

# **WALKING OUT OF PARADISE**



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**September 4, 2004 to November 22, 2005**

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## walking out of paradise

walking out of paradise  
a traveling carnival of light  
ruthless in joy  
fierce day strides

from the boy so bright

the man in full emerges  
from naïve tunes to dirges  
a house of horrors ride  
into a toothless silent night

## one tuesday in algonquin

forgot tent forget the tent  
prunes instead of raisins  
forget the raisins eat the prunes  
forgot wine forget the wine  
drink water from the deep lake of your dreams  
in rented tent bed set-up excruciating  
reinvent the tent set it up totally new  
the beauty of re-engineering the old  
the joy of illuminating the darkling space  
but the algonquin air the algonquin air a grace  
heaven redolent heaven sent the algonquin air  
full of cedar and balsam and pine a brace  
the trees of this green cathedral the spire  
full of forgiveness a blaze of wonder and green fire  
no ambient light no ambient sound at night  
wolves howling at the stars morning light inspires  
loons making a noise like a small dog's bark  
in the bright bays on the far side of the lake  
each time is always eternal as the first time  
the ancient wilderness an eternal light  
the ancient new giving and taking sings  
new and young and fresh and cold  
the abundant air alive as a living wire  
as the very last beat of our waking hearts  
wood smoke rising up like a fading fable  
like the fabled nightingale or the lark  
we winged gondoliers singing to a thin moon  
*for alan, daniel and Michael*

## **clouds**

up here in algonquin they are moved and moving  
commanding a view of lake and island on island  
to the vanishing point like wild animals domesticated  
in their peaceful acceptance of the ever challenging winds  
confident on horizon way to some ultimate home  
where when they arrive they will be as they never once were

here with the sun their young golden shepherd  
descending into the hills beyond the lake  
they saunter meander ramble and linger cow-like and placid  
in their navigation resides no anxiety  
just the candor of ships tacking off friendly winds  
the warmth of the shepherding sun in gentle pursuit

it is the wind in the pines the buzzing flies the chameleon skies  
the bend of the near bay saluting the bend of the bay on the far shore  
not only the sun warming our skin under them  
but the sun creating fields of radiant diamonds shore to shore  
the little jeweled waves lapping each a tiny tinkling bell

the wind coming from mysterious places plays its part  
its invisible rush and traffic visibly scoring the waters  
its insistence unifying all colors forms and light in a hush  
its invisible hands caressing the visible world  
of rocks and seed and stick and stone and bark and blister  
as if the entire landscape and all in it were the back of a cherished pet

they're all singing something very soft and sweet as they go  
a strain so terrible in beauty that to hear it fully would be to die  
a strain so insistent and strong that we feel a hint of  
on our skin in our blood in the aromatics of land water and sky  
of cedar moss rock-face trees and forest winds on shore

and then there are their shapes  
projection screens for our speeding day dreams  
the one resisting is a prisoner being dragged to jail with ball and chain;  
the other striding out is a man who's been set free from a guillotine  
a mythical menagerie of ducks and trucks and boats and beasts and little gods  
moving somewhere comically a cartoon opening some healing door

and marvelously it all becomes a silver pastel scrim  
set before us as a feast of hill vanishing on hill dark to light to ever lightly  
the jagged saw of tree tops sharpened by the winds  
sawing up in to the soft quilt of sky

and the waters forever amiable moving and moving  
everything forever amiable forever moved and moving

### **the happy bush**

the happy bush  
leaves dancing in the wind  
sits by the lake  
taking in the kingfisher clouds  
the kingfisher sun  
the kingfisher's waters  
the kingfisher's hours  
in our hearts  
something happy flowers

### **cedar burning**

the wind always is carrying it all away  
to the clouds large as continents  
to the waters black across the bays  
small strips and patches of green  
on the low lying hills far away  
the light in slashes puddles and stripes  
as the sun in ribbons breaks through  
the croak-of-raven clouds  
osprey above the dappled camp looks down  
the waves are talking  
no and yes and yes and no  
they are saying they are singing  
it is all i can do to keep up  
everything is moving too fast for one so slow  
to take it in as it takes me  
this animated conversation  
this other distant language  
is a band of silver on the far shore  
becomes a carpet of gold on the lake's opening door  
opens out to greet me and as quickly goes away  
the sleight-of-hand forest light on my hands  
comes and goes and comes and goes  
who is this great prestidigitator  
leading me on infinitesimally  
always in the shadow of his glory  
minutes follow minutes years follow years  
all but a single letter in this his eternal story

### **clothes on a line**

the wet socks with blackened soles  
look too tired to dry

the long johns defer to the blue towel  
in all matters of fashion and style

### **the power of art**

to have others see it clearly  
as if for the first time  
as if on their very first day  
and also feel it strongly  
as if suddenly remembered  
present from another place  
long ago and far away  
but now right now today

### **airlifting an elephant from the outdoor sculpture gallery of the metropolitan museum of art**

cultures can be so large and gray  
that after centuries tribes of academics and philosophers  
are still deciphering them  
sorting tail from head from side from trunk  
proffering this theory or the next  
but airlifting an elephant  
from the outdoor sculpture gallery  
of the metropolitan museum of art  
sets the teeth to grinding and the mind to unwinding  
first there's the getting of permissions  
and the thought of paying the massive rent  
from the city and the various boards of directors  
and the infernal logistics the devils in the details  
of getting the elephant up the freight elevator  
usually reserved for rembrandts, van goghs and egyptian funeria  
then there's interviewing the trainers to assure a docile animal  
who will not be spooked by the aztec sacrificial masks  
or the hindu goddess of many arms in eternal dance  
on point one leg rising up in fierce wrath  
dancing on a bed of human skulls  
all propelled along in a stately procession  
on the plated back of the tortoise of the cosmos  
then there's the marketing and publicity  
what angle to use to garner maximum media  
so the brand is showcased and people start believing  
something very new is taking place  
at the grand old storage cabinet of all human achievement  
and patrons give and give and attendance goes up and up  
at fundraising dances fashion shows and special openings  
and everyone is happy happy happy

administration curators politicians academics media citizens  
this was the conundrum of my dream last night  
in the depths of algonquin park in northern ontario  
too much oxygen I suppose  
but I woke up pouring sweat poised for success near triumphant  
the only catch was finding a plane that could lift  
an elephant without need of a runway  
capable of vertical ascent and descent  
and airlifting an elephant  
from the outdoor sculpture gallery  
of the metropolitan museum of art  
and the other problem was the would-be pilot  
who i unwittingly hired was actually a terrorist  
who insisted he had access to a plane  
parked in central park ready to do the job  
when only i knew he was out to destroy  
the physical history of the family of man  
in the dream i could feel myself returning to wakefulness  
but i futilely resisted the pull to consciousness  
knowing when i awoke i would have to live with the fact  
that i failed to prevent a terrible crime against world culture  
in my beloved dream city of new york, new york  
the radiant imperial center of my every dream  
that and not wanting to ever hear an elephant scream

### **looking down from the top of a great hill**

sometimes perspective is everything  
you look down from high up  
on the bays of the great lake manitou  
on the waters trembling in the departing sun  
on the leaves shimmering in the cool wind  
on the far shore paved with glacial boulders  
a few as large as a child's room  
on the cattails and the dead cedars  
in the frame of a very old white pine  
the width of two stout men  
lightning-blasted survivor of the old cuttings  
a scree of weather-bleached branches  
like weather-bleached bones breathing  
next to the long dead and dying  
birch tree's leaves rustling one against another  
their sound as much a touch  
as the sound of the wind  
or the touch of a human hand  
and everything in harmony  
serene at peace with peace

calm as tea in a china cup

**raven's words**

*mujekiwis*

ruler of winds

*kwonishi*

the dragonfly

*chibiabos*

musician

*shashaw*

the swallow

*mama*

woodpecker

*papukiwis*

the storm fool

*pugawagun*

*war club*

*mubuwahaka*

laughter of waves on the shore

**thinking about my father's heart attack**

**on my mother's birthday**

man o man o mine my father's heart

still beating somehow in mine

most intimate form of *tu*

father and son nation

strange word "detonation"

timing each and every one of us

*et tu, brutus*

the palpitating blood pump

the fabled source of all emotion

the chapel of all love

the still breathing soul

exits stage left

the rapture of the bird

that's flown the nest

*ticket that's exploded*

pledge of allegiance

hats off hand over

the stalwart heart's betrayal

the light still red as wine

this guest inside his chest

that long ago broke the lock

that locked the treasure chest

### **the sadness that follows squashing a vole with a car**

i wasn't speeding honest  
i saw its little black silhouette  
long nose stub tail  
black fur cropped  
snub like a chubby mouse  
wearing a small black mink stole  
speeding helter skelter across the road  
frantic in its small crossing  
determined committed mindless blind  
in split of a second calculating  
speed of car speed of vole  
vole calculating speed of car  
i chose to not swerve  
he much determined kept on  
the hard thump  
and imagined squash  
told me we were both wrong  
my deepest regrets, mr. vole  
such a terrible relentlessness  
surrounded it all

### **many words and many meanings**

there were many words and many ticking meanings  
the gloves and the socks and the boots and the pants of it  
fitting those they fit and not those not

what is the word was the word but a vision a story  
in the rumble of many a stumbling congestion  
like being in a colander of cooling linguini

the restless search for beauty became a fading joke  
the sun went down was lost like the dearest dead  
and through the comic mask the skull's teeth glowed

where were the translators now that the obfuscators ruled  
the right word at the right time in the right tone was missing  
like bats at dusk driven out of their minds by bugs

there had to be a concise description  
for the evanescent driftings of the heart and mind  
the zest that the grater extracts from the lemon rind

many times the definition seemed to lift its head at the end of a distant field  
but by the time the binoculars were lifted and set  
it was only a field full of a distant recent emptiness



the cicadas and the katydids are saying something to us  
every august night they repeat the old repeated stories  
their sound like a hundred thousand violins

it seems like everything conspires to have us know  
but we are addle-brained and dunder-headed in our senseless reign  
one word the exact one word the key is lost cannot be found or spoken again

### **buckwheat's prayer**

otay otay  
as I walk through the valley  
of the shadow of death  
feets don't fail me now

### **end-of-august field**

goldenrod ailanthus in full bloom  
asters on the wane  
once again every cricket  
every bug each singing  
their hearts shout  
path cropped close  
dusk sky steel and rose  
full moon  
old clouds threaten rain  
cock robin's chortle  
a dog howls  
a steer lows  
no stars out  
is their song in joy or pain?

