
unexpectedly like twin feelings  
falling like a leaf onto a line  
marking an edge  
the sound like before attention  
of crickets creaking,  
edge scrapers,  
wing ridges,  
the squared echo  
of my abandoned and crumbling  
empty courtyard.

## Winter Holdings

Winter has come,  
I'm sure of it, it's definite,  
I mean,  
the slow but steady cold wind from the North,  
the white powder like insinuations  
collecting in corners and in holes,  
the dark which comes on early in the afternoon  
after the day has had a late start. Winter  
has come and it waits for me every day,  
for the time when I wake, when you've  
cracked the door leaving and the wisp  
of cold wind gathers around the edges  
of the bedspread and quilts. Your warm hands  
have left. Winter has come, I'm sure of it,  
the white flowers of the evergreens  
have fallen off and blown away. Your coat,  
I see it lifting up and dropping down  
in your rhythm down by the boulevard, your heels  
kicking up its hem, your hennaed  
hair escaping from under your healthy hat,  
the sounds of you escaping like the winter  
wind. I'm sure of it, it's definite,  
I mean.

## Walking Through Ourselves

Signs of aged woods,  
birches lit up in the moon  
shine seen from a furrowed road,  
dirt or sand tracks with a hump  
of grass between like two walkers  
with little to say. Signs of people's

lives, a fence made of rough  
hewn maple or other  
hardwoods hidden up  
to its fencepost tops  
like islands in a sea of night  
fog painted a metallic white  
by greyed light from the moon  
filtered through the night air, We

each walk our furrows and who  
would think the tufts of grass  
between us could stop  
so much.

## Indispensable?

The bosses tell us  
no one is indispensable—  
including you, you bastards. I like it  
when the bastards lose their jobs,  
when they end up in jail or broke.  
I like it when their bottom  
lines are big negatives and their  
string of luck has run out. I want to be  
there when one of you bastards tells St Peter at the Pearly Gates  
that no one is indispensable. And what about  
Satan? What will he think of it?  
Indispensable? No,  
so let's start the dispensing  
with you.

## Miracle No

Clock ticking on the table,  
ticking in the middle of the room,  
darkness taking in the ticks,  
the night near its middle  
and something hot in me has me awake  
in time to hear the ticks grow  
further apart as everything  
stretches out like tight fists  
unlocking. I sense no miracles about  
to happen, and I'm not about  
to get up and wind the aged spring  
in my old clock, and without a miracle  
in this hollow room  
where I lay alone  
the night will continue  
to stretch on.

## Rock Sound

Stone colors—elemental—compounded  
by air—nursing pebbles—under dirt  
and browned—stones clicking like clocks—  
time pressed into emotion-sized slugs—  
time locked up as odor—the stone  
that fell into my father's field  
was planted around,  
mowed around,  
danced around,  
stuck around  
while all of this came,  
while all of this went.

## Three Stations Toward Total Winter

In day  
the petals of drying flowers drop off  
into the rising dust and low-flying  
insects who make no noise but fill  
the air like popping sounds.

At dusk  
the air flowing around and past  
the dried-out flowers grows  
colder and colder and not  
even moths will fly into it  
or through it and the gift  
of flying has turned liquid  
like a river distilled and lifeless,  
soundless.

In dark  
the sounds the day made  
such as the sounds of dried petals  
falling in harmony with their old  
colors or the sounds of insects  
ripping little at leaves and dried grass  
blades are replaced by a flow into me,  
a gold turned black, a singularity  
folding in, by a river of ice slowing,  
whispers, wingbeats,  
the sound of ice cracking on itself.

## Hold It Right There

I'm in that city  
of dead  
again where  
homes are boxes underground  
and inhabitants are  
just dust  
where the ghosts are  
not part  
of their machines  
where the sounds of conversations are  
lost on us  
drowned out by pine  
needles sewing  
shut the sky overhead blocking  
our ways  
heavenward should  
our machines  
stop.