### **the clock**

the patient rocks  
hard as the idea of eternity  
infinitely wait  
tick tock  
the sentient waves  
lapping and laughing  
ecstatically knock  
on great earth's door  
tick tock

### **cancelled trip**

i was going to miami  
to board a cruise ship

to spend two days  
next to a turquoise bay  
watching pelicans drop like stones  
to feed on schools of fish  
the color of sultans' rainbows

i was in a yellow taxi  
and i had this vision  
as we drove to the silver plane  
that would take us sweetly there  
and when i got to jfk  
discovered all flights to florida  
cancelled for two days  
hurricane jean  
railroads down too  
,

i had this vision  
of where i was going  
and where I would be  
and now i'm sitting in a bar  
in pennsylvania station  
off madison square garden  
thinking how odd are our expectations  
of the ever unraveling future  
thinking this and dreaming that

and it's never this and never that  
it's far away and mostly these and those  
something entirely else  
and is this not the eternal story  
of art and civilization and you and me  
whole cultures painting, sculpting,  
building, singing, placing their bets  
being inspired to move forward  
by visions that rarely come to be

i had this vision  
of where i was going  
and where I would be  
of what they call sincerely or not  
the will of the gods  
karma or the will of god  
fate or final destiny  
the three fates cutting obliviously  
the fuzzy strands of our wooly lives

thy will be done  
why always expect  
so much more fun  
when one's allotted length of twine  
is perchance carved like granite adamantine  
or suddenly spilled like a glass of wine

### **poetry always penniless**

penniless poetry mocks pricing sales and salary  
never includes the hourly lunacy of commerce  
from its cavern walls the scrawls of its shoeless callers wail  
"rise up rise up grasshopper from your summer fields,  
sink down sink down minnows emptied from your beaten buckets,  
fly away fly away you innocent sparrows from hunting hawks"  
what law has paid the little fiddler of words  
the little painter of sunsets and trees on horizon  
the tinkering tinkling tin smith  
the shepherdess of syllables of colors in herds  
the much desired clockless courted muse  
souris souris sings the little yellow caged bird  
sings happily night and day from his golden tree  
pages and leaves piled in golden scales  
the old echoes of all painters and poets  
covered over by history's forgetfulness  
rising up of their own joy in the finesse of song  
to blaze a trail for you and me

### **one definition of prayer**

you can see it in four-year olds  
when they carve out a quiet place  
a cell formed by overlapping cedar boughs  
which they turn into a holy room  
and there unabashed and outlaw out loud  
chant a narrative of their own invention  
what wondrous convolutions of plot and word  
only they know never to be told  
too shy to explain even if overheard

to observe them so bold so immersed  
in their own ancient thought pools  
they appear happily busy calmly occupied  
free of fear ever recreating the outcomes  
of their self-reinventing monologues  
they speak in voices  
and voices speak from them  
flowing and flowering and flowing

sweet water to the old salt sea  
remembering timothy in his fortress at mom's

### **sailboats in marinas**

they face one another  
different points on a compass  
like people in conversation  
at a party on blue waters  
their whiteness never fails  
to spark a cleansing shock  
cleaner white in any weather  
than the brightly assembled  
opera of clouds

their spare aspiring masts  
are silver exclamations  
they bide their time by pale shorelines  
in the extravagant hudson air  
stalled like impatient palominos  
waiting to be ridden  
by dark waters blue winds  
and the expert equestrian skies

### **amtrak to rhinecliff**

the shadow of the blue heron on the hudson's shore  
the penitentiary at ossining and razor wire  
the great black-backed gulls soaring and gliding overhead  
yachts and sailboats kayaks and canoes and dinghies in marinas  
the whistle of the train and the warning bells at crossings  
the great gray bays of the winding hudson  
with the cormorants drying their wings  
stretched out in crucifixion to the sun  
wood ducks mallards and swans feed in the shallows  
the birds a half mile away black in the early fall light  
like a well tied dry fly – a black gnat on the vast missouri  
all proud visible even in the late september glare

### **peonies**

winter long they slept sound and snug in their beds  
dreaming of a march sun and a more merciful rain  
for months when dawn wore her black slicker  
and walked her dogs freezing rain and snow  
our waiting for their fragrant globes seemed a forever  
challenged by their own rapid growth and green gravitas  
they gave new meaning to 'cultivated'  
begging for rings to support their weight to keep them tall

and save them from toppling over of their own need to grow  
their unbridled love of a benevolent sun  
their theatrical openings loved by ants and humans as well  
their sweet smell is my childhood's pristine dell  
and here they are again so soon so soon  
round pink and white going pink or lighter  
white and white going pink and pink going darker  
i love their brightness they the fireflies of summer days  
i love them white or pink or white or pink and rose  
their color is the color of an old calming secret  
never an intrusion on the hopeful robin's egg  
never a swear on the blue skies of mays and junes

### **first there was one**

first there was one  
then there were two  
what then more perfect  
than me and you

### **chasing the sublime**

i am the hound of heaven  
tracking down the sublime  
I am the lepidopterist of rhyme  
with my butterfly net  
chasing the butterfly  
of beautifully flying time

### **some exotic birds**

the gold and ebony-plated ant rattler  
the scarlet-crested walloon  
the antlered swamp shriek  
the fluffy web-footed desert nautilus  
the pink pond shearwater  
the snub-winged elephantine murmur  
the razor-beaked ought  
the club-footed zap gloss  
the timorous mouse linnnet  
the cave-dwelling slug swallow  
the apple-breasted lolly lark  
the whistling whinny  
the tin-tailed french fry warbler  
the adipose cuckoo  
the checkered sturgeon pecker  
the ruby-throated cow flopper  
the lesser dust tosser  
the greater dust tosser

the sludge auk  
the downy glass-breaking grosbeak  
the watermelon seed shoveller  
the silver throated boat-tailed balloon chaser  
the single-eyed flounder pipit  
the tweedy bee snatcher  
the metropolitan cross-billed snipe  
the carrion mouse hurler  
the ebullient moose chucker  
the rose-bottomed aluminum thrush  
the bog-dwelling sardine hawk  
the massive carolina hog chickadee  
the egg scrambling looney  
the blue-footed carnivorous booby  
the diving dowager  
the rocky crescent moon swallower  
the star-eating rook  
the surly grouch buzzard  
the nettle-crushing snark petrel  
the short-winged monastic howler  
the bat-faced lard warbler  
the lesser marshmallow plover  
the swarthy lyre-feathered gnarl  
the short-legged armadillo chaser  
the long-legged armadillo chaser  
the saffron gourd hollower  
the saw-billed buzz croaker  
the ring-necked glitch  
the scurrilous ring-necked bog hopper  
the tufted calliope  
the parisian pallet wren  
the italian bog trollope  
the spiky log drummer  
the hump-backed chicken startler  
the tangerine tortoise vulture  
the tasmanian jumbo jay  
lord phalarope's two-toed phoebe  
the gherkin albatross  
the featherless oops  
the tuba borer  
the synthetic chump changer  
the nude belgian endive canary  
the ivory-beaked tuxedo crow  
the slow black-backed bratwurst poker  
the flat-billed urge  
the amazonian millipede throtler

the whistling nicotine curlew  
the tittering devil-horned galloper  
the dun and rose-bellied over  
the great blue-winged finale

### **river at play**

with the fog rising up  
it could be a canyon  
or the end of the world  
seeing it the first time  
if you didn't know  
it was a body of water  
you could imagine it  
a drifting body of cloud  
the end of the world  
the cliff one steps off  
and keeps falling forever  
through a shroud of gray  
but when the fog shifts  
it's just the river at play

### **fall again**

the same maple gone orange surprises  
the same beech a jolt of gold  
the black birds gather and rise up startled  
black net above the trees and departing leaves  
the sky predictably is pilgrim gray  
squirrels woodchucks chipmunks hurry  
cramming last mouthfuls of protein for their big sleep  
in the still green grass solitary crickets still sing  
the fallen leaves make placemats beneath the trees  
one leaf in a single fall's sea of leaves  
lands balanced perfectly on my shoulder  
reverse camouflage shocking red and yellow  
almost as inconsequential as we  
but still one very bright note  
in an eternally repeating melody

### **sun on the hills**

the sun on the hills  
but for a moment  
at the end of day  
lights up the higher ground  
as if the land were kissed bright  
as if the sun flicked off a bedroom light  
and gently said good fall day good night

### **the leaves**

orange red green and gold  
they smile though outfoxed  
by the hours which know  
new crayons in a box  
the days come and go  
the wind at dusk  
takes everything down  
to a whisper in the dark  
today all colors grow old  
the key to death now unlocked

### **old maple**

one old maple stands  
in the yellow october light  
and at its base every year  
falls a perfect circle of leaves  
days come and days go  
and the circle holds its form  
only the most uncaring cold wind  
ruins this golden symmetry  
and brings winter storming in