## No Bigger Farce Than Poets Without Work

no heavier fog than the dark  
laced with fog and letting out only  
voices and voices of peddlers  
and streetmen holding onto  
their sides splitting  
from too much bread too much fatty  
dips too much laughing the mis-  
ery of poets skulking along alley walls  
lifting up the hems  
of dumpsters filled to the brims  
speaking in voices and voices  
to the otherworld the worthy world  
of poems completed and poets  
laid off

## Can't Or Don't

our favorite spot  
has fallen apart  
the slats of our bench are weakened  
or hang  
the metal forms once our solid base  
have rusted nearly through  
nettles cover the hill where we laid  
and rolled  
the pond has drained so much  
it's just a swamp with stilled and colored  
water flies where birds flew once  
the children who would bike by  
and call out to dogs carry now  
their hats like calling cards  
or shields  
as they walk home after a cold  
day and  
you're standing in your window  
and I'm  
standing by the street looking up  
this is the only place you can't  
or don't  
see

## Drained Rainbow

a rainbow hangs in the air  
like the neck of a swan hanging  
from a hook in the barn  
with enough life in it  
to bend in a graceful curve  
that looks to untrained eyes  
like the circle of an optical  
phenomenon like the bending  
of light through drops in a shower  
but few recognize the draining colors  
bending away from the health  
of a blue sky at mid-day  
a pooling of the fading blue  
on the bottoms and the whole life  
of it draining slowly  
into the distant hills  
like the discharge of spark  
after a long goodbye

## Dreadful Poetry

from my window curtained  
by drops falling from the dormer  
onto a steel roof crimped with fastening folds  
facing East in heavy showers  
or the mooing of an all-girl family  
of cows upslope in the Austrian Alps  
I'm watching the sky and clouds  
prepare for dawn by clearing  
out a patch of blue above the couloir  
that drains the cold air down onto my cooling  
opened bedclothes and what I want  
has been packed away  
forgotten on the bottom of my bag  
and I'm ready to leave this centerfold  
this glamor strip the sound of you  
being fucked twice three times  
by the DNA man who thinks that filling  
you marks you  
ha ha it just wakes me up  
and fills me up  
—dreadful poetry

## Is She Right?

Here's the scene—little beauty:  
a lake half-drained with a low rim  
of rounded rocks about it, oval shaped;  
hazed of smoked sky hanging high  
covering the scene in an urban  
or industrial light;  
across the lake lawns like  
walls sloping rapidly up to  
a berm of housing units,  
apartments starting many stories to the left  
and sloping down to the right,  
the color of unwashed rocks  
pulled from mud;  
a tree,  
or is it two?  
they huddle close the way we used  
to;  
smoke from a small fire just put out  
with a bucket of muddy water  
drifting from right to left just  
obscuring a stone walkway around the lake  
but below high water;  
to the left a Japanese girl  
in a Japanese schoolgirl skirt  
talking on a handy  
to me  
telling me,  
“we don't need poets  
around here.”

The poetic question:  
Am I right?

## All Bottom

I was the worst of times  
hollowing a doorway  
closed over. Hung over.  
The quips slipped up  
like an Edith Piaf song  
skipping the meaning  
increasingly.

Eyes that lower mine  
a laugh that loses itself on his mouth  
Voila, the portrait without touch up:  
Man, Auguel, I belong

When it takes me in its arms,  
it speaks to me: all bottom.  
I've seen the life in rose—  
it says to me words: Love,  
those everyday words.  
And it does something for me  
it is: enter into my heart,  
a part of happiness  
of which I know the cause,  
this is him for  
me, me for him (in life).  
It has it for me, says,  
the swear for life,  
and of that I, the L' Apercois,  
then I feel in me my heart that beats.

Nights, love has more to finish;  
a big happiness that takes his place—  
boredoms, sorrows obliterate themselves:  
happy, happy has some to die.

Edith,  
so mouth,  
so full,  
so increasingly.

## Think Along

O let's make things  
break things  
think like new  
hide the facts in a cabbage bag  
sick onto the ground and weep  
O let's make things  
sneak things  
do with all what we do alone  
do above what we do below  
let the world that acts like dreams act like us  
follow the con trail to the burning fire  
fling the facts into the fact of faces  
O let's make things  
forsake things  
hide the facts  
they belong to mr think along  
they belong in crates  
here hold this

## So Girl

Shrinking shadow  
of a woman's circle of love  
when her husband dies  
& children drift  
to one coast or another  
& everything about her becomes  
more and more  
female, feminine, womanly, girlish,  
her connections to her  
surroundings dry up  
& she becomes less like them.  
She'll distill herself  
to purity—so much the female,  
so little the cold situation  
of a man in a car  
driving at dusk to a night  
of two TVs and a wide  
shared bed, no-man's  
land between, She  
will circle her circle  
like Rilke's dark panther,  
like a cyst of heat  
in ice, like an absolute  
against compromise.

## Goodbye

We write the goodbye books—  
one for you, one for me—  
and thus we write it—  
what we cannot say—  
or write with decency—  
goodbye.

## Attacking Merchandise—Sky

cornfields skyscrapers  
holly poinsettias  
store so over a lifesize stuffed bear  
softens windows  
as large as  
load bearers  
light dropped out  
daylight of headlights & storelights  
cars glassed in shoppers  
attacking merchandise  
and all us thinking  
of the effects of highheels  
& gray skirts  
& fur caps  
so much like a diesel engine  
no one looks  
for sparks just pressure  
of critical mass  
two bumping shoulders  
a spry honk  
pink on ice blue  
pewter

## Pull Out & Under

So it's night and there's a pattern  
of houses lit on the hills and down  
by the rivers and bays and streetlights  
are wide spots of orange reflecting  
off the Greyhound's inside windows  
refracting in the spray of drops  
spewed up by passing cars from an earlier  
rainfall—who rides the bus this late.

Or early.

The busdriver doesn't have needs  
for heat or stops or drinks or girls—  
he drives on past exits, past towns,  
past casinos in the distance, neon  
like a sunrise, sunrise that never comes,  
it's always night. Pattern of all night.

Pattern of lights lit like a sign.

Pattern of neon towns in the distances.

We are always riding. The woman in all  
different clothes is coughing forever.

The child cries in his always wet diapers.

The hopefuls hope. The bus drives on.

Just when the sun should be rising  
we pull off the highway and pull under  
a neon that says "enter." We pull out  
with one more passenger and his wife  
who each count out \$8.50  
for what a lovely long ride  
we expect to have tonight.

## Unlinked

somewhere  
a lawn so green it's not a shade  
lies  
across humps and hills among  
trees  
and in lines intersecting  
stand  
stones someone carved into  
crosses  
and stars and each  
marks  
important places where people have  
dug  
deep holes and placed in them precious but  
unwanted  
droppings from their memories and long  
lives  
and this is where home will be and here I'll  
stay

## Me & Winter

Standing on a corner  
facing West—sunset dregs through buildings  
built the color of the hope of green glass,  
tough as internal steel crossbeams.  
Women pass sometimes and look.

What do they see in my face,  
my defeated stance leaning  
against a low wall,  
against each of them?

Winter is to the West,  
wondering toward us,  
thinking of the skirts  
He'll paste to their asses,  
puff into balloons.

You're wondering if I'm here  
and what I'm thinking?

Me too.

## Seducing Former Girls

I've got all your best women,  
now they're singing in real voices,  
perhaps I've seduced them.  
They are no longer your children—  
I've shown them real danger,  
letting go. And how could I  
do that unless I was already in  
them?

## One for S. R.

I alone am left to write  
of all those eager, capable.

Of all who could, most  
have died, their capabilities

a decay. Some are living  
in unknowable places. What

they wrote is really not  
appropriate to how we felt—

ineptness our greatest strength,  
yet the girls loved us sullenly,

followed us from a distance  
and angle we couldn't direct.

But Russ rode in Twig's long  
Pontiac Catalina, island

of romance in '65 before  
we knew girls. Not before

he did. He did.  
Russ changed his name to Sean

and wrote like a butterfly,  
with a talent deeper than the rocks

beneath Rock's Bridge—O!  
that murky water of 1967.

After he died I sat on that bridge  
with my legs over

its edge and read Russ again,  
O! how he copied Hopkins

with his own twist but  
what I saw most clearly

were the rocks beneath  
the bridge just inches below

the clear clear swirl.

## Ruminations Behind a Ballfield After a Double Header

a lightning  
a thunder...both echo

need for examples  
conversation to puzzle out  
what

we mean never  
thought...linear thinker

Homer drafting  
a better poet...modern madmen

a hand...fingers drawn across  
the lips...direction of eyes

directing the mirror flip...we pretend  
to be phones back...so many

making disposables...plug them  
into books...make talent

a slave to property...of the mind  
imagination single

things out...keep them  
apart before they make

more than they can be...  
say it isn't so Joe

And he hit  
a line drive,

maybe 2 or 3  
games to  
go,

and it was  
caught. And he was

mumbling—he  
always talked

to himself  
a little bit.

And he said,  
"How did

I look, how did  
I look?"

And I'm thinking,  
"Why is he asking

me how he  
looks?"

So, I said,  
"Joe, you look great."

## Unlikely Recurrences

We carry briefcases  
in case we need help.  
Our shoes are polished  
to prevent us from being short  
a mirror. We wear neckties  
to remind us of death  
as it is in places where death  
is much closer.

The reason Winter  
is grey and its days short  
is to increase our depressions  
so that the pure white  
of its first storm is taken  
as a sign of innocence  
and not death.

Mirrors are full of it,  
our minds are flat  
and our hair silvered.  
All the symbols line up  
and are executed quietly  
tonight somewhere down  
this quiet street being pressed  
for time by snowfall.