### **autumn**

this is the murderous season  
when walking down a mown green path  
the path bleeds leaves red leaves  
like an agatha christie murder mystery  
and what is being murdered  
is just everything  
all of us and you and me  
to read and breathe and kneel and be red and bleed  
the conniving hand of a killer season  
drives everything underground  
a few cold nights send all earthward bound

this is the murderous season  
when suddenly on a mown green path  
congregate drops of blood the sized of your palms  
leaves leaves leaves all dying leaves  
relentless in number remorseless in their red fall  
from green to orange to red to vain purple  
from supple to dry from vine to grape to wine  
from ferment to frigid to frozen still  
when remembering anything but ice and chill  
seems a long lost eon murdered long ago



by the knives of snowflakes dancing on the window sill

### **morning with no adjectives**

i walked out into the day  
i breathed the air  
it was the beginning of autumn  
the trees still had leaves  
and some leaves still had trees  
birds were singing and birds were song  
the ones flown were singing somewhere else  
the sun was rising up through clouds  
and somewhere else it was going down  
i filled the feeder with seeds for birds still here  
who were still asleep their heads under their wings  
suddenly the day woke up without their songs  
trees were missing their leaves  
and leaves were missing their trees  
october was scattering the pages of yesterdays  
the wind was spoiling the circles of leaves  
if you had to pick a day to be alive  
this day would be the day  
the geese assembling their ranks  
honking back and forth about their routes  
now the sun reversed the dominance of day  
the shortness of days announced the night  
for bill castagnoli

### **annie dillard's saddest lines**

“i no longer believe  
in divine playfulness.”

### **amaryllis**

bulb heart  
size of monkey head  
your flowers the colors of lent  
to wedding white  
your jack-in-beanstalk stalk  
a candle shock of cutlass green  
leave your church and funeral home  
your christmas and easter scenes  
your clay and plastic pots  
your perch in florists' shops  
and let your captive clutch  
of open blooms dream

### **simple map**

i can only see where I am  
by the pain of where I've been

### **god**

*de capo fortissimo*  
voice of the wilderness  
no name no address  
the eternal living word  
the silver planets the smallest stars  
the blue and green earth a marble  
between your index finger and thumb  
the everlasting no and yes  
a child in your arms  
the sky the sun the planets the moon  
the exclamation of enlightenment  
the hidden song of awe  
the circulating infinite mobius  
the collective 'oh!'  
the vast *obbligato*  
all that are sheltered all that come to harm  
the blind the lame the frail the deaf the dumb  
the all encompassing compass of us  
the less that's more the more that's less  
the north south east and west  
morning night and noon  
all that's learned and all that's taught  
the voice outside the voice within  
the shrouded mountain  
the sun going down  
*basso profundo*  
caught in the eye of the fallen bird

### **lab rat**

it's truly a simple maze  
with twists and turns  
they always change on me  
i can only see where i am  
through the pain  
of where i've been

### **log**

humble log  
your smile warms us  
the happy fire dances  
when you enter  
flames christmas at your center

like cats mark a favored bush

once in a while  
when i fail to remember  
walking in a trance or fog  
a wagging poem like this one enters  
replaces one forgotten  
and follows like a happy dog

### **the sow's soliloquy**

oink oink where have y'all been  
so you think i'm dirty a greedy slob  
when i'm clean smarter than any dog

when my immune system is closest to your own  
and i'd just as soon suckle a starving kitten  
out of ample indulgence as my own newborn

a classic my bacon frames your eggs  
my hulk and slow grace in moving begs  
an intelligence swifter than my girth

when i am kindly hung high by my ankle bones  
to be throat cut and bled by the farmer who raised me  
i will gladly own this as a joy and mercy then  
over the factory deaths of my less fortunate kin

### **in my heart there's this undeveloped land**

in my heart there's this undeveloped land  
it's virgin territory vast and unexplored  
the excitement of knowing that it's there  
makes me glad to leave my bed  
and place two feet on the morning floor  
each day the sun is smiling a song  
and on days when the clouds' frost and dark  
make it at first seem all dark all wrong  
i think of rain and cloud and the ever-changing weather  
there is a river running and celebratory trees  
there are skies and plains and lakes and purple mountain majesties  
there's the compassion of birds and the sweetness of domestic animals' eyes  
the patient bridges the stalwart trains and ships and planes  
the power plants and fluctuation of the financial markets' buys and sells  
but most of all there is the rocking on the amtrak rails  
where I recognize that trains and those we love have sails  
are free as the celebratory clouds if only we knew  
and we watch the sun go down and the moon rise up

and are stricken dumb when we see that the days are nails  
pried from the coffin lids of our ignorance giving us the gift of sight  
bright suns soft moonlight the cryptic joy of migrating birds  
on high who keep our little world in sight

### **father sun**

goodnight father sun  
i pray i shine as bright  
when my small day is done

### **searching for cover**

if you could open the train window  
you could throw a coin into the river with no effort at all  
see the splash and lose track of the silver descent  
small currency in the glare of sun's setting ball  
the bridges tugboats and garbage scows would sparkle  
and you might be convinced that the day was a smile  
with no motive to spread its lips and show its teeth  
than the raw fact of spreading mid-december light  
on the ancient river the bovine clouds smiling back

### **cans't thou draw out leviathan**

cold has locked mountains and molecules  
and all their dreams in prisons of ice  
the communities of geese pick and peck  
the nubs of still green frozen grass  
is this not the beautiful dark thing  
is this not the risen thing that makes us feel  
is this not the faith of every breath  
does not the insistent alleluia of waters  
and rises and ledges of river and river land  
serve to summon the great beast of joy  
no lure too large no hook too sharp

### **road kill**

they are not as frequent as the leaves  
or the grasses gone pale from the first freeze  
or the sands forever subdivided by unforgiving seas  
when you pass the fallen deer or fawn  
the woodchuck saluting the bloated driver who struck him  
the smaller ones - chipmunk squirrel rabbit snake turtle cat or dog -  
you know even if you choose to ignore or not see  
this was nothing like running over a rock or log  
the skunk with his aftermath musk out of luck  
the possum with his frozen snarling grin  
all struck dead in the pitch of dusk night or dawn

and unforgiving the bloodless light of day reveals  
the unfortunate white of gristle tendon and bone  
as you drive by their furry litany *noblesse oblige*  
can you almost hear the sad snap and crush of fine leg  
that once leapt obedient to the will of the antler-crowned buck?

### **the new machine that cuts the roadside brush**

in the old days fields were mown straight and clear  
tree limbs trimmed short and sweet almost surgically  
but then they made the new machine that rips the roadside brush  
a metal fan of two inch link chain  
a whirlpool a dwarf chainsaw a vicious helicopter  
that when the roadside gangs push a button or pull a throttle  
an unnatural break in man's ugly pruning shockingly appears

### **the moon and the sun seem so close**

we've put a god on the former  
and know to avoid landing on fire  
but to see it as a primitive man  
and fear they would be extinguished  
and send the race into interplanetary night  
must have once seemed a real fear  
not that we can count on them or us  
to remove us from them or them from us

### **snow fall**

it is a white pall floating down slowly descending  
no comforter this slow blanketing from on high  
genteel in confirming the open fact of falling  
that earth has always been a fertile grave  
seasoned and sealed by winter's wiles  
while below next to root and hibernating vole  
lives the cold secret to which all our lost days go  
white on white for miles on miles  
the icing on this frozen layer cake of former lives  
this seeping dirge of virgin snow  
while above all await the ancient play's next act

### **it is as nothing**

it is as nothing  
the raising of a voice  
or the raising of a hand  
or a flag a brow a hope  
an edifice an artifice a band  
a note a nap a good thing to sing

it is as nothing  
the flute of our haunting days  
the mystery of our strange dreams  
our staggering aspirations  
knocking on the doors of our limitations  
a thread pondering the joining of seams

it is as nothing  
the ice of rain on trees  
the sweetness of winter cold  
the freezing touch of a december breeze  
a white a silver a telling a told  
a warm bell inside an old note to sing

it is as nothing  
the ticking of an ancient clock  
the hearing one's own heart beat  
minute second hour year  
our past washed fresh as a linen sheet  
time our friend or foe a clock that rings

it is as nothing  
the waiting all the time  
in hopes of something better  
money love health fame power  
no more no less than fickle weather  
and at the end a sudden lethal sting

it is as nothing  
but still it is as gold  
more riches than time to spend  
hearts and souls lovers and friends  
nothing but a chain of beginnings and ends  
enter with spirit exit with spirit to begin again

it is as nothing  
as burning wood consumed by fire  
the midnight lighting of a torch  
a match a spark a germ of light  
a rocker rocking on an old front porch  
our every wish a kite on a burning string

### **the night sky's lament**

oh whitest of shining whites  
you are the better half  
of my missing heart

muse that i will never find  
oh how i miss you  
and your fine moon light  
on this my darkest night

### **the effect of moonlight**

the effect of moonlight  
clear as water in a crystal glass  
quenching an ancient thirst at last

### **message in a bottle I**

god speed belle canto  
last song of a small soul who hopes  
in the endless river's ebb and flow

when truly rightly found  
shall you sing of open doors  
the timeless sunlight shining in

of your little journey to the sea  
a musical magical round

### **message in a bottle II**

celebrate and meet your fate  
shy one tightly sealed

to drift on cold waters  
to be cast on strange shores

until found and broken open  
your meaning at last revealed

### **moon shadows**

they are reduced from a winter noon  
as a broth boiled down  
their technicolors muted  
to shades of white and blue and coal  
the silhouettes of trees  
become unimportant filigrees  
their shadows lengthening  
under the winking eye  
of half a january moon

### **blizzard**

this stark canvas

has a civility  
in the way it contradicts  
the bluster of darkness  
with its crystal lights