## Not Yet

Beginning of Winter—  
when the cold and snow are  
fresh and the sodium lights  
are visible 5 miles up—  
we're fresh out of imagination  
and everything we think of starts  
with a bicycle and a girl in red.  
I've thought of seduction—but rake  
or dandy, I can't decide so fop  
it is. All I've learned is that whatever  
shine I show I need a cruelty—perhaps  
tossing back into the field  
the stones in an ancestor's wall.  
It's not the end of Winter that's cruel  
but its beginning when it arrives  
at the close of summer. One change  
and it all changes.  
Do you remember when we imagined  
ourselves? We didn't think of the boulevard  
wall-to-wall in sodium lights  
and ice skaters on just 7 layers  
of water poured out onto a staked  
arena on the mall. How Russian  
we looked in St Louis near the Arch.  
Gateways. Beginnings. Our cold shoulders  
when we kissed them. Fog like the happiness  
of memory rising from the River  
and of the time:  
It is not yet.

## First Wave, Then Done

It was nearly dark but the sky  
was blue still while the sun  
flared behind the high hill  
and I was driving up the winding  
road to home. The sodium vapor  
light was half against the sky the shade  
of translucent blue porcelain  
and half against aqua siding on a 1960's  
house. Something about the orange yellow  
stain in front of so many related  
shades of blue through my windshield  
highlighted halos on the glass shaped  
like the football-shaped sodium vapor  
light. I pulled over  
and parked while half the shades  
grew darker through purple  
and on into black and the sodium vapor  
light grew merrier, lost all hint of shadow  
from its surroundings and became like  
a sun or sign of high hope. The next  
day it rained and all of us—  
the sodium vapor light on and all  
the shades of blue—  
were washed into the Bay  
and into this ocean of words  
not worth  
the effort of reading.

## Ran Down Moonbeams

Here's a devilish hint:  
long streets ending short  
signal loves extending beyond  
their natural lengths. Some have  
the luxury of roads with few  
houses and housewives  
hanging like executioners  
their lingerie on rope clotheslines  
on their front porches at nearly noon  
and then lounge out on an old sofa  
with one leg and one arm up  
on the backrest, and some  
face urban brownstones and stoops  
covered in whores waiting for sunset  
to add the last layer of makeup  
that makes them sirens like  
the ones in White Room  
where Clapton lets go for  
the first time and we've all  
been scrambling for the cry  
of tears he let loose  
that day on the advice of a devil  
smiling like chicanery.

## Observation and Prayer on Hearing of Distress

There's a plague going  
around here whose only symptom  
is the long parts of a horse  
bending to bring  
swiftness, or the thin  
long branches of the birch  
bending to bring  
quick tips in touch with a wintered  
ground—I mean snow—grinding  
the earth to dust, ash, and sand  
in the sawtime of Spring. But  
remember:

Plagues kill,  
horses trample,  
twigs snap,  
and water is as  
the women.

## Stalled

Prayers answered,  
telephones ringing,  
weddings planned,  
wood smoothened,  
hair removed—  
coverings quickly tossed  
aside. My phone's ringing,  
someone telling me of a wedding  
now and another later, after Spring,  
someone asking for prayers,  
men of little hair and matching  
faith for faith. Me, I  
just rub my faith board smooth,  
as cows have done forever in stalls.  
Prayers answered, faith installed.

## Postromp

Driving through a campus  
town a cameraman films with his Bolex  
long before steadycams  
using a film that drifts with time  
to a uniform green. Those trees  
who seemed so young and trim  
like weeds under a yellow sun  
are now fat trunked oaks,  
rotten and fallen down.  
I've read five books titled "Aruba"  
by four different writers,  
and what we would think  
of as tropical is really a desert with cactus  
and adobe ruins.  
It is a milestone of postmodernism  
that dry heat can mix with trade winds  
to form a poem with a story  
and a cheery melody  
played on a banjo learned  
by playing 33 rpm records at 16 rpm  
and tuning down the banjo and  
plucking along to each note  
then spreading the hand  
to make sense.  
Let's bow to the thrill  
of escape and enlightenment  
that a film about to turn all  
green gives. Let's be careful  
our eyes don't bounce out  
of our heads tonight. Let's  
bask in Aruba tonight.

## What's Left?

The way of your smell,  
the sleek slim silhouette  
of your body, the glitzing  
in your eyes, the odd clean  
way you phrase denials,  
another sigh before you close  
your throat for the last time—all

you have and are  
like the heads of dandelions  
will detach and some will  
blow away in the wind  
and the rest will pull  
up a cover of clover  
and what's left  
will be something different  
and changing above  
and something familiar  
and lingering below.

## Snow Forlorn

In your snug life you huddle with warmth  
and the cabin collects snow on its roofs for the same purpose;  
heat is generated in distinct spots;  
the rooms can be locked away from the snow piled up outside;  
farm animals are locked away in their barns all Winter;  
snow is the persistence of memory  
and where we walked is covered until redemption;  
you are here seeking fun but only the snow falls;  
the ride here was shallow and the road home is slippery;  
the encounter you have will pave the way for retreats;  
you long for Summer but nothing happens to your clothes;  
tonight the dining room is shut from all others  
to save the heat from the last of the wood  
before the only warmth left is the warmth  
from the man clutching you like the last  
token on his scared first journey home.

## Clinical Locution

Outside the window,  
next door,  
a shovel scrapes along the surface  
of concrete and I'm guessing  
something sloppy is happening.  
Is this autobiography  
or the imagination filling  
in for nothing? Can you  
tell from these words and what  
you've found out about  
my life whether this happened  
or let's say something like it?  
How many people sit next  
to windows with concrete pavement  
nearby and how many times have the sounds  
of shovels scraped the air  
and what could be sloppy about it?  
Or asking the autobiography question,  
surely that happened because, look,  
it's right up there ^ see it? What's  
different about that question that  
it can't be questioned whether it happened?  
Look, there's nothing here but words.  
What you found out about my life  
is just more words. Is the word is  
autobiographical? You've got the hard job,  
I'm just typing. This about this:  
How many people sit nothing? Can you  
tell from just could be sloppy is this autobiography  
or let's say something sloppy is happened becauto wing  
somethat questiong the surface  
of shovel screte people sit's along the surface  
of concrete air  
and whation fillife  
it's right up the auto windows windows wither this happened  
or asking the autobiography  
or the imaginatiography questioned how many timethical? You've got the  
window,  
next door,  
a shovel scrapes right up there ^ see it? Can you  
tell from there this happened?  
Look, times here be sloppy about about my life,  
surely that happened because, look,  
it's right up there words about my life  
is just more words. Is happened because, look,  
it's right up there ^ see air  
next thing like it?

## Between Ink and The Page

roads like lifelines  
straight as bad news

seed signs fronting  
corn milo alfalfa wheat

dry rivers lined  
with cottonwoods

some sage in the high  
plains wind like

the only lifesigns fronting  
towns railroad silos

round bales of alfalfa  
size of 2-ton trucks

near here the cemetery  
where a story popped

up instead of a soul  
instead of heaven

smudging lives  
caught between ink and the page

## Quick Up and Down

past midnight she awakes, walks  
down the hall littered with pictures  
of those who call themselves her family,  
twists the stopper off a fifth of gin  
and recants. outside some snow fails  
to blanket the roses which just  
last week bled like foil leaking  
beneath the roast she made  
for the one who holds her  
like payment. she snapped.  
the wind in coming in,  
the signal, the scouring  
over nettles and daisies  
gone frozen. the gin kicks in.  
her bed, those arms, await.

## Cover in B&W

the roads come together - the slush -  
the snow on them are rough and sliced  
by tracks - of a truck turning onto the side  
road - of a car going straight - and even  
though it snows the temperature  
turns it to white - to water just frozen -  
the sky is just a wish for warmth -  
you could walk here - add your black  
steps to the black slicks - but you're  
face down on the hardwood floor -  
eyes covered by hiding hard - lips  
closed - admitting nothing - emitting  
nothing - the floor warms - outside  
I follow the tracks past a tree -  
a spike - the next thing to living

## Heaven Hot Me

What bark on fresh love?  
The eyehole through the brambles  
wall into the dunes above the sea  
is forcing a relaxation onto tension  
defined by waves on sand.  
Wave  
goodbye.  
Waver.

My choice is to step  
out onto the promenade by the canal,  
the fueling station hovering in its small  
spill. You snap it, lens into light,  
glass,  
who cares?  
Waiver.

Outside the air is dense with the Gulf.  
An overtone from your laugh escapes  
with the smoke through a just-opened  
door. Your love lurks behind your convictions.  
Once fresh, now barked.  
Embark.  
Embargo.

We seem destined for water,  
rivers, risk, swamp.  
Do you recall the bones we found by the Mississippi?  
Yours?  
Ours?

Cut off from the world,  
not the river,  
by a train passing uphill  
for hours.

Sparkle. The only response water can make  
when facing something  
hot. Heavenly.