### **true fire**

true fire reaches  
for the fine air  
at the top of the flue  
the way a drowning man  
looks to the surface light  
as he makes his descent  
down into the deepest blue  
down past the dark spires  
away from his last day  
into the rarest night

### **mid-january**

three barns barn red  
their windows white  
the sun a flame  
in their reflecting panes  
snow a map of tracks  
where squirrel and deer have tread  
old trees are naked cold  
all their leaves are dead  
juncos cardinals jays and crows  
know that stubborn spring  
lies deeply dreaming  
freezing months ahead  
and now the drift of snows

### **winter morning**

the wind has blown the snow  
off the red barn wall  
now the rising sun  
casts the shadow of the maple  
and the cloudless skies

### **snow on the hudson**

first indicator the weather channel  
the fifth estate stirring the media caldron  
a blizzard of predictions  
whipping the masses into a frenzy  
snow shovels road salt bottled water  
flying off the shelves



flying out of stores  
ten inches to two feet  
people speculate  
attempt to quantify  
the fine powder of the future

there is a forgiving aspect to it  
the white will to create a blank slate  
of a proportion seen only in winter  
all the clichés of softening  
whitening rounding all angles  
unsullied fresh purifying  
dulling the points of picket fences  
with little round caps  
outlining the topside of tree branches  
pine dogwood locust maple cedar birch  
whitened

the birds wild in their anticipation and hunger  
the juncos gray and white robed  
talking to one another so urgently  
as if to say, "it's coming down hard.  
it's going to be a big one."  
fill up eat up store it up now  
soon the pumpkin seeds  
will be invisible buried  
soon the song sparrow the wren  
the cardinal the nuthatch the finch  
will find snug harbor  
and sleep right on through  
their insulating feathers fluffed out  
round feathered ornaments  
against the storm

the geese and swans that failed to migrate  
find the last patches of open water  
on the hudson on streams on spring fed ponds not fully frozen  
heads tucked under their wings they wait it out  
snow already covering their backs

the fine flakes are furious  
and falling as if angry  
i think of the deer  
in their hillside thickets  
on their sides huddled together  
their brown eyes closed

their shelters beneath dense cedar or pine  
still dry the only sound they hear  
the soft sizzle of small flakes  
and cello of the snowing wind

no distinctions  
road and field and path alike  
under a low ceiling of white  
recipients of white

everything reminiscent  
of the stroke of a calligraphy brush  
dancing over the ivory white paper of earth  
whose handiwork is this  
whose mighty obliterating white  
whose powerful ordinance

inside the furnaces breathless  
warming expirations continuous  
no systole diastole inhalation or exhalation  
just a steady mechanical regulated breath

at 2 p.m. the light like dusk  
at 3 p.m. almost night

the occasional muffled car  
on the cautious road

snowplows biding their time  
the crews making ready  
for the all night shift  
waiting for an accumulation  
filling their thermoses  
with hot coffee or tea

the rhododendrons' stiff green fingers  
tightly curled as frozen gloves  
the cedars an infiltrated net of white needles  
the air damp and clean and determined

and white the falling of white  
white on white on white  
and the memories of other snows  
the snows of childhood  
pristine liberating remembered  
freeing from the slavery of school

and the wet coat closet smell  
and the smell of sharpened pencils  
and the smell who (uses them today)  
of rubber goulashes and their metal snaps  
and the smell of wet wool  
and wet hair and wet skin  
and the no-smell of cold  
and the comforting sense  
just before falling asleep  
that the snow is still falling  
and warm we are still dreaming

it makes a sound  
a subtle one  
a shush a sizzling  
and this gentle sound  
is healing somehow

it has a message for us  
from its vast terrarium of white  
it says  
listen and accept  
being covered

and then it's dark  
and each flake is a falling reflector  
and the night is not black  
but blues blue grays and whites and silvers  
in hundreds thousands and millions descending  
and the barn light lengthens  
the shadows of the covered trees  
and the bowing swamp grass is capped in white  
and the flakes shine in the light of passing cars  
and in the city you might hear  
the sounds of scraping shovels  
but in the country you only hear  
the occasional roar of the plows passing  
piling the snow in banks  
on the sides of the roads

and to know that through the night  
white is falling deepening  
is to know the joy of sleep  
the innuit sent their elderly  
into the hoary blizzards  
and it was a merciful death

a sleep against the encroaching cold of age

the flames in the fireplace  
resemble a comanche headdress  
the wind picks up  
no exit no egress

in the fluffy morning dunes cover all  
the media was right  
it was not a dusting but an all out squall  
which left town and country a clean slate

snow falls and snow falls  
in a lifetime of snow falls  
down and down  
the snow of our childhoods  
the snow of our deaths  
the snow of our friends  
the snow on our graves  
the snow of down pillows  
the down of snow  
on the back of your neck

groups of children in school yards  
red blue yellow green and black coats and hats  
their heads tilted back  
catching snowflakes on their eyelashes and tongues

snow plows  
snow boots  
snow shoes  
snow suits  
snowmen  
snow days  
snow shovels  
snow flakes  
snow fences  
snow drifts  
white out

they were young then  
and we were babies  
i remember being wrapped  
so warm and tight  
i could barely move  
couldn't wait to get outside

my sister in front me in back of sleigh  
it was night and the snow  
falling down was falling down  
the streets were empty  
and we were in the middle of the street  
streetlights casting blue shadows  
snowflakes shining like jewels  
only the sound of my parent's breathing  
the crunch of their boots  
the shush of the sleigh  
cold as it was  
i've never felt as snug  
my little sister's cheeks red  
the pom-pom on her hat  
blowing back and forth  
my parents laughter muted by gusts of wind  
only ones out in the blizzard  
yet protected and warm

a vision as hokusai painted it  
the floes a moving jigsaw of white  
crushing crunching plate against plate in the low tide  
moving down river as far as a man can walk  
the immature and mature bald eagles  
one mottled hawk brown the other black  
their white heads and yellow talons beacons  
along for the ride perched on choice floes  
hunting the cruising stripers cruising the surface  
patiently preying for their next repast

the bridges rising up out of the snow mist  
gray shadows that turn into gray stone and steel  
stoic calm presences spanning the icy waters  
reassuring friendly even in their vast stolidity  
snow on the backs of geese and mallards  
all the trees on the peninsula on the opposite banks  
their every branch covered in slurry of snow  
the crenellated parapets of bannerman's castle  
outlined in snow reminiscent of pop-up children's books  
open the page and the wizard's castle pops up in all its glory

bear mountain engineered a road cut into its flank  
contours of riverside woods and copses made exquisite  
the underlying architecture of swell of land and rise  
and climb of tree and bush and vine revealed as if for the first time  
it is the capacity of new snow falling

to at once clarify and soften the world's design

in the bays the snow on frozen floes blown into the outlines of waves  
the shape of granite and the mass of pines complimented  
by the eradications of their customary mass  
the river high and robust and almost to track's edge  
the entire symphony of storm singing as only new snow can sing  
and somewhere deep in the human heart is a peaceful cave and fire  
the eternal children sleeping with the cats and dogs curled up at their sides  
and this is the center and eternal repository of all civilization  
a quite vantage and respite from an eternal succession of storms  
our only hope to weather it out from a warm place  
which affords a great view of the unfolding glory  
the pines and cedars as if they were weeping  
or paying homage to the river and the earth  
to the seasons the rain and the snow and the ice  
their respect mirrored in the dreamy eyes of the passengers  
on the trains on the far side of the river  
dozing to the rhythm of their rocking train  
rocking on steel tracks that steal and soften travelers' time  
the plumes of smoke from the occasional cottage or cabin  
affording the few white verticals that aspire to sky  
the hips and thighs of the almost human mountains  
where razed by fires long ago white as human hips and thighs

### **woodblock print**

in the stack of christmas cards  
by the christmas tree is one  
that looks like the aftermath of a storm  
on brown parchment white acrylic  
against a band of ce  
rulean blue  
the image of two tall cedars  
and snow flake stars  
make the blue look like night  
and the white a new snowfall

### **ode to a backscratcher**

simple tool yet a treasure  
always yields a simple pleasure  
intimate inanimate hand  
of varnished bamboo  
bent at one end '  
like a de-clawed paw  
when I asked  
a chinese friend

a student of calligraphy and law  
what the small character  
on your long stem meant  
he said with a guffaw  
it's chinese for "ah, chu!"