## The Sadness of Japanese Women

Kintai Bridge leaps across  
the Nishiki River and young

girls watch debris drift  
like lost cherry blossoms  
beneath the arches.

Research, try, build—  
the drift of thinking like an arch  
from nothing to memory

humped in the middle  
based on stone islands  
spaced apart for debris to pass.

Disheveled, drinking Coke,  
her sense of sensuality drowning  
beneath the arches. Grave  
of coffin lid. He taught

her sensuality,  
love, way of living,  
washing past from the pen

of a woman. Green  
leaves, young leaves,  
disappearance into the mist  
that clogs up from the river,  
devours clouds

eats the world  
from the roots up.

## Park of Hindered Fashion

The fashion of parks  
to hinder privacy. The likelihood  
of discovery beneath willows.  
The streamlined nature  
of smooth skin on a standing  
man. The rate of bicycling  
on cobbles and gravel. The glacial  
color of swift water. The rate  
of napping approaching  
constancy.

Welcome to the world  
of dreams of love, insomnia  
of grasslands, of sprinters  
downhill. Welcome to the  
Park of Hindered Fashion.

## Z-Z-ing

Chicago's  
no girl, sitting  
astride an aliased river  
z-z-ing toward her center.  
Roads lead here. Trains  
moving slowly, freight-laden,  
toward her. Made-man  
things square off. The rails  
follow nature, streambeds,  
riverbeds. Driving toward  
her the green neon motel's  
sign's *Air Conditioned* line  
flutters on and off. She  
lays centerfolded on the shore.  
All of this,  
and the green thin light above  
the set-line, makes  
me cold,  
cold at heart.

## Neon Flutter

The future of hope  
is splayed on the curing table,  
intravenous, on life support,  
ravenous for slippery passages,  
undulating with each artificial  
pump. Hope is oblivious,  
hope is eternally waiting,  
hope is hung like a hat on a golden  
rack. Eyes meet—hope, the future  
of hope. Optimized optimism.

## Rain Like Age

Stopped at a light,  
light rain in mid-December,  
song of deep regret playing on  
the radio. Beside me to the right  
a robin blue house robbed  
of the freshness of its original  
paint, white trim coming  
off in thin long strips. In front  
of the gauzy curtain backed by a pulled  
down shade 5 electric candles  
rising up 2 by 2 to the one, white:  
blue and green,  
red and yellow.  
Behind the smell of hot-rubbed  
brake pads, the rain like age  
drizzling down.

## Float, Aloft, Recast

One line like Chicago  
played on the strings of a stiff frame  
bridge riding on the rocks  
of a fording place. We can go  
to this place. The house  
of my friend's father being bulldozed  
while I drive swiftly past  
on my way late  
to the airport. For sale  
and torn down, my thoughts  
and me tangled in the melodies  
stitched by mickey mouse left-hand work  
together. Is this a death, a retirement,  
a reward, an omen of the too-soon  
flood of demons down the valley  
English professors decry? We can go  
to this place. A waste of gulls rise  
up from a hollow-hidden dump  
and swarm toward the river  
or is it the ocean or is it the bridge  
or piled-up lumber of the bulldozed  
house? We can go to this place. She  
turned her back on me by the riverside  
down Chicago way and I took her  
exposed skin which she womanated  
for a second till the wind blew  
and would not stop and never did  
and still does blow holding the gulls  
aloft persistently here where  
we have not gone.

## Unlikely, Unlikable

We'd wed  
and no going on DNA  
to know what will come  
of it. Some things, unlike airports,  
have no end or no end  
on site. Suppose everything.  
Everything happens and what we see  
is what our minds' statistics tells us  
to? Desolation is the hinder  
place, the kinder  
place. There is a stable  
holding horses  
trained to carry  
us to the land of living poetry  
where the laws of physics  
are guesses made by  
people passing through  
on their way to a surprise  
algebra quiz. O help  
us breathe so song  
might unfold like  
jazz and jizz.

## Riverworld

Two of course  
floating down the river  
from the past of fancy facing  
the hoards of tomorrow. "We  
were part of it all," they said  
about to float past on a burnt-out log  
smoldering still, still wiping  
smoke and dirt from their eyes,  
licking blood from cuts, "glorious," they  
said. We cheered from the banks  
and shouted "what battle?" The river  
narrowed and they sped up and yelled  
with pride, "no battle..." and the curve  
of the river and a deepening downward  
cutbed pulled them past us fast and we heard  
them fading fast,  
"...only..."

## Hard to Doom

River's top sprung to life:  
wind down its course like a second  
river. Air, water—density  
of conviction. Come  
to think of it, the riverbed  
is flowing too, mud down  
to the sea, to bedrock. All  
speeds, and with small shifts  
and large, directions vary. Suppose  
everything: How to decide  
which to see? The laws  
are just everyone's best  
guess today. Ripple  
on a wake, wake  
on a flow, flow on  
a tide: Pity the piers  
and their hard stone  
banished, doomed.

## Poem of My Longing

I plumb her eyes for love light like  
Clapton says in Wonderful Tonight,  
and I ask her to say things in her German tongue  
to hear or even to see her wrap it around  
the strange sounds and meanings of the words  
or scenes I feed her. Or feel it wrapping  
like swimming eels around mine wrapping  
around hers. Or just the scene played out—I  
pretend it's real ... feel  
the calamities of confrontation.  
Like a poet hungry for another's tongue  
to feed on, heal on, I am the younger  
poet aged beyond recognition. My rivals  
are dead and their ambitions holed up.  
I've swallowed my tongue and seek  
the love of words in theirs, the love of me  
in their eyes. Foreign eyes. Strangers' eyes.  
The vulture—there on the branch  
my rivals burned—unfolds her wings,  
prepares for her short flight.

## Poets ... or Birds?

Do I wish to be as birds perched  
on my feeder frantic with watching and eating,  
aware exactly of eagles and cats,  
so aware of now: no past, no future;  
or as poets perched in their chairs  
or standing at bustops glancing  
at the present through the distraction  
of memory and against the interference  
of imagination hanging on one crutch  
of language and another of nonsense,  
aware exactly of childhood and death,  
so aware of then, hereafter: no now.

## The Perfection of Imperfection

The day Jesus was crucified—  
it was tough on God who, unlike  
portraits painted by believers, knew  
as little of that outcome as the wind  
knows of the other side of a cloud.  
Only time knows, playing back with forth,  
listening with perfect memory,  
gulping with anger bottled  
in its nutty scribble. We don't  
and our wish is for our god's excesses  
to supply certainty somewhere,  
but God's perfection is shallow,  
crucial, and antagonistic to beliefs:  
His sight is human scale, yep,  
and He knows it, but—and here it is—  
but that don't bother Him any.

## Lockstep Concentration

You walk away by walking upslope,  
and the new has been jammed  
into the old, sometimes one just  
standing on the other. A model  
on the Pont Neuf, nude, hungry,  
and extravagant, while the old bridge  
sticks to its ways. She dances,  
describing her passions with her ass  
and two innocent smiles. You walk  
away from the old by walking upslope  
of them, by climbing up out of the city  
settled in a valley and onto a ridge.  
Looking at the thoughts. Order  
hanging back. You walk away.

## Life in South Dakota Viewed as Several Contrasts

Out above the silking stalks  
of corn rain from an sprinkle irrigator

arcs from a narrow opening,  
disperses, a curved fan, the shape  
of man's helping hands before the fall

of nature. Behind, storm clouds curtain  
the scene—early July, and the corn

leaps inches a day. This place  
might as well not exist—all  
we need are the trucks and cans

or only the store clerks carrying  
boxes and palettes into the aisles

and onto shelves and cases. No need  
for soil and the sprinkler, no dirty  
farmer, no corn green and yellow

John Deere belching down furrows,  
no combines, no trucks, no macadam

roads, no fertilizer (no incorporation,  
no broadcasting) no little secrets of life,

no silk. Only husking and savor.  
Grandpa's truck broke through the ice

two weeks earlier and he and Dad and all  
my uncles raised it from 70' of water. He broke  
it down, rebuilt it, and died the week before

Dad turned it over, a month before harvesting,  
a year before Dad set it on fire in the cornfield

and the smoke of it made our hair smell  
of the city, of consumers.

## God Debugging

She waits for the sun like the moon  
below the horizon—what's inevitable  
will come in its time. When it does  
so will he and their mahogany still-life  
will repeat. The logs in the fire  
simmer each other as all great loves  
do, and the snow beginning to cover  
their balcony is not pure white  
but carries an industrial stain,  
a modern stain. An alarm  
sounds before the sun rises,  
and the day starts dark except  
for what seems to be a wound  
behind the city. Outside, from the balcony,  
God looks in, sees them walk past  
each other and Him, arrange  
cups on a table, heat water, and cook themselves  
breakfast, the sound only of making things  
reverberating off the clueless walls.  
God wonders: Should they have souls?