### **dream of impotence**

i shed a crocodile tear  
as i said to the criminal  
put your hands up  
or i'll shoot  
turns out to my sad surprise  
the gun was just a pencil  
and like a horn that won't toot  
was only good for a stencil  
or for stirring sugar in a cup  
as murderous as a shout  
the sign of impotence is fear

### **vision**

to derive ultimate pleasure  
from the simple act of looking  
to be inspired to keep watch  
to be inspired by looking  
to see a piece of dried macaroni  
in the street by a forest of garbage bags  
as an equal opportunity epiphany

to grasp the gift of sight's pilgrimage  
to savor the journey of the brilliant eye  
to hunger to see openly  
to wake up craving the shining light  
to see the elegance of cigarette butts in gutters  
to have compassion for crushed plastic drinking cups  
and drink deeply in the thirsty scenes

to know that to see is to love  
to always keep the loved one in sight  
to fear no shadow no blindness  
to love sight as the first act of faith  
to embrace the open flower of the streets  
to greet the faces that they greet  
to know that seeing is to be being

to unconditionally embrace the world

with the eyes given you to be  
to be filled up full by burly landscapes  
by the dance of light and dark  
to summon the crystal light of day  
to bow down before the comic obvious  
of hats and umbrellas blowing in the wind

### **mind cure**

rid yourself of yourself  
of fear-thought  
bring down your vanity

rise above your anger  
and petty complaint  
your common cold and ache

breathe deeply in the vast song  
that breathes us all in  
be breathed and sung

fret not world turmoil  
for it cannot be helped  
insignificant the global belch

as a gnat on the hindquarters of god  
know we will all be slapped down  
and brushed away

emulate the condition of flame  
burning the dross away  
gross skin and bone

walk the high mountain path  
look down on rivers  
new waters making old stone new

call on your greater self  
the eye that sees all  
always find peace in flux

where your feet stand find home  
when your dreams land take wing  
and fly away from them

take no orders and become  
a mere castaway free



on the open sea of your own truancy

leave the phalanx of words behind  
collapsing dominoes  
in the dustbin of meaning

assist the stars in their rising  
by greeting them  
and calling the planets by name

remain moonstruck to your last day  
when the flying moon will smile  
at each rising of the undaunted sun

count the echoes of your final voice  
as a final victory and joy  
when all's done knock down your wall of pride

### **early february morning**

the fall of the stylus of light  
laser-like inscribing skin and feather  
penetrates the very heart bone of each of us  
and the snowdrops and the crocus spring  
rise up and sing their old happy solos  
prompting our tiny souls to sing

### **first hatch of winter**

it was the first day of fifty degrees  
after a frieze of days thrown down  
a deep well of below zeroes  
the fields furrowed from the rise  
where the blue lilt of hills spun off  
soft to the east and soft to the west  
as if they had been plowed by man  
when they had been plowed by sun  
which melted the row tops  
and saved the snow in troughs  
and gave the sense of snowfields plowed  
to what end too early for spring  
late winter under a quilt of pallid blue  
did one fearless one a tiny god  
a midge? a blue winged olive?  
rise up before my eyes?  
it only took a change of few degrees  
to make this stalwart nothing rise  
and i raved, "bravo! brave little one"

if you against all odds  
then why not we?

### **field snow**

the paths of field mice and voles  
through the ever receding snows  
are the field's varicose veins  
or a random jigsaw puzzle composed  
by small mammals' tunneling brains

### **surrealism**

my skull breathes and rattles  
my skin bristles and bridles  
my razor refuses to act

the chicken headed humans are hacked  
into small commas and apostrophes  
my feet have morphed to lobster claws

scuttling across an eternity of ocean floors  
calling all the lapsed souls back  
bones weeping in the evening dew

and falling in the fallen light renewed  
insurgent against the tyranny of mind  
in the black pond's mirror reflects

natural as the turpentine in fir  
un-natural as the oyster irritated by the pearl  
supernatural as the rain of bowler derbies

granite boulders furnishing empty rooms  
the unpredictable weaving of the minds looms  
cabel vision vhs equinox solar stress

the testicles of bulls bare to the surgeon's scalpel  
and when the scrotum's pulled back  
the open eye reveals a world of chess boards

bishops rooks kings queens pawns and knights  
congealed into a humpty dumpty pie  
a piano dragged by beasts onto the ocean shore

a crowd of lemming-headed citizens leaping off cliffs  
their understudies kissing through burlap bags  
things declaring themselves to be what they are not

a string of murderous juxtapositions  
culminating in the anarchy of spoons and sugar cubes  
eliminating the need for bearded woman and men with breasts

naked and impaled on the metal cross  
mummified and wrapped in dental floss  
the final cry of elliot's futurist I want to die

and everything is more beautiful than mice  
or the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella  
on a dissecting table in the hall of surgery at the sorbonne

and everything is the backs of puppets' heads  
and wooden figures and melting clocks and preying mantises  
on vast horizons towering beasts walk with ancient crutches

the sun's beams penetrate the burning dusk like spears  
and van gogh's paintings like centurions after centuries  
in the minds of bankers and politicians remain in arrears

the urinal has become a sculptured work of art  
the birdcage full of marshmallows ode to a sneeze  
a flock of neon bicycles are an ode to a grecian frieze

### **river ice**

the river ice is driven by a southeast breeze  
to the hollows of the east shore's bays  
stacking up in transparent blocks and plates  
pale lemons blues and pinks and salmons  
it is the color of girls' shirts bleached  
the white heads of eagles shining  
each by each by each by each  
hunting on the drifting frozen floes  
watching from the sun-drenched tops of trees

### **greek diner**

ripe sliced strawberries  
on the cutting board  
lemons in a bowl  
the sharp paring knife  
the smell of coffee  
eggs and bacon frying  
toasting kaiser rolls

## **e-porn**

there are 'chicks with dicks'  
huge dicks sloppily photographed  
the way fisherman photograph fish  
the holding arm extended to gain three feet  
and the illusion of monstrosity  
boggling the mind and depressing  
the community of inadequate or normal dicks  
there is the fist fucking web site  
not for children or the squeamish  
up to the wrist in a variety of orifices  
the recipients equal opportunity employees  
feigning the terrors of invasion and rape  
but ample enough fee-for-service-wise  
there are the 'massive cum load' sites  
'virgin' faces bathed in sperm or sperm-like fluid  
bordering on the wretch gagging squish  
the realm of don't need or want to know  
there are the 'big black dick' sites  
meeting more 'underage virgins'  
whose grimaces of fear and terror and desire  
are captured eye rollings and open mouthings  
only seen in cows in pasture when they bellow  
and for one dead president  
you can have an entire day's 'sexplorations'  
of everything you've every fantasized  
but couldn't photograph  
the obligatory moans and groans  
masturbations and hot sensations  
are followed by a caravan of adjectives and nouns  
enter the nouns the nouns come  
and every one gets off  
comes and goes and this is the snapshot  
a \$2 billion industry  
and this is our 21<sup>st</sup> century  
where liposuction tooth whitening and six pack abs  
breast augmentation dick lengthening butt tightening  
glut maximization nose jobs lip fattening  
and other forms of surgical amelioration  
make us more worthy or desirable to whom  
in the painful awareness of our flaws publicized  
we are made impotent by the knowledge of our aging  
and for relief from our deteriorating humanity  
for relief some turn to the humanities  
of never aging always ameliorating e-porn

### **sea wrack**

the wrecks of man's little hubris many  
drifting disconsolate in the eddies and bays  
the pinions of the drowned gull and crow  
pinned pathetic dirty-winged wet crosses  
their necks limp like hanged men's  
their yellow beaks though bright not celebratory  
ignored by the flock of geese optimistic overhead  
the rusted awl and staves of broken barrels  
dancing like children's toys in the surf  
foam and plastic balls chased by dogged winds  
their paint worn thin to pallor by salt's teeth  
the tremolos of milk cartons and kelp like disheveled wigs  
the slosh and grumble of broken ships' vertebrates  
wood soak and rust broken-down returning carcasses  
metal and compass to the ocean particulate  
broken buoys and burst balloons unwrapped  
by the giant hands of winds and tides and tossed aside  
the careless hearts of men and women open nets long fled  
their cavernous chest caves sway in davey jone's locker  
the seabirds' sharp cries of *requiem eternam*  
harkening above the fog and sea tides  
the assembly lines of floating bottles and cans  
mocking the idiot engineer of fickle weather  
waterspout and tide surge and moon rust  
and the ever cacophonous symphony  
of things hobbled and bobbing in sea and river brine  
the drift of pale flesh of dead fish white and nutrient  
the flotsam and jetsam of all our meanderings  
returning to the ocean library to the estuary of nothingness  
remembering the remembered reminding the reminded

### **gene splice**

oh goaty dogs  
oh doggy goats  
if goats ate bones  
if dogs ate oats

oh toady cats  
oh catty toads  
if cats ate worms  
if toads ate rats

### **spring song**

the dry tufts of nest grass  
in all the starlings' beaks forecast

like calls through black telephone lines  
they telegraph first signs of spring  
along the rising river on floes of ice  
expectant seagulls face the setting sun  
stand in line like an eager audience  
waiting to buy last-minute tickets  
to the Broadway play of night  
the light on their white backs shines

### **on planes after september 11**

ever since september 11  
i get on planes and think of me  
and my fellow passengers  
as unwitting weapons  
perpetrating some bloody darkness  
on unknowing victims  
unwilling fuel for a lottery ticket  
that could explode any minute

### **wappinger's creek and a late march snow**

as dark as a secret wish  
dark are the polished waters  
black as a vintage cadillac

### **gulls on hudson**

startled by the train  
sudden as a sharp pain  
they rise up  
a multitude  
from the calm surface  
of the gray hudson  
from their great white wings  
a celebration sings  
of some rare gift  
of some vast giver  
yet unknown  
the balm of their flying  
home oh home

### **the little animals**

they live in a magic land  
they get scared  
by all the big noises  
roaring motors cars and trains  
screams shouts bigmouths  
and unfamiliar things

moved by their gentle shyness  
our humanity sings  
when we pet them magic reigns  
our hearts are bared  
our souls expand

### **going forward going backward**

in the filthy station  
a steel fan of tracks on either side  
gleams in the underground light  
dead rats fester  
and snicker bar wrappers blow  
the train on the right  
is not moving  
the train i'm on is moving  
if i look to my right  
my train appears to be  
moving backward  
away from the direction  
i know we are moving in  
if i look to my left  
we are once again moving  
in the direction i know  
we should be moving in  
further on shrouded  
in march sleet and a big wet snow  
the expanse of the hudson unfolds  
the bridges are bracelets  
that span the great gray flow  
mirage more eternal than man  
a red tug boat pulling a garbage scow  
moves stubbornly up-river  
appearing to know where it must go

### **the wounded god**

i have been born and died and born again  
i have mounted the many steps  
to the pinnacle of dawn the apes below  
in a frenzied froth of expectation  
in my white ceremonial gown  
i have been thrown to the seas below  
to drown in my own blood and the blood  
of those thrown heartless down before me  
their chests split completely blown  
i have ascended the highest temple  
and felt the stone knife

tear my flesh and break the cage of my ribs  
and still living seen it hurled  
still beating to the supplicant crowds below  
i have been flogged crowned with thorns  
and nailed to a cross of wood  
and felt the spear pierce my ribs  
my water piss sweat and blood baptizing'  
even the dogs at the base of my cross  
i have been slandered and left with my beggar's cup  
abandoned to seek alms from the hard-hearted  
in jaipur or mexico city in hope of reincarnation  
where beggars deform themselves for profit from pity  
roach-like i have huddled in tunnels like a tunnel rat  
i have been burnt by their flame throwers  
i have been thrown into the rabid company of strange beasts  
and torn limb from limb my blood watering the sands  
my flesh ripped from the husk of my body  
like a grilled piece of corn on the cob  
and planted in the cold dark resistant earth  
i have been crushed between large stones  
my blood a wine in the press of their cruelties  
i have been the passenger in the tower's plane  
and have remembered the litany of my many names  
i am he who knows no end  
to the futility of my frequent tryings  
the tides of my ever rising and fallings  
i am he who in the end knows no end  
who rises victorious and ever unknown again and again  
my bleeding heart the ever burning alpha and omega  
the beginning eternal without eternal end  
i am your heart your breath as you are mine  
again and ever again resurrected  
i have tasted the brine of my own blood  
even as they roll back the door of my tomb  
as they rifle through the ashes of my fire  
as they dig up my casket to exhume  
what is still alive and lives within the rot  
i hear in my own voice like the howling wind singing  
they know not what they do  
father forgive them  
they know not what they know  
and i hear these words ringing in my ears  
and can never forget the fragility of my own oblivion  
i am the lord and there is none other  
i form the light and create the darkness  
i make peace and tolerate all evil



i the lord who am do all these things

### **first law of writing**

always more important to transcribe  
the very first thing most deeply felt  
with utmost precision of attention  
and to follow the gift of that  
like a hunting dog on point  
than to 'write'

### **skywatch april 11 2005**

low in the west northwest sky  
in the darkest recess of night's heart  
in the farthest deepest corner lies  
a slender sliver of a crescent moon  
like a white silk shirt beneath a charcoal vest  
a sky signal used by the ancients  
to put their ancient calendars to rest  
to the right float the silver pleiades  
the beautiful seven sisters sing  
to the waxing moon's embracing light  
a grayish blue ball a ghostly rune  
sun from earth's reflected sun  
old moon in the new moon's arms  
old heart in the new heart's charms  
glow of earthshine through a lunar pall  
the candles and the fire in the fireplace  
the echo of the spring peepers' calls  
reflecting inward the splendor of it all  
the moon shineth like love eternal  
and maketh the darkling corners bright  
all that's old is born new again  
all who've wronged stand forgiven  
kind memory of a kind of heaven

### **american airlines miami flight 921**

fine apparition these faces boarding  
these shining masques of god hiding  
these hidden suns all one all flying

### **periwinkle**

the winter was dark dawns  
with many deep freezings  
grays of snow  
grays of sky  
grays of earth

grays of frozen rivers  
grays of frigid days  
grays of wool and boots and boring overcoats  
boring everything muted down  
to dark dawns and deep freezings  
deeply muted deeply down  
relentless sleets relentless snows  
missing the light  
sitting by the fire at night  
and then one day unannounced  
after freezing torrential rain  
and wet late spring snow  
the light did something funny  
as if someone playing a computer game  
put in their password and a secret name  
and suddenly the computer kicked in  
and we felt what it was like to truly win  
to come into a pile of money  
as in the old days of rin-tin-tin  
spring barked and ran and came to the rescue of us all  
like the unifying power of color television  
one fine day we woke up turned on the tube  
and it was all birdsong sunlight and budding greens  
and even if you're not a country rube  
or, pity, were not attuned to a new season's rubic's cube  
or smell like cats on porches everywhere  
the earth breathing the change of air  
you know it in your heart of hearts  
this is not a job for midas muffler or omni-lube  
but a job that blows a joy long overdue  
this is april and the world so long dead is waking up  
pablo casals is gone but still plays on  
on cds and in all our memories  
the maple shadows still cross the road  
the nights finally are shorter than the days  
starlight somehow shines less colder  
and the cellos of the constellations and the planets  
thrill those listening with their celestial trills  
with their eternal chilling change of days  
and when all was once dark bleached gray  
charcoal miner's black a coal pitch grave  
suddenly out of nowhere like a wish  
the eternal periwinkle begins to sing,  
"blue first blue first blue!"  
unvanquished sings, "blue first blue!"

## **new jersey childhood**

### **I. First Memory**

what one dreams can be  
walking with my grandfather  
through an arbor of cedar  
the morning sun falling down in slats  
at path's end sat the beast  
to this day i don't know  
if it was a lynx a ferile cat  
or a domestic tabby  
muzzle bloody  
from a feathered feast

### **II. Second Memory**

the sound of rain  
in the alley mating cats  
the drunk mr. mckenna  
returning home drunk again  
feeling no pain  
waking me up from a dream of rain  
singing, "the ham is cooked.  
the ham is cooked."

### **II. Roselle 1952**

there were orchards and ponds  
and apple trees blooming  
and spring peepers peeping  
there were pink globes of peonies  
and their ever-attendant ebony ants  
and five types of fragrant roses  
a big screened-in porch  
irises and rabbits in the yard  
and in the kitchen in his under shorts  
my father sweat band on his forehead  
sporting his signature crew cut  
keeping his sweat out of the pots  
brewing gallons of lipton's iced-tea  
no air-conditioning the whirring of a fan  
and in the playroom a piano and a TV  
with a rolling hissing screen  
both horizontal and vertical hold not working not  
the kitchen smelling of fresh lemons, peonies and tea

### **III. Escape**

the fields were jungles  
and the creeks were rivers

exotic lands three blocks from home

#### **IV. Birthdays**

there were plastic cowboy hats  
and aluminum-foil princess crowns  
birthday cakes and candle lightings  
sparklers and sparkler lightings  
on the white cake dribbles of pink wax  
pin the tail on the donkey  
as flash bulbs popped and hissed and blistered  
they scrunched under our feet  
everyone tried far too hard  
to have a bit of fun  
the flash and the eye's memory of the flash  
blink to remember when was that

#### **V. The Dream**

it was a long suburban street  
and there was no one on it  
fat street lights glowed  
like the ghosts of giant fireflies  
at the far end full of menace  
down a corridor of gloomy moths and maples  
his massive knuckles bruising the blacktop  
loomed the albino gorilla  
moving insanely toward me

#### **4•17•05 at 5:07 p.m.**

day-lit moon above pansies  
their faces deep lavender  
and white with a smile of yellow  
at their true centers  
the "black delights"  
are not black but purple night  
the green of their stems and shoots  
such a little miracle of green  
the skies' blue is simply boring  
carpenter bees are hitching rides on one another  
humming that deep resonant bee hum  
the moon above dark side down  
reminds me i don't understand  
the rotation of its luminescent round  
why in fall cup up in spring cup down?  
i always wished i knew – don't you?  
and that, mon frere, mon semblabe  
is the measure of the man

the truth of his here or there

### **hide and seek**

in the spring the cardinal calls his mate  
hear the male whoop to the female out of sight

in the fall the leaves all die in mindless droves  
hear the lowing of the seasons in the rusty groves

in the winter everything is frozen quiet still  
hear cold silence in the memory of the goldfinch's trill

in the summer you hear it all – spring, winter, fall,  
the heat of crickets' hearts the only season with no fear

### **when your father dies it all dies**

when your father dies it all dies  
and then you have to find a new way to live  
to replace his voice his look his laugh  
what he gave with a hope of giving too  
no more conversations  
as hard as you might try to talk to him  
his voice will not be heard returning  
the empty silence deafening  
and then there are the things you recall  
what he said his glance his walk his stoop  
the details never remembered by half  
the things remembered that make you cry  
the nights when looking up in the sparkling sky  
you see the star shine of him in your solitary dreams

### **6:38 p.m. on april 18**

it's 6:38 p.m. on april 18  
we've had our dinner  
the dishes are done  
and it's still light  
i'm sitting on a wooden chair  
the pansies with their lion faces  
silently roar at me  
the half moon looks like its buried  
in the scalp of a man with a sky blue scalp  
inside whose skull is you and me imagining this  
me telling this to you  
the moon and the hair of clouds  
are exactly the same family of white  
and amazed we watch within a maze

**“disquietude is always vanity” \***

there is nothing  
and there is understanding  
and understanding nothing  
accepting nothing is all  
and nothing should dissuade us from peace  
from calm in the face of life’s many disappearances  
there is everything  
and there is understanding  
and understanding everything  
accepting everything and all  
and everything that should dissuade us from peace  
from calm in the face of life’s many disappearances  
not the pandemic of global aids  
not fanatical terrorists seeking to destroy America  
not cancer heart disease alzheimer’s  
not the failure to end war  
not the failure to feed the starving  
not the failure to protect the children  
not the erosion of our small planet  
not bad customer service  
suits that don’t fit medicines that don’t cure  
hopes and dreams that refuse to come true  
loves that ignore our love  
youth that withers so suddenly  
countries that nurture the resilient and strong  
and ignore the sufferings of the passive oppressed  
there is nothing on the clock of infinity  
or the puny timetable of our microbial histories  
that counts for much more than naught  
than the journey of a diatom at sea  
than the blink of a night or day  
so take comfort in this my reader my friend  
breathe deeply in thy utter insouciance  
accept the heartbeat of thy fragile self  
live in thy valueless nest at rest  
a zero a negative a cipher a loss  
disquietude is thy only lot  
the shortsightedness of thy pride and vanity  
when seen in light of day  
can vanish more quickly than you or me

\* **st. john of the cross**

**shy sparrow**

small sparrow shy sparrow

your rust-crowned head at rest  
tucked soft into your downy breast  
tonight our friend the moon is broken  
like a mirror its shards are flashing  
in the tops of the tallest pines

small sparrow shy sparrow  
the sweetness of your morning song  
is now a silent dream as strong  
as all sweet dreams that go unspoken  
under wheeling stars and planets splashing  
in the wine dark sea of an april sky

small sparrow shy sparrow  
my dusty companion without a care  
so commonplace so everyday so rare  
you show us how small can be a token  
of something so fine beyond worlds clashing  
that certain small things may never die

### **trophies**

what is it to capture a moment?  
the head of the rhinoceros on the old den wall  
the sound of the phoebe repeating its call  
the onslaught of spring's fleeting green monument  
the fire in the old wood stove  
the rain dripping down the barn drains

cast it draw it recall it remember its pieces  
one can kill it fill it full of lead  
or let it be and watch it unfold  
so quickly now none can count it  
the simple act of observation  
and remembering that now is then

at this point now time stands still  
and one truly sees that no amount  
of embalming recording taking of beautiful pictures  
can bring back this fast day that has passed  
can say what it was to watch a fragile sun go down  
can say in one's heart of hearts

i wish it could i wish it would last  
instead we put it on a wall make a copy or a plaster cast  
of the imprint of the artist's hand  
a facsimile of what was in the artist's heart

right there once now at the very start.  
instead we simply make it dead and mount it

### **cocker spaniel in apple blossom time**

the cocker spaniel had an apple blossom stuck  
in the left twitching nostril of his shiny nose  
black as patent leather tap shoes or wet galoshes

the pink blossom like a small sad sail  
emptied and filled by warmth of spaniel breath  
bugged him but he didn't use his paw to scratch  
though it looked like it was affecting his breathing

his expression made him look like an old man  
who can't get to an itch to scratch  
the owner in a rush to get home  
was oblivious to his dog's distress

i chose not to intervene  
and thinking back wish i had

### **light on hudson**

observing the excitement of light  
on hudson late afternoon in early may  
the sun at such an angle setting  
that gulls tugboat yachts are all back lit  
and appear only black as fine silhouettes  
the black current's swirl is telegraphed  
by morse code currents of light  
and sparkling wakes of motor boats and swans  
and nearer to far shore the pastel hills  
in limes purples blues and rare russet  
there are diamonds living on the tips of waves  
murmuring, "we're here no there no here  
can't you hear us call wild with glee  
don't we illuminate you all like a page  
as you watch us and realize what it is  
to truly see a lone catamaran a single dory  
each manned by a single man  
two dark apostrophes  
placing a lonely white skiff in quotes."

### **cows**

there's nothing quite like them of an early summer morning the sun uprising  
as they placidly amble in love with a fine mist up the long green hill  
their backs white and black jigsaw puzzles wend up to the company of old friends



there is no rush in their easy progression to their world of animal belonging  
and then there's their patience like a stone wall's or a house wren's trill  
in their sweet seriousness they slowly spread out over the new grass their quest's end

the rise of timeless hills and the line of gray fence and barbed wire  
are proud compliments to their stolid stance on rented pastureland  
without them the old red farm would surely float away bereft at a loss all alone

it's their big eyes vacant and warm too shy to show any fire  
that tell us they're not just meat on the hoof but a humble kind of grand  
for all their unflappable density their skin loose canvas over a living piano of bone

their company is cherished by geese and goslings nestling in their shade's safe distance  
they meander the live-long day like tourists in an open bright casino grazing winning and losing  
looking at once alert and at rest vacantly ruminating on their well-chewed cud

whenever i pass them on highways and see them speeding to abattoirs at our insistence  
mud caked crammed side by side stunned by their loss of fields at our hungry choosing  
there's always the shining eye of one that meets my eye as if to say, "i too know it ends in blood."

### **suicidal baby toads and rabbits**

in late june on all our country roads  
you'll encounter many suicidal toads and baby rabbits  
who don't know from geese cars crows or cows  
some inventor should invent some gismo for rural autos  
like cowcatchers on trains of old but tinier  
to break small critters of their machismo country habits  
then there'll be no need for pleas like these or whinier

### **mockingbird hunting**

waiting for the amtrak 260 to penn station  
on a mid-july afternoon the humidity painful  
the day wrapped in a mummy gauze of heat  
the mocking bird track side edge of hudson  
her pilgrim breast no more than an inch or so across  
would open her wings not drying or stretching but hunting  
take a few paces open wings pace and open wings  
her way of scaring bugs scared of motion  
and in her hunt also discouraging predators  
by exaggerating her size with the face-like aspect of her open wings  
patiently stealthily methodically hungrily  
and sure enough she would flush some small frantic thing or two  
eat up and continue on her determined way  
she flew over the train into the haze of thee o'clock

### **burning tiger**

the sun is a burning tiger  
that leaps across roaring oceans and white sand shores  
and leaves his mighty paw print  
on another shining continent  
as great night closes his old cage door

### **late july moon**

well after midnight  
getting up to pee  
seeing reflected  
in glass of the old pantry  
the red o  
of a late-july moon

### **fireflies**

there are thousands  
in their brightness outstanding  
as ideas in colonies  
above the cattails and the sinking mars  
when there are no doors or walls  
and every single thought shines  
as fire flying  
not one single one landing

### **the stars so big**

the stars so big  
the earth so small  
the farther out we fly  
the farther in we fall

### **the secret**

she was way overweight and shy  
surprised someone opened the door for her  
saw her later going up the escalator  
a book the art of finding happiness ‘  
pressed against her breast  
as if to regulate her heart

### **“don’t want to end up a cartoon in a cartoon graveyard” \***

many days belong to the four horsemen of the apocalypse  
and they’re not funny unless the re-touchers put in place of our heads  
the headsof mickey mousey homer simpson bugs bunny emler fudd  
the roadrunner or wiley coyote then the entire catastrophe shifts

to primary colors and the deflation of tragedy and grief begins

by putting cartoon masks on the massacre we accept  
and the margins are eminently laughable  
the hero is crushed by a falling safe and walks out from under  
flat as a waffle decapitated by a frisbee and keeps on singing  
eaten alive by poison ants or piranhas skeleton still walking

blinded crippled hooked maimed stabbed burned shot broken  
rendered neuter two-dimensional crushed drowned  
as fat from a pig's haunch is rendered medium rare  
clear hot and two dimensional too  
the roots of our tragedies well done  
\* paul simon – rhythm of the saints

### **have have not**

we have  
all the time in the world  
right now  
but never enough  
we have not  
have we

### **summer's end**

our hungry concepts fail  
to hold the power of the sun's chant  
the cicadas no sooner arrive  
than fickle they fly and run  
small consolation the painful august  
path from one to no one  
shy leaves prepare to bleed and leave us  
each leave unto itself abundant  
from a trickle to a flood

### **the canary's complaint**

the trapeze bar is broken  
the wire cage door is ajar  
the open garden is in flower  
this is my time to be free my hour

never more than now never more

but I'd rather sit on my dirty cell floor  
and sing a few sour yellow bars  
than fly out free over the vast green bower  
past faded blinds to the shelter of friendly stars

too far too far too far

### **the space between the fish and moon**

between the small silver fish  
no bigger than a child's finger  
silver as aluminum foil in flashlight glare  
the moon shining up through a quiver of night

the water rippling quite conventionally  
as small streams river shallows lakes and bays  
as school children in a fog playing in a silver haze  
the moon defining the contours of river and fish

it is a great distance from moon to fish  
the walking of all our lifetimes and our every wish  
but in an instant's magic night and waters are married  
a thousand mile bridge is crossed in a flash of light

i sometimes see the night as a series of obsidian blocks  
no bigger than a stack of dominoes  
the fish and dominoes darting up and falling down  
and you have an inkling of the great interweaving

the space between the fish and moon

### **disasters of war series #1**

they took him to a room with no windows  
where walls and ceiling and floor  
were stained wet with blood

they put his little finger on a butcher's block  
and with a ball peen hammer smashed it flat  
and said this is what we will do

with all your fingers and all your toes  
and when we're through with that  
we'll do something to your penis'

that will make you wish you never were or knew  
that your mother and your father ever kissed  
your slow dying will be a fat echo of agonizing 'o's'

### **noctilucent**

the moon punctured the night sky  
to look at its light

was to look through a long straw  
into a blazing brightness  
it was the top of a scalped skull  
the wet bone glistening  
the black bloody skin of sky peeled back

the moon conducted an ancient violence  
it was the head of a shining spike  
driven into the open palm of darkness  
the tender chorus of katydids and crickets  
do witness thy nightly sacrifice of day  
they sing on incessant  
they sing on amazed in their praise

**i'm sure it will amount to nothing  
but my heart was always in it**

it was eternity in the voices  
of the end of summer  
katydids caryatids and crickets  
millennial and eternal  
that persuaded me to believe  
that hell and heaven are choices  
we each make in the eternal now  
a composition of our own writing  
and that our only torture or fortune  
is to accept paradise and suffering

it was acceptance or living in indecision  
of the end of summer  
ursa major low in the north sky  
and mars all a glow  
that forced me to choose  
between vacillation and balance  
like the planet libra  
weighing significances and values  
in such a placid way  
as to shed light on the subtlety of their next eternal step

it was watching the bright traffic of stars  
at bright seasons end  
and not holding on to the season's end  
but setting it adrift freeing it  
allowing it to float off on a tide  
of cooler air and the reign of water, stars and leaves  
making a palace of the insignificant  
that enfolded us in the new to be

in such a calming way  
that the carefree moon and we were free to rise

it was a certain lightness of the air  
like a gift that lovers send  
a twig a flower a simple single word  
millennial and eternal  
that persuaded us to believe  
that the traffic of the sun and stars and leaves  
was a symphony of significance  
to be embraced as the pulse in our veins  
a tide a mine courageous and intrepid  
that yields as last breath a golden ore

i was sitting on the screened-in porch  
free of bloodsucking bugs gnats and mites  
that proved the power of man's cocoon  
the protective chrysalis which allows clear thought  
the season called "time out of time" or "leisure"  
the place of calm center centering  
the song that's only heard in the innermost  
most listening ear of the most quiet soul  
and that the only torture  
was to be bound and gagged by others' views

it was the correspondence of my breath  
and the breath of all things  
being breathed and breathing summer fall winter spring  
that rung my weeping wet heart dry  
that cast surgical light  
on the mountainous ego the mountainous why  
we each request of the here and now  
no more than waves request the tide  
no more than ocean moonbeams cry  
the eternal birth and death of every why

when I wonder at my own continuance  
my own insignificant insignificance  
being breathed and breathing in  
winter spring and summer and fall  
the surgical light now musical the music of now  
or not musical or no music at all  
a symphony of insignificance  
like thunderous waters flowing over the water fall  
i wonder is the only suffering or paradise  
a hawk hovering in the blue beyond it all

does the single cricket know itself to be alone  
to be but one of an ocean of crickets  
to be called the throb of a dying season  
to face the winter as a pastoral song  
to call the cold surgical light of fall  
from its old cave to abandon thought of right or wrong  
to set out first-flight-new as the first new day  
without hesitation self consciousness or fear  
to look clear as through a still forest pond  
calm intrepid unspoiled fresh ever-near

### **oliver so far**

he was albino snow  
a pastel hope of bleached marmalade  
orange set adrift in a softness  
big ears foreshadowing his largeness  
a cabbage head big paws  
promising a big cat  
he escaped a humane prison  
of runny nosed hyper cats  
found thelma as thelma found him  
just like that just like that  
he won courage from her love  
from his tiny courage she saw her own  
his own was comically unflappable  
and deaf as granite  
tap on the screened porch floor  
and he was at your side  
he was a creature of vibrations and lip reading  
gladiator he rode the vacuum untamed  
loved the prospect of bubble baths  
read lips and had no fear of trouble  
had no fear of water  
his curiosity a gentle wondrous "oh!"

### **dead leaf**

dead leaf  
blows across fall road  
so toil and sorrow all go  
leaving the mortal coil free  
lightening the load

### **"to diadem a brain"**

to diadem a brain  
there needs to be a dew

of diamond light  
that casts a shadow  
throws a burning blight  
on all fungal doubt  
that refuses to shout  
or swear at the landscape  
of summer winter spring or fall  
that forever favors  
and forever moves away from “in”  
to the eternal right of “out”  
*for A.R. Amons*

### **the sun**

the greeks say the sun is  
“he who smiles from afar”  
everyone else knows  
dry days sap all expose all  
in a blinding clarity  
with a pressing heat  
no one can face  
we all know  
it is what it is

### **the cruelty of the cricket the farmer and the moon**

when i was a singing cricket  
not old enough to know right from wrong  
i envied the simple farmer  
plowing row after row of corn

when i was a simple farmer  
and lost my magic carpet song  
i forgot what it was to be a cricket  
to sing all that singing crickets know

when i was a sickle moon  
plowing furrows of light in the clouds  
i looked down from on high on all crickets and men  
and envied the simplest song of a fall afternoon

though they lived blessed as the old earth and sky  
deep within the answer of one another’s wild soul  
not one - neither cricket nor farmer nor moon  
could recall when long ago they forgot or why

### **the fear of the dark within**

it’s not being able to see



your old hands in front of you  
your old face now haunted and invisible  
in the fun house mirror of doom  
it's being sealed alone in poe's coffin  
pine lid spiked shut  
a flashlight with no batteries  
the sole survivor of a sunken vessel  
tropical midnight in great shark bay  
the gay fiesta of the stars smothered  
by a pillow of evil cloud  
not being able to see the glint of starlight  
on the school of half-sickle fins circling  
what's below your dangling legs who knows  
it's the looming shadow of the vampire of despair  
the bottom feeder on life blood  
the valley prelate torturing little boys  
the way cats make mice their toys  
it's never knowing  
what lies beyond that final door  
that black interval when  
the dark bird of the heart stops  
and waits infinitesimally  
to see if a dark hand might  
open her steel cage door  
and proclaim her free  
to begin her ascent to the shining stars  
beyond all emptiness and night  
it's the loss of belief in the possible  
it's walking out of paradise

### **flying over el paso**

way down there the earth's a clay bowl  
of barren mesas mountains and desiccate flats  
the curves of valleys are a checkered pliocene  
that their tiles of teal and lime all rhyme  
a mule of a quilt following the meander  
of a disconsolate river so mean  
its arroyos and waters are brown as turd dirt  
and everything rolls out to a parched beyond  
all scorched and rusted and angry dry  
dead as boredom dry and predictable as guilt  
yet here and the new greens remain indomitable  
making the old palette of decrepit reds sing

### **last pear**

and i upon the last gray branch

all around me all around  
the forest a library of unread trees  
the blood of maples on the ground  
when i alone lit up the early fall nights  
my rosy face never looked down

### **the spelling of chrysanthemum**

as a boy in elementary school i dreamed  
but never knew the empress of dreams  
queen of ancient china who bred small dogs  
pekinese to match the colors of chrysanthemums  
furry allies who slept in her sleeves to warm her arms  
i never could spell the flower or the dog  
but to know queens bred dogs to look like flowers

is to hear the cold diamond cry in the night  
is to know an old man can be a boy again  
is to be sent to a kennel where flowers barked  
and ran in frantic furry circles  
where tiny dogs of red and blue fell from trees  
light blossoms fall on spring grass spring green  
stirred by the gentle wind of something never known

### **clouds outside of west palm**

below blue waters  
above blue skies  
some clouds small as a dime  
some medium as a shoe  
some large as a flock  
of eccentric hairdos  
some extra large as a yacht  
some gargantuan as the horizon  
all teased up in billows and proportionate  
cumulous stragopherous nibum horsse tails 0- kllist  
an eclectic blend of whites  
cruising aimlessly together below us  
their sailing intelligent  
with the intelligence of something bigger  
than the cinema of imagination  
moving slower and opposite  
and white contrary to the silver  
of the plane's determination  
to arrive on time while looking down  
on horses galleons villains heroes and clowns  
knights in among indians rabbits and birds  
reincarnated into air and water shadows of themselves

projections of a mind above  
sky and shifting water  
amorphous regulated by an unknown hand  
by who knows what subtle power  
force of an unknown order and law  
the fickle vaudeville of weather  
tap dancing to an old fashioned tune  
under a daytime vaudeville moon  
damselles in distress vegetables and minerals  
flowers and mermaids and treasure chest  
cops lawyers judges and criminals  
while we continue to make our usual mess  
of on the ground is sometimes called history

### **poetry**

i like to think of poetry as a slide show  
an endless play of images in day's glow  
that for a moment grabs our attention  
and gives us a momentary respite  
a magic verbal intervention  
a form of truly relaxed breathing  
the provides calm and small respite  
and forestalls the inevitability of death

### **to all the words**

at once present yet strangely absent  
responsible yet not responsible

oh you neutral legions  
in your armor feathers furs or finery  
locked and loaded in your box of dictionaries  
like untested chocolates or small bombs  
biding your time  
wrappers unwrapped fuses unlit

well meaning threatening or not caring at all  
you dance one generation to the next  
your usage a matter of chance

the monkeys of fate at their typewriters  
their tails all curled  
are hammering away on their typewriter keys  
anachronism following anachronisms  
their colored pixels piling up on computer screens  
like piles of fermenting electronic leaves

what is unseen about you  
what is furious and inscrutable  
is what we want to know the most

we follow your waddling path  
like goslings a mother goose  
to open water or farthest shore  
like axes hammers drills or saws  
prying opening locked doors

sometimes lonely for significance  
you cry out like farm dogs at night  
who hear the free coyotes range  
you crave the company of wilder kin  
on the far side of some wooded hill

even when we think  
we've given you a sequence  
a certain melodic marching order  
a magnificent significance  
we melodramatically beg you  
to tell us what you mean  
we are tight you are loose

and we remain unsatisfied  
knowing it's not your sequence that lied  
or your letters that lived and died  
but our unquenchable desire  
for a spark of light  
on a moonless night  
black stars on a white page

### **perfect november morning**

the path around the field is trim cut  
an oval begging back to its beginnings  
the wild asters are blown and black the field grass drying  
on some blades the fractured crystal of a raindrop  
sun's mighty benevolence shining on and through  
the woodpeckers making their goofy chur chur chee  
the single cricket and then two their chirping bells ringing  
a mild wind shushes the few leaves left on trees  
causing some small yellow ones to drift down  
there is still the slow warm of summer in the sun  
and the shadow of my hand and pen  
on the lined paper seems bright and forgiving

no matter that the ink of most our lives is black  
and that the merciless frost is on the way  
laying low even the fall sun physically  
the horizon is as far as we may ever see  
but today's a day to take a soothing ride  
on all the fine memories and on all the clouds  
of fine memories on horizons yet to be  
somehow on days like this the now is all we need  
it's as if the entire season lifts us up entire and universally  
and leaves you and me here and now together  
weak with the gentlest november morning kiss  
as soft as one softly falling maple leaf