## Dream Accomplice

Maybe the crossroads mean something,  
the old macadam roads heading somewhere,  
the hamburger joint and fountain  
making at their best, and the Flying Horse  
gas pumping fresh and jockeys cleaning windshields,  
checking oil and all—sound of mufflers doing  
little to muffle, tuned like pan pipes  
to flowing melodies, sonic pheromones,  
quick 4/4 ripping from small speakers  
hung from the DQ overhangs—but  
today they are collectors of dust and thistle,  
rusted signs crying forlorn, hollow,  
cars lost but proud and unwilling to stop  
at the one shop still open.

Some  
reading this will think of the Cross, believe  
clues  
undropped, recall their adolescent recollections  
hovering  
in their memories and bring their own connections  
however  
irrelevant they may be to my work. Think of the found  
winds  
and their directions aligned to each road, which way will your wind  
blow?

## Is Too Small a Word

Epic, complete, big,  
invaluable, revelation,  
kudos, classic, grief,  
hatred, thank you, clever,  
legend, trance, expanded,  
America, fantastic, storefront,  
nice, peace, songs, appreciate,  
superstar, writer, incredible,  
spectacular, vast, outrage,  
me, determined, heterogeneous,  
mindboggling, cuteness,  
subplots, sticky, grateful,  
selfishness, jazz, enthusiast,  
friend, hyper, love,  
arrangement, hectic, obsession,  
tragedy, shortstop, gratitude,  
incredible, cause, oil, honor,  
potent, breathtaking, persistent,  
anticlimax, camp, pride,  
applet, fansite, glorious,  
impressive, wow, boom, lucky,  
organization, coming out, influence,  
definition, atrocity, hectic, genius,  
multimedia, significant, site,  
marvel, troubling, miracle, book,  
joy, simple, tree, car, moving,  
problem, good, confidence,  
appreciate, tub, fat, please,  
vengeance, masochism, bleak,  
guilt, hype, arrogance, loopholes,  
user-friendly, profound, idealistic, ironic,  
pedantic, outback, disappointment, word God.

Buried, outrageous, common—everything here  
is everything.

## Tonight, Alone

The opening between  
day and night is narrow  
and defined by light: gunmetal grey,  
robin's egg blue, Tokyo girl pink  
with dirt black tiger stripes. Tonight,  
a window yellowed by a single  
incandescent bulb lays a soaked  
light on the sidewalk. A car highspeeds  
by and its exotic tire tread pattern  
flushes the rain away in an exotic  
pattern. The woman walks past  
with a clear plastic scarf keeping  
the rain off, tied under her chin,  
her left hand tightening it by constriction,  
her right holding her purse close in case  
someone should jump her. A shadow,  
mine I guess, eclipses the bulb's  
contribution to twilight. The opening  
is a gap I must squeeze through  
tonight, alone.

## Not Away

Isn't it odd how a sad song makes life  
alive, how the chance that the melody  
and its plodding accompaniment will choose  
to soar makes any day, any time feel  
like the day it rained all twilight  
while you headed up the street  
with its broken, uneven sidewalks  
lined with dryrotted fences  
and over-reaching grass  
on your way from another  
afternoon of just sitting.

When it soars  
the rain lets up,  
the clouds form a shelf  
whose underside is lit  
by the sunken sun,  
and you walk  
toward me,  
not away.

## Love Poem on the Night Flight Out

Rain outside.  
You open the door, disheveled,  
in tangles clothes and hair.

I enter and you ask  
me to caress your mound.  
Where you lie  
and where I recline  
puts your hair in the light of a naked  
lamp and I can see through  
to your lips.

I tuck up in a ball  
and you tell  
me you fly tonight  
to Calcutta and need me  
gone forever.

Where is the hole?  
I am stuck on you.  
Am I sure enough to know where to enter?  
Here where I met my mother  
I go on like billy-o.

## Limited

This years ends: Y2k1.  
Space Odyssey. Our vision  
won't admit us. Our limitations.  
Our technologists weep  
for change, because change  
is things, because things  
are toys, because toys  
are cool.

We need new. We  
remain old,  
and sentimental,  
we favor nature images,  
we want our words  
to stay the same  
and what we say to change.  
We limit what we would change  
to what matters, but we  
are upside down.

Y2k1 becomes Y2k2.  
When I was able to realize  
when I was born and relate to when  
I'd die, this year, last year, next year—  
they all seemed impossible. I was born  
in black and white.

I am now limited  
to death.

## On Leaving the Marital Bed

I've stepped into her space and she  
adorns me.

Two clapping arms  
and I'm their sound. Luxuriously  
she's asked for me

again. And she has oiled  
herself for this. Within  
her arms

is the light of streetlights  
piercing snow. Outside

this circle  
lies my home,  
my bed